

# ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY



## DAVID CAMPANY

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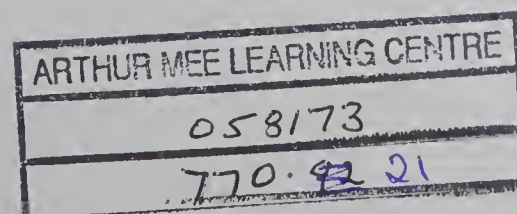




**DAVID CAMPANY** is a London-based writer and lecturer on the history and theory of photography. Also an artist, he was co-founder of the organization Photoforum, which brings together theorists and practitioners working in the photographic arts. His published work includes essays in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. Jon Bird and Michael Newman (Reaktion, 1999); *Postcards on Photography: Photorealism and the Reproduction* (Cambridge Darkroom, 1998); *Cruel and Tender* (Tate, London, 2003) and *Where Is the Photograph?* (Photoforum/Photoworks, 2003).



*Art and Photography* is the first book of its kind to survey the presence of photography in artistic practice from the 1960s onwards. The photographic image is central to contemporary art and the debates that surround it, yet it took most of the last century for it to acquire this status. Despite the extensive exploration of photography as an independent art in the Modernist era, it was not until the late twentieth century that artists, museums and galleries began to explore its social roles as a medium of representation. This volume provides a comprehensive survey of photography's place in recent art history, further contextualized in the Documents section by original artists' statements and interviews, together with critical and theoretical reflections on the photographic and the art of the photograph.







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PRE-

BY DAVID CAMPANY

FACE



Photography is embedded in almost every aspect of our visual culture. If one were to gather together at random a dozen photographers they may not have much in common. Little appears to unite the photographic imagery of journalism, fashion, the police, architecture, portrait studios, medicine, geography, anthropology, the film industry, community projects, advertising, amateurism and the rest.

Photography in art is equally diverse. It is made by many practitioners with a range of artistic identities: 'art photographers', 'artists', 'photographic artists', 'artists using photography' and 'photographers'. This book is not concerned with pedantic categories but it does take this lack of consensus as a way to look at the multiple sensibilities of photography in art.

In the mid 1960s many artists were looking to expand their horizons to engage with the rapidly changing world and its representations. It was in the photographic that they glimpsed the means to do it. Every significant moment in art since the 1960s has asked, implicitly or explicitly: 'What is the relation of art to everyday life?' And so often that question has taken photographic form. Why? Because it is an everyday medium. The photographic has achieved its greatest significance for art in its adaptability. This has been the source of its radical potential, of its fascination for artists and its extraordinary capacity for renewal.

The aim here is to look at the variety of places photography has occupied in art since the mid 1960s. The recent past is the most difficult of things to grasp, and there is always the possibility that an overview will hastily define works and artists just as they are trying to open up new questions. With this in mind the structure of this book makes use of themes that depart from but complement those familiar from recent art history such as 'conceptual art', 'postmodernism', 'the body', as well as those from recent histories of photographic art – 'image/text', 'the constructed image', 'identity' and the 'political image'. Certainly all these have their place here but the aim is to cut across them to arrive at other themes that can be seen to have been constant but variable over the last few decades.

Section one, *Memories and Archives*, looks at work that has explored the photograph's role in the formation of public and private histories. Section two, *Objective Objects*, looks at the photograph's apparently direct relation to the world. Section three, *Traces of Traces*, examines photography as a record of the real and its effects. Section four, *The Urban and the Everyday*, looks at the supplanting of classical 'street photography' with a breadth of attempts to register the social and economic complexities of contemporary city life. Section five, *The Studio Image*, charts the intersection of the photographic studio and fine art's traditional space of making. Section six, *The Arts of Reproduction*, brings together photography that rethinks art's past with works that reflect upon the way mass culture is experienced as fragments. Section seven, *'Just' Looking*, addresses the ways photography has been used to question the social structures of vision and the place of the gaze in the formation of our identity. And section eight, *The Cultures of Nature*, looks beyond 'landscape photography' to bring together works that examine how the current understandings of the natural are formed and reflected through contemporary representation. The themes used here are not a rigid classification but a suggestion, a way to bring works into dialogue with each other.

SUR-

BY DAVID CAMPANY

VEY



You know exactly  
how I feel about  
photography.  
I would like to see  
it make people  
despise painting  
until something  
else will make  
photography  
unbearable.

Over the last three decades or so art has become increasingly photographic.

Why phrase it this way around? Why not say photography has become art? Because that would suggest a kind of unity in the medium when in fact photography has ended up in art in diverse ways, for diverse reasons.

This wasn't the result of a recognition of a singular medium with singular credentials.

Certainly photography has always had its champions who have spoken on its behalf, made attempts to give it an identity and tried to fashion it into something artistically unique, although they have rarely agreed on what it should be. In 1989 our grandest cultural institutions put on large historical survey shows. They were pitched as a mix of 150th birthday and welcome present.<sup>1</sup>



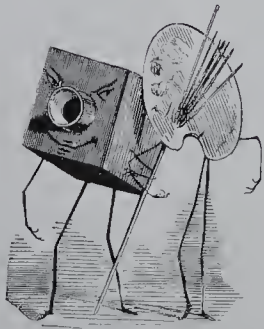
Photography was celebrated as some now fully accepted individual, as if it had been struggling for recognition. It is a personification with a long history. We might here recall a famous little illustration by the photographer Nadar from 1859 depicting Painting taking Photography by the hand and offering it a place in the fine arts.

Despite the big declarations and official bestowal, the great ceremonial embrace of a thing called Photography was misleading. By 1989 the photographic had been seeping its

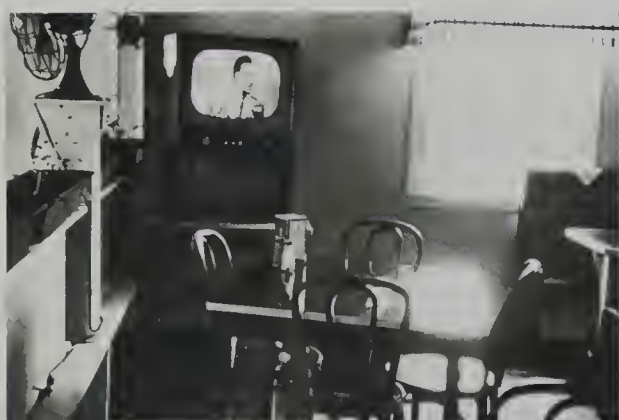
way into much of the most significant art practice for over twenty years, largely unannounced and rarely in the name of Photography. It had appealed to artists precisely because it didn't seem to have an intrinsic character, a clearly

definable identity. It didn't belong to art: it belonged to everyone and no one, and what little baggage it had picked up in the hope of becoming a distinctive medium was intriguing but easy to ignore. It was photography's lack of specialism that made it so special. And it still does.

In recent art no other medium has been taken up in such a variety of ways. In what might now have become a post-medium condition for art, photography is so often the medium of choice.



This book shares its title, *Art and Photography*, with an earlier study by Aaron Scharf published in 1968.<sup>2</sup> Scharf looked at relations between photography and painting. For one hundred and thirty years discussion of photography in art had revolved around painting, around the degree to which artistic photography might be an imitation, rejection or extension of it. Give or take a year, 1968 is the starting point here. By the late 1960s it was becoming clear that the photographic was taking up unexpected dialogues with many more of the arts than painting, such as cinema, theatre, performance, literature and sculpture. A more radical development, however, was that artists were beginning to reflect on the everyday photography outside of art and on representation in general.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes playful, sometimes serious (and often both) it is this reflection that unites the important uses of photography in the art of the last few decades. Later in this essay some of its different aspects are discussed, in parallel with the Works sections. First we need to examine the moment when this reflection became both possible and necessary.



### Photographies and Modernisms

The self-conscious art photography of the 1940s and 1950s had subjected the mechanism of the camera to the photographer's own 'poetics of seeing'.

At its best this gave rise to a type of

critical and political independence. For example Robert Frank's book *The Americans* (1958–59) was an acerbic critique of the growing social alienation of North America. His photographic journalism of a post-war country uneasy with itself became very influential. This was partly because of its subject matter, and partly because Frank's apparently lone voice flattered the seductive idea of the outsider photographer at odds with the world. Less politicised but equally attractive was the embattled pursuit of an independent art of pure photography. *Aperture* magazine, founded in 1952 and edited for twenty years by the mystical Minor White, was North America's bastion of a fiercely romantic, personalised photography. In Europe a parallel Subjective Photography movement was led by Otto Steinert, who championed the cause in three group exhibitions (1951, 1954 and 1958).<sup>4</sup> The movement produced some beautiful photographs but was often trenchant and defensive about its aims, so much so that it grew insular and quite conservative. Its photographers attempted to convey free and individual expression in



their images but these turned out to be generically similar to each other in their rich dark tones and moody atmospheres, suggesting a reflex retreat into the opposite of the cheap colour images of post-war mass culture. Art photography had always been wary of the popular character of the medium. Its aesthetic aspirations could be so easily thwarted by the colossal weight of its popular cultural 'other', with its base indistinctness, simplicity, blank objectivity, industrial standards, entertainment value and disposability. These are things from which any art, traditionally defined, might wish to recoil. Yet these were also the very qualities that began to strike artists, with no vested interest in defending photography, as being significant.

Pop art of the 1960s is perhaps the moment that looms largest when we think of art embracing a mass medium. Andy Warhol and his assistants made canvases that reproduced photographs from newspapers, magazines, celebrity portraits and the like. He mixed the tradition and

forces internal to art as well. Many felt the need to transcend the often stifling limitations of abstraction which had dominated art for some time. Pop was one solution but by the late 1960s its ironies seemed insufficiently critical, tending to close down artistic possibility rather than open it up. Much less flashy than Pop but perhaps more significant for the future development of photography in art was conceptualism. A largely retrospective term, it is applied to an art that wanted to put ideas, investigations and definitions first. It was a cerebral, theoretical and political practice that set out to examine the nature of communication, and the nature of art and artists. It wanted to see if an art was possible that did away with the mark of the hand, with the excesses of artistic selfhood, to deal with how meaning is made, both in the world and in art. This was radically new and not new. Its historical precursor is the art of Marcel Duchamp from the twentieth century's first two decades. In the late 1950s his work began to influence avant-garde American artists such as

Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage, who were precursors of conceptual art. Duchamp had been interested in shifting art from questions of morphology to questions of its function, from 'What is beautiful?' to 'What is art?' The now famous readymades such as *Fountain* (1917)

introduced everyday objects into the space of art, turning the artwork into a matter of nomination, of calling it art.<sup>5</sup> Other of his works used anonymous industrial processes and materials, while the photographs of his masquerades as a female alter ego, Rose Sélavy, seemed to challenge ideas of the unique artistic self.

Language was conceptualism's ideal medium.<sup>6</sup> It could perhaps get rid of objects, put ideas centre stage. When it had recourse to images it used photography in a perfunctory, matter of fact way, but questioned those facts at the same time. It was an art that didn't need to be about technical skill or beauty, traditionally defined. It didn't need to have the 'look' of art. Like a well-formed thought, its beauty could emerge in the clarity of its ideas. This is what unites works as diverse as Edward Ruscha's brazenly amateurish photo books (1963–71), Joseph Kosuth's 'proto-investigations' such as *One and Three Chairs* (1965), Dan Graham's works for magazines such as *Homes for America* (1966), Bruce

materials of painting with an artisanal mimicry of mechanical techniques. Silkscreens could be made in number, in a process somewhere between a cottage industry (although Warhol called it a Factory) and mass production. For himself, he inverted the idea of the lone, self-expressive artist into a mesmerisingly blank mirror of consumer culture.

Outside of Pop there was a growing interest in the evidential power that photography had accrued over the previous century. It had been placed in the service of science, the law, news and other institutions as proof. Photographs were given an enormous amount of authority in daily life, supposedly telling us how the world is and what is important in it. Artists took the opportunity to tackle those uses head on, to take them as their subject matter. This was a part of the general attempt to make a more direct connection between art and everyday life. At a time of great social change in Europe and North America artists wanted to be relevant and play their part as well as being questioning and critical. There were



Andy WARHOL *Orange Car Crash*, 1963  
Marcel DUCHAMP *Fountain*, 1917. Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz  
Man RAY Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy, 1923–24

Nauman's improvised works made in his studio and documented for camera (1965–70), Douglas Huebler's self-assignments called the *Duration, Location and Variable Pieces* of the late 1960s and 1970s, Victor Burgin's illusion/anti-illusion *Photopath* (1967–69) and Keith Arnatt's *Trouser-Word Piece* (1970). Such art accepted photography as an anonymous condition of everyday life, but probed and subverted it at the same time. In some cases it was a direct critique of the authority of the photograph, in others it was indirect: simply using photography in such obviously inartistic ways could force a different relation to the visual, and a different understanding of the role of the artist. Photography was essential to conceptualism but it approached it as a non-medium. There was no scramble to define its essence and no programme about what it should be. Some of the most significant art of the late 1960s and 1970s was being made in a medium about which the artists didn't really care too much, certainly not as guardians or

spokespeople. And it could only have been made with that non-attitude.

Since the late 1990s there has been much interest in these kinds of practices, with several survey shows and critical re-evaluations. Once photography had become available to artists, the speed at which ideas could evolve and work could

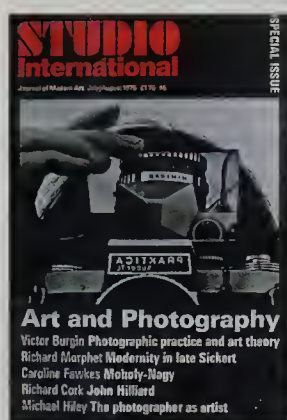
be made was often exhilarating. Moreover, not being beholden to the often conservative pace of an art market or to the demands of a photographic history meant that the vast intellectual and artistic ground that was covered between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s is still a great source of inspiration for contemporary art.<sup>7</sup>

At twenty years remove the photographic artist Jeff Wall looked back and suggested that hidden within conceptual art was photography's moment of modernist 'auto-critique', when it examined its own condition.<sup>8</sup> Photography for the first time was forced to ruminate on its primary social functions as journalism and bureaucratic evidence. In post-war art Modernism is closely associated with medium specificity – the focus on those characteristics thought to be unique to a medium. This in turn is associated with purity, a purging of all those things extraneous to the essence. For painting this meant an attention to the flatness of the canvas, the materiality of paint, the mark of the hand and a rejection

of figurative representation. Abstract Expressionism, typified by the work of Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, was perhaps the best attempt at a pure modernist painting. One version of photographic modernism involves something similar, that is to say a search for the internal properties that might make photography unique – such as focus, detail, framing, perspective, shutter speeds or tonality. However, photography is inherently representational, inherently descriptive. It is thrown into the world (or the world is thrown into it) and is thus not at all pure or autonomous. Within conceptualism photography reflected on itself not by looking inwards to define a special or essential character but by looking outward to reflect on how mass culture understood photography, how it put its descriptive character to use in everyday life. This version of photographic modernism was the absolute opposite of Abstract Expressionism. It was 'representational non-expressionism', a rejection of the self-consciously arty photograph in favour of the artless, dumb and plainly descriptive image. Within conceptualism photography restaged and estranged its social character. This idea is important in the sense that modernist art is usually thought to be all about the turning away from figurative representation.<sup>9</sup> Photography's modernism is a turning *on* representation. An impure reflection on its own impurity.<sup>10</sup> But it took a while to realise that this is what it was. If conceptualism was the moment of photography's modernism it wasn't a modernism of the manifesto, of a declared intention for the medium. It was largely accidental and ignoble. It happened by default.<sup>11</sup>

Artists continued to take up the photographic in this way throughout the 1970s. They put it to use at the service of performance (Chris Burden, Carolee Schneeman, Bruce Nauman), investigations of the document (Susan Hiller, John Hilliard, Lewis Baltz, Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, Thomas Barrow) investigations of the self and the social body (Ana Mendieta, Hannah Wilke, Eleanor Antin, Urs Lüthi, Bas Jan Ader, Francesca Woodman), and in sculptural activity in which the camera extended the idea of the object into performance (Richard Long, Giuseppe Penone, Gordon Matta-Clark, Fischli and Weiss, Boyd Webb, David Haxton).

This splicing of photography into art practice took place in the shadow of a largely separate boom in interest in specialist art photography. A market was being developed for fine art prints of the past and their imitations. This was accompanied





by an unlimbering for the public of criteria for the aesthetic judgment of photographs – letting them know which were art and which were not.<sup>12</sup> Big museums began to put on occasional shows of art photography, and a few dedicated galleries began to open.<sup>13</sup> There was a proliferation of books on the great ‘masters’ (Henri Cartier-Bresson, Edward Weston, André Kertész and others). The leading art magazines devoted whole issues to photography and these too reflected the gap between specialist art photography and the more critical social reflection on the medium by artists. In 1975 Milan-based *Flash Art International* had a ‘Special on Photoworks’. In London *Studio International* and in the United States *Artforum* soon followed.<sup>14</sup> The latter two in particular are revealing snapshots of the time. There were essays from a range of perspectives: nineteenth-century portraiture, modernist painting borrowing from photography, recent photography books by photojournalists, the split between art photography and artists using photography, staged images of



the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, photography in conceptualism, and an introduction of semiotics and rhetoric to a theory of photography. On the commercial pages there were advertisements for small presses selling cheap artists' books, fine

print sales galleries, museum shows, educational packs, specialist bookshops, contemporary group shows in alternative spaces and retrospectives of figures from the past.<sup>15</sup> In some senses that wide gap between art photography and artists using photography can be read as an ideological one: aesthetic conservatism versus radical vanguardism; or formalism versus post-formalism; or a defence of the ‘soul’ of photography against the claim that it doesn’t have one; introversion versus social engagement. The gap was real in the sense that the audiences were quite split and the networks of exhibition were fairly distinct.<sup>16</sup> To a large degree specialist art photography was bound up with an idea of both artist and medium possessed of a coherent and given core, conventionally defined. Vanguard art was destabilising that artistic identity and this was intimately linked to its ad hoc and indirect destabilising of photography as a distinct medium.<sup>17</sup>

This was most clear in the uses made of photography by feminist art and the revolutionary impact it has had on

thinking through what is at stake in the visual. Feminism brought a demand that art address the historically and culturally specific functions of images; both within and outside of art, they are always expressions of social values, ideologies and power. It was feminism that most emphatically prompted a widening out of theories of art and photography to a theory of representation in general. And since photography was a medium ‘in general’, serious questions needed to be asked about what a theory of photography was and whether it was possible or useful to have one.

Once it was grasped as a thoroughly social sign, the study of photography began to be informed by a wealth of theoretical perspectives. This began to happen towards the end of the 1970s. Two key books of the period were Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* (1977) and Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida* (1980).<sup>18</sup> Barthes’ thoughts on photography stretched back to the 1950s and combined with his other writings on literature and mass culture they have informed nearly all the subsequent theoretical approaches to the medium. Semiotics, feminism, psychoanalysis, philosophy, phenomenology, cinema studies, literary theory, institutional analysis, as well as advanced art theory, all brought important and stimulating insights to the thinking and making of photography.<sup>19</sup> Many writers and critics have contributed to the now advanced understanding of photography in art, including Rosalind Krauss, Craig Owens, Douglas Crimp, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Griselda Pollock and Régis Durand. Still more writers are also artists, many of whom emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s (Victor Burgin, Martha Rosler, Barbara Kruger, Yve Lomax, Allan Sekula, Mary Kelly and Jeff Wall). This has helped broach the often artificial division between practice and theory, breaking with the still popular idea of the artist as someone who works in a realm ‘beyond language’. Out of this grew what was called ‘postmodern’ art, a key moment in the alignment of art and theory. Like conceptualism, postmodern art addressed the social roles of representation, but by the late 1970s these roles had changed. With a shift in economic structure Western industrial countries found themselves with an image world dominated by television, consumerism and entertainment. This was no longer the imagery purporting to be visual fact that had so informed conceptualism.<sup>20</sup> It was a new, accelerated environment of distractive fantasy and permanent instability. Rather than mimicking or reworking the cheapness of the

lumpen descriptive image, postmodern artists began to dissimulate its role in consumerism and entertainment in order to examine critically the apparent disconnection of the image from the real. (I shall discuss this in detail later.)

The economic boom that had produced this cultural situation also produced a buoyant art market that could sustain such postmodern work. The market has since ebbed and flowed but a long-term consequence has been that art institutions now have a much less erratic interest in photography. A firmer base has allowed artists who use photography to develop long careers. Signature style, still very much demanded by buyers and curators, is present but it is an effect of sustained concerns, approaches and subject matter.<sup>21</sup> Against the background of photography's sometimes overwhelming possibilities, artists have tended to pursue particular lines of enquiry over longer periods. Many now evolve their practice incrementally and diligently. This is what has characterised the work of the last decade or so.<sup>22</sup>



However there is a second sense in which recent work has become slower. Popular image culture has accelerated and become largely electronic, so that photography is now grasped as a medium characterised by slowness. Where once it might have been the pinnacle of cultural speed, it now seems a more deeply

contemplative medium, detached even while it describes. This has left it with the chance to reflect at a much greater distance and with less anxiety than before. Its audiences are beginning to approach it in that way too. These are the conditions under which those older differences between specialist art photography and artists using photography have begun to dissolve.

### Memories and Archives

From its very beginnings photography has lent itself to the logics of the archive. The nineteenth-century systems and templates established for ordering data, acquiring knowledge and assembling histories found in it a highly adaptable form of information. More than that, the ways in which photography has been developed and deployed as a technology have been largely dictated by archival purposes. It is a medium of the particular but it is also a medium of collation, comparison, repetition and distribution. It has become

central to the archives of the sciences, the legal system, education, medicine, commerce, industry, art history, entertainment, news and the domestic family.

Despite all these investments made in it the photograph remains, as Allan Sekula put it, a 'fragmentary and incomplete utterance'.<sup>23</sup> It actually means little on its own and relies on a broader textual and discursive apparatus to bring out its latent possibilities. It is also a highly mobile kind of image, liable to be pried from its original location, to outlive its initial purpose, or to exist in many places at once. A photograph might be a fixed image but its meaning is much less stable.

Major museums have been repositioning archival images as art since the 1920s. The official canon of art photography, assembled and promoted in the century's middle decades, was put together from very scattered sources. Alongside photographs made self-consciously as art there were images made by professional photographers with artistic ambitions (such as art photojournalists) and photographs brought into art from a variety of functional archives by curators. In the latter case the rationale was rarely that of Marcel Duchamp's Readymades, imported to problematise the definition of art.<sup>24</sup> Rather, there was a desire for a more seamless recontextualisation. The emphasis was on highlighting singular projects and artistic ambition at work in the fields of the applied image. The case of Eugène Atget is a well-known example. Atget was a professional photographer who made utilitarian images of Parisian streets, buildings and industrial design for any number of purposes. The carefully artless, automatic quality of the pictures, with their inadvertently haunting depiction of the empty city, attracted the attention of the Surrealists. Later they were acquired by museums not just for their subject matter but as a unique artistic innovation.<sup>25</sup> 'Atget' was an invention of the museum.

This repositioning of photographs as art by curators has continued, but in recent decades the archival itself – with its images and rationales – has become one of the most widespread subjects for artists. It surfaced within Pop art's reworking of mass media imagery and then more radically in the 'non-art' strategies of conceptualism. The systems inherent in archives corresponded with the conceptual interest in bureaucratic forms, seriality and the everyday. The usually hidden structure that gives the archive its authority was made visible and visual in artworks that borrowed its formal procedures in pursuit of deconstructive



investigation of the social forms of knowledge. Art could be a space to examine the *meanings* and *implications* of the archival, rather than simply turning its images into art works.

In general this has taken three forms. The first is the researching, collating and re-presenting of images. Emblematic here is the ongoing *Atlas* (1962–) assembled by the German artist Gerhard Richter. It takes the form of more than six hundred separate panels of images that have been important to his work as a painter. Incorporating news photographs, snapshots, studies for paintings, pornography and kitsch, the bewildering diversity of the material is arranged in standardised grids and presented in a roughly chronological order. In its grand scale it moves between public history and autobiography, social interest and private interest.<sup>26</sup> There is a formal order to the work but Richter is under no obligation to make it add up. His grids offer the promise of coherence and authority but the diversity of the content refuses it at every turn.



The format of the grid has been employed by a number of artists who have worked with archival material (including Andy

Warhol, Sol LeWitt, Sophie Calle, George Blakely, Joachim Schmid, John Divola and Susan Hiller). In some respects this can be understood in relation to the general turn towards the grid in art in the 1960s and 1970s, with its flattening out of the picture plane and the embrace of constructive systems.<sup>27</sup> It is also an anti-hierarchical form that flattens time and de-narrativises images. Rather than offering anything concrete, the grid of photographs offers raw material to the viewer as potential meaning, in a manner akin to the archive itself.

As the sheer weight of images accumulated across the twentieth century, the task of making sense of the relationship of photographs to history and biography became deeply fraught. In addition, the rupture in historical consciousness caused by the Second World War drew many European artists to examine the way images can both aid and disable the continuities of history, memory and identity. Hence the often melancholic and enigmatic character of archival subjects in art. This is present most acutely in the works of Christian

Boltanski. In his projects that use found portraits from family archives and newspapers, Boltanski collates and orders the material, giving it new purpose but preserving a sense of dislocation. In a culture in which the portrait is so often made to stand in as a surrogate for the absent person, his marshalling of photographic faces is read inevitably on some level as a marshalling of dispossessed people, a theme central to the memory and culture of post-war Europe.<sup>28</sup>

In its formal systems the archive is organised to meet the need for immediacy. It is depthless, all things becoming relativised and available instantly in such a way that the temporal gives way to the spatial (and with the coming of the electronic archive the spatial begins to disappear too).<sup>29</sup> The photograph's internal relation to time is offset by its distribution across a flat field. So while the archival might in theory make the writing of history possible it also frustrates it. The photograph makes a promise of a history it cannot itself keep. There is certainly a sense in which the disarticulated fragments to which so many post-war artists have been drawn can be read as a metaphor for the unruly processes of memory and the traumatising of historical continuity. Indeed there are strong parallels between photography's emphasis on incidental details and the involuntary memory fragments that are the raw material of psychoanalysis. It is a matter of putting the parts together and inserting them into language: a task that is left to the viewer of the photo fragments. (We will return to this later in a consideration of allegory.)

The second strategy involves the recreation of the archival image in ways that allude to the construction of official knowledge. An early example is David Levinthal and Gary Trudeau's *Hitler Moves East: A Graphic Chronicle* (1977), a witty yet serious remake of the popular illustrated history book. It consists of actual testimonies of soldiers, documents and archival photographs mixed with carefully shot model set-ups of Eastern Front battles. The images mimic war photography but reveal their own artifice at the same time. There is no simple rejection of the historical photograph here but a reviewing of its often unquestioned authority.

Several artists have considered the place of the archive in the formation of national and racial identities within colonialism. For her *Sea Island* series (1992) African-American artist Carrie Mae Weems made enlargements of images originally made in 1850 of a slave family who worked a plantation in South Carolina. They were taken by a naturalist



as ethnographic studies (although many such images circulated among the white population as illicit fetishes). Weems' blow-ups of the pocket-sized daguerreotypes overwrite these classificatory views (right profile, frontal shot, left profile), transforming them into a triptych portrait format which shifts our relation to the sitters and the status of their histories.<sup>30</sup> Warren Neidich revisited the official versions of North American history in his *Contra-Curtis: Early American Cover-ups* (1985). He took photographs of Westerns screened on American television, toning and printing them as historical pseudo-documents. The images of 'American Indians' emphasise how mass entertainment is a problematic source of popular history, while the title of the project alludes to Edward Sheriff Curtis' turn of the century depictions of Native Americans as a noble but doomed 'vanishing race'.<sup>31</sup> In *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (1998) the English artist Yinka Shonibare assumes the role of a black nineteenth-century gentleman of wealth and taste. His luxurious tableaux of leisurely



extravagance were shown as billboard posters on the London Underground, bringing these unfamiliar scenarios, and thus a consciousness of black history, into high public visibility.

The third approach has been the exploration of the interrelations of collective history and private memory. Where popular wisdom presumes these to be separate things, the photograph always moves between the two, blurring any easy distinction. Mohini Chandra's *Album Pacifica* (1997) brings together images from her dispersed Fiji Indian family in a symbolic reunification of people scattered around the world. Mari Mahr's poetic collages, which include objects charged with personal memory, hint at how the need to narrate a past increases when the continuity of a life is disrupted by movement from one country to another. Allan Sekula's *Meditations on a Triptych* (1973–78) comprises a small group of images from a typical family album (his own) accompanied by an extended text. Sekula lays out for us just how much social information we glean from even the most fleeting and

casual reading of photographs. At the time of making the piece, countless books of snapshots were being published in Europe and America for the popular market. These were often no more than random trawls of discarded domestic life presented as weird cod-sociology. Avoiding the exoticism and easy enigma that can be generated by recycling just about any photograph out of context, Sekula's aim was to slow down our reactions to just three related images to reveal the deep connections of the ritual image to our understanding and misunderstanding of the world.

In all of these approaches it is the hidden structures that support the photograph as historical knowledge which are drawn out by artists. In this way a critique becomes possible of the unconscious of the archive, of its partiality, its inconsistencies and exclusions. Artists have tried to come to terms with the social use of the photograph as a supposedly adequate stand-in for history and memory. The aim has been to 'brush history against the grain' and reveal the archive as

a contestable site in the construction of social meaning.<sup>32</sup>

### Objective Objects

In 1969 Roland Barthes visited an exhibition of shock photographs and was left unshocked. Looking at the images he could feel the presence of the photographers governing his vision, blocking any 'direct' access to subject matter.<sup>33</sup> The few that did shock were news agency pictures 'where the fact surprised stands forth in its obstinacy, in its literalness, in the very evidence of its blunt nature.'<sup>34</sup> Barthes had earlier talked of the press photograph as a 'message without a code', a message that suppresses our awareness of its social construction so that visual information appears to 'speak for itself'.<sup>35</sup> For him the most forceful images leave the viewer with what seems like a raw encounter. His final book *Camera Lucida* (1980) was a long speculation about his response to the directness of certain photographs.<sup>36</sup> These were mainly nineteenth-century portraits where he could sense the sitters



the most and the photographer the least. He preferred the 'evidential force' of the brute image, with its insistence on the indexical character of the photograph – the fact of its being 'caused' by the subject matter. For him this indexicality could be more powerful, subversive even, than any creativity or artiness of construction. The photograph's forte was its authorless, mechanical quality that turns the existing world into a sign of itself, not a sign of the creative ego.<sup>37</sup> In this sense its power resides in the very traits that make it independent of art, independent of authorship.<sup>38</sup>

If art always foregrounds the author, how does the 'straight' image function in this context? In 1964 John Szarkowski of New York's Museum of Modern Art presented 'The Photographer's Eye', a show attempting to set out a scheme for the aesthetic judgment of any photograph. He was interested in the broadest range of images but was looking to convert them into special objects rather than accept them as social or automatic signs belonging to the world. He sought



to define overarching criteria that would bring all photographs into the museum under the same formalist 'eye': The Detail, The Frame, Time, Vantage Point and, most ambiguously, The Thing Itself.<sup>39</sup> Among many portraits chosen was one from 1865 of Lewis Payne, a murderer condemned to death. He is handcuffed and photographed in a manner that later evolved into the standardised police photography of criminals.<sup>40</sup> Szarkowski underlined the ability and judgment needed to produce such images, stressing the individual achievements of photographers as problem solvers. We need not dispute the skills required, particularly in portraiture, but we can also see the straight photograph as a cultural convention, an industrial standard. Despite its subtlety Szarkowski's influential programme was too preoccupied with assessing images as formal objects to become fully engaged with thinking about photography as a field of social practice.

By the mid 1960s vanguard artists were beginning to

engage photography more as a medium of the world than something to be aesthetically redeemed. As we have seen, taking up the artless image could expand the remit to social investigation, challenging traditional definitions of the artist as maker in the process. This is the point at which the term 'artist using photography' first emerges, and 'using' neatly alludes to the interest in the utilitarian, functional image that stands in for its object, conceptually at least.

Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) was one of a large number of three-part works. These 'Proto-investigations' as he later called them, took up with a philosophical rigour the complex relation of objects to representation. Comprising a chair, a photograph of it and its dictionary definition, the work disarms any assumed transparency of meaning by complicating the notion of self-evidence. Aligned with its representations, the chair also becomes its own representation, another sign of itself.

Mel Bochner's *Actual Size (Face)* and *Actual Size (Hand)* (1968) were black and white shots of the artist's body parts photographed on backgrounds marked out with Letraset measurements. Printed actual size, one-to-one, they pointed up the inherent scalelessness of even the most apparently objective image.<sup>41</sup> A similar economy of means informs John Hilliard's *Cause of Death? (3)* (1974), a deft deconstruction of visual fact. Hilliard offered four croppings of the same straight shot of a shrouded body, each with its own title – 'Drowned', 'Fell', 'Crushed', 'Burnt' – laying bare the reliance of supposedly objective images on an anchoring text.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to such deliberately dry gestures there is philosophical humour in the early photographic work of many artists with similar concerns. In his early image *nohJ* (1970) William Wegman simply flipped the negative of a portrait of a garage mechanic called John, whose name we see reversed on his overalls. John Baldessari's *Wrong* (1967) presents an amateurish photo of a man on the street. The photographer has committed the 'error' of placing him in front of a palm tree that appears to sprout from his head – even the casual snapshot has rules and conventions. The English artist Keith Arnatt stared into the camera wearing a placard announcing 'I Am a Real Artist' (*Trouser-Word Piece*, 1970), a statement so blatant it immediately raised the distinct possibility that he might not be. Photography lends itself to the simplicity of the subversive joke because it is so quick and unlaboured. As with

language, deadpan visual humour in particular can undercut objectivity. We are asked to grasp the transparency and the artifice of communication at the same time. Serious or jokey (sometimes it's hard to tell the difference) these works deployed words not as a simple supplement or poetic addition but as an integral element of a reflexive practice, confronting the photograph's powers of description with its radically open meaning. Investigating the interplay of image and language that produces the apparent seamlessness of everyday culture has been an important strand of vanguard art. It stretches back at least as far as René Magritte's painting of a pipe underneath which is inscribed 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' ('This is not a pipe') (*La Trahison des images*; *The Treachery of Images*, 1928) and forward to other works we will discuss later.<sup>43</sup>

By contrast the influential German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher have extended a commitment to objectivity. Their systematic documentation of industrial architecture



and vernacular buildings began in 1957 and still continues. The images adhere to a formality built on a conventional, uninflected use of the camera as a means of description. Presented in number they allow various constructions of the same basic type to be compared and contrasted in a straightforward, unheroic way. The inter-war New Objectivity in Germany certainly played a part in the genesis of their practice, while its seriality and emphasis on the informational were the criteria by which it entered art in the late 1960s.<sup>44</sup> However their project cannot be fully contained by either frame of reference, precisely because of its historically grounded insistence on subject matter. The New Objectivity emerged with a modern, progressivist promise that was broken by the Second World War. The Bechers' work exists in an era devoid of utopianism. Moreover they document types of building that are soon to vanish, in an era much less certain about progress. They keep faith in photography as a medium of objective description, yet the project has an ambivalence



that tends more towards melancholy than optimism, in a manner similar to the archival projects discussed earlier.<sup>45</sup> What makes their photography unique is that having entered art on the basis of being non-art, it still retains a utilitarian function. Books of their photographs are bought in equal quantities by the art world and by architectural historians for whom they are important sources of information.

The Bechers' project chimed with the concerns of Minimalism in its repetitions, industrial forms and avoidance of expressive craft (it has more of a signature content than a signature style). This has also been true in some ways of the serial work of their ex-students, including Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, Thomas Ruff and Candida Höfer. Gursky's photograph of a stretch of industrial carpet (1993) is about as close as a descriptive photograph can come to the bold reductions of Minimal art or monochrome painting.

The photographs of many other artists also owe a debt to Minimalism, particularly Lewis Baltz's frontal images of

vernacular architectural forms made during the 1970s and 1980s. For Baltz, much like the Bechers, Minimalism has been just one of a number of possible discourses through which to consider the open ended character of his work.<sup>46</sup> Lynne Cohen's calm descriptions of institutional interiors grew directly out of the influence of Minimal art when she moved to photography from sculpture.

Beyond the Minimal, photography has had dialogues with many other kinds of sculptural object. *Stiller Nachmittag* (*Quiet Afternoon*) (1984–85), by the Swiss duo Peter Fischli and David Weiss, is a series of quick photographs of comic, makeshift sculptural forms assembled in their studio and made permanent only by the camera. The equally theatrical *100 Boots* (1971–73) by Eleanor Antin makes an even more performative use of sculpture and photography. In these fifty images we see an army of black galoshes apparently marching across North America to New York. More recently Gabriel Orozco has extended this principle in many works such



as *Until You find Another Yellow Schwalbe* (1995), made in the city of Berlin. In a less interventionist manner Richard Wentworth's ongoing series of photographs *Making Do and Getting By* are observations of the sculptural fabric of city life, where inadvertent relationships between objects are made significant by the attention of the artist's camera. Photography is exploited here as a shifting mediator in which the art resides equally in the image, the action and the objects.

Although this protean character has become one of the photograph's chief characteristics in contemporary art, it has its precedents. The medium's compelling and unnerving ambiguities lay at the heart of Surrealism in particular. The *Sculptures Involontaires* of Brassai and Salvador Dalí (1933) were close-up photographs of tiny and improvised sculptural forms made from everyday materials shaped by the hand. They are a radical indication of the way photography can transform nondescript objects and matter simply through objective representation.



What is common to all of these explorations of objectivity and objects is a turn towards everyday things, to the overlooked, to the fabric of daily life lived in an era of the cheap and industrially produced. Be it Kosuth's common chair, Baldessari's snapshots, Wegman's manual worker, the Bechers' anonymous architecture, Gursky's carpet or Cohen's generic interiors, a relation is found between photography as a vernacular medium and vernacular subject matter. This is an important part of the more general shift in the role of the post-war artist from absorption in the artistic self to absorption in the world of everyday things and representations. This shift has by no means been exclusive to photography but as a social medium it has lent itself to it the most readily.

### Traces of Traces

In 1970 New York's Museum of Modern Art held the international survey show 'Information'. It was a prediction of what the curator Kynaston McShine and the organisers thought

would be the concerns of the art of the following ten years: art as data collection and experimentation with forms of the evidential.<sup>47</sup> The exhibition catalogue contained a keynote image called *Dust Breeding* (*Elevages de poussière*) that was made a full half century earlier. In 1920 the photographer Man Ray visited Marcel Duchamp's New York studio and saw a sheet of glass lying flat, gathering dust. Far from being a scene of neglect, Duchamp had been cultivating dust as a stage in the manufacture of his mixed-media sculpture *The Large Glass*. Man Ray photographed it, made it semi-abstract by cropping down to exclude the studio and gave it its title, although it also went under other names, including *View from an Aeroplane*. Both artists signed it and it occupies a distinct if minor place in their oeuvres.<sup>48</sup> Six years on from 'Information' the critic Rosalind Krauss looked back and saw that the evidential in the form of the index or trace had indeed become a preoccupation of art, particularly in North America. More than that she compared the turn quite explicitly to the

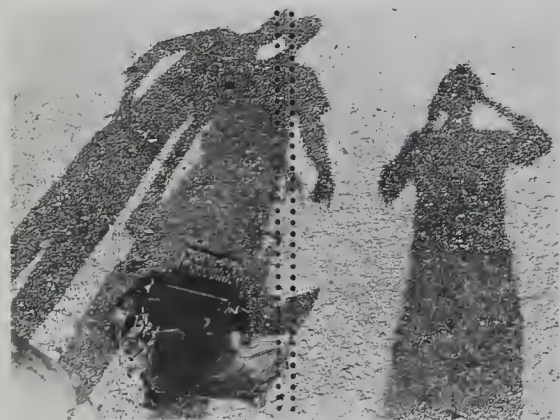
increasingly influential work of Duchamp and emphasised *Dust Breeding* as an important precursor.<sup>49</sup> The image condensed many of the ideas that were central to the vanguard art of the 1970s. In this one photograph there is an exploration of duration, an embracing of chance, spatial uncertainty, ambiguity of origin (it has two authors), institutional instability (it is an art photograph, a photograph of an artwork and a supplement to it), a blurring of media boundaries (photography, sculpture, performance), and perhaps most significantly it is an artwork as process and trace.<sup>50</sup> Granted, all photographs are traces in that they are caused by their objects, yet as such they have a particular relation to the trace as subject matter, and this has been a continuing source of interest for artists.<sup>51</sup>

In an early essay in *Artforum* the writer Robert Pincus-Witten reproduced *Dust Breeding* next to one of Bruce Nauman's photographs from his series *Flour Arrangements* (1967).<sup>52</sup> Over the course of a month Nauman manipulated a heap of common flour into various shapes on his empty studio floor, documenting the changing forms and, by implication, his sculptural activity. Nauman has often deployed the camera to make slight forms visible and available without having to make them seem permanent. He exploits the double relation photography has to form. As an apparatus the camera is always on the side of the formal and the rational, but it can preserve the formless irrationality of base subject



matter, like a sign hung over transient actions or minor things to focus our attention.<sup>53</sup> This capacity to give permanent expression to ephemeral forms and behaviours is what attracted many artists to photography. It could contribute to what Lucy Lippard and others called the 'dematerialisation of art', not in the sense that art disappears but that it adopts fugitive and ambiguous forms.<sup>54</sup>

In the early 1970s many artists became interested in the forensic as an aesthetic of the trace and as a ritual procedure. For example Edward Ruscha took crime scene documentation to a parodic extreme. He hurled a Royal typewriter from the window of a speeding car onto a desert roadside, and an accomplice proceeded to record photographically the effects of the 'incident'. Ruscha's artist's book *Royal Road Test* (1971) fleshes out the sober images with bureaucratic description, measurements and annotations.<sup>55</sup> The absurd act is turned into a comedy of data collection. John Divola's *Vandalism* series (1973–75) takes a comparable approach. Breaking into



disused houses, he turned arty vandal with an aerosol can before using his camera to make two-dimensional documents of the altered interiors which are rich in narrative implication. Absent cause is also the hidden centre of Mac Adams' *Mysteries* of the late 1970s, a series of mini-narratives in which marks and traces become clues in condensed detective scenarios that owe as much to B movie Hollywood as the police file.

Exploiting the idea that the camera could make an action outlive the moment without actually replacing it, photography became the means by which the spirit of performance could be kept alive. In the sequence *Jumps* (1969) Vito Acconci snapped with an Instamatic camera held at arm's length while taking leaping strides in the woods. The resulting camera shake in the 'bad' images became a trace of the action and the consciousness that created it. Similarly in *The Nature of Balancing* (1979) Mary Beth Edelson is seen on the horizon of a landscape standing on one foot for as long as she can while

the time exposure captures her precarious wobble.

Performance art is irreducible to its documentation since it is about the 'here and now', about being in the physical presence of the performer. However, a photograph of a performance has an advantage over moving images in that it can record the live event for posterity without supplanting it. It can illustrate a performance while preserving its integrity. It is also more readily disseminated than video or film documentation. The photographs of Carolee Schneeman, for example, performing *Up to and Including Her Limits* (1973–76) are certainly iconic images in recent art history, but the intimate essence of her performance eludes the picture. The photograph of Chris Burden clutching his arm after the performance *Shoot* (1971) is an extraordinarily visceral image. His voluntary act of being shot in a gallery before an audience remains reported as a trace rather than substituted.<sup>56</sup> Part of the effect of this documentation is the creation of an aura around the historical performance, which

in some senses returns them to a more traditional definition of an artwork as, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, 'something at a distance, however close it may be'.<sup>57</sup>

Within these self-initiated experiments it is important to recognise the ethical and political dimensions for artists of the trace as damage. Eleanor Antin's landmark work *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (1971) was a series of 140 pseudo-scientific, full-length shots of Antin's own body taken over thirty-six days. In this time she 'sculpted' herself towards a social 'ideal' by dieting to lose ten pounds in weight. The work points to the ways the beautiful in western femininity is so often fantasised as that which appears spontaneous and 'untouched', eluding or covering traces. Fred Lonidier's *The Health and Safety Game: Fictions Based on Fact* (1976) was an extensive project that combined photographs, text and videotape to document occupational injuries suffered by workers in North American corporations.<sup>58</sup> As well as exhibiting it in museums Lonidier displayed the work in civic



and municipal buildings, encouraging a direct participatory debate with his audience.

The trace in art corresponds with the double need of art and artists both to feel connected to the social world and yet to view it from a certain remove. As an evidential medium photography has in some senses become that remove and the trace in the image has become a complementary subject. The structural similarity of the trace and the photograph allows for a degree of reflexivity in the medium: the photograph both as and of a trace. But there is much more at stake here. Art's earlier re-presenting of performance and the probing of the photograph as evidence has been accompanied in the last decade or so by a very different invocation of the trace. One of the most significant tropes in recent photography has been the turning of the documentary photograph into an image made after something has happened. Although the world still comes to us today as photographic evidence, it comes in the wake of television.



Whatever its indexical primacy, photography is now a secondary medium of evidence. It is no longer the sole mediator of events or the sole source of visual authority. Its slow slippage from the centre of visual culture was well under way by the late 1960s. Photography was already beginning to be supplanted by other image technologies and in some respects it was this decentralising that opened up photography to art's investigation of it as a social medium. (Prior to television, when photography was the medium of the day, art photography aimed to distance itself from mass media.) This is the source of the eclipse of the realist reportage of 'events' and the emergence of a photography of the trace or 'aftermath'. Ceding the present tense to video, reportage photography now exploits its status as a missed encounter with the real by recording traces which are themselves the mark of the real. This is increasingly visible in magazine editorials in which photography returns to the sites and the people of world events. Like the trace, the photograph

now also comes after these events.<sup>59</sup> In art we see a parallel procedure in the works of Willie Doherty, who steps back and away from the conflicts in Ireland to record obliquely their effects on places and the popular psyche. Anthony Hernandez in his extensive series *Landscapes for the Homeless* (1989–95) circumvents the visual stereotypes of rough sleeping in Los Angeles in preference for a documentation of its in-between spaces within the city. Sophie Ristelhueber's images of the remains of the military destruction in Kuwait were only possible after the Gulf War. Few reportage images were released while it was happening. The reality of the conflict is implied but it lies outside the time and frame of her images which are at once deeply personal and utterly impersonal.<sup>60</sup> Here photography comes not just in the aftermath of events but in the aftermath of television. The directness of traditional reportage is replaced by indirect commentary. The trace becomes allegorical.<sup>61</sup>

### The Urban and the Everyday

Photography is 'time-bound' in two senses. It has specific temporal relations to the world that result from its indexicality and its speeds, and it comes into existence within the temporal upheavals we associate with modernity. Its relation to the everyday is a product of the two, but it isn't a particularly stable or simple one. Until the 1970s photographic representation of daily life was dominated by a model of picture making derived from reportage. The decentring of reportage within mass culture had far reaching consequences for the depiction of the urban and the everyday.

The art-photojournalist emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as a figure moving between the editorial page, the photographic book and the gallery. Typified by the calm descriptions of Walker Evans and the 'decisive moments' of Henri Cartier-Bresson, this photography took advantage of freelance work to pursue a journalistic poetics of the image. Out of this situation grew 'street photography', perhaps the only genre entirely specific to the medium. It had certainly become that for practitioners, writers and curators by the late 1950s and 1960s. Despite its enduring images and its still firm grip on popular perceptions of what the medium is all about, street photography came to something of an end in parallel with the decline of documentary practice in the early 1970s. While it was being sidelined by television in mass culture, in art it was being shaken by conceptualism's inquiries into the ideolo-



gical determinations of documentary and the structures of photographic meaning.<sup>62</sup> Photojournalism began to lose its grip on art as it lost its grip on journalism. Street photography had produced some extraordinary images over fifty years (and in many respects it couldn't have got much better within the increasingly narrow parameters it set for itself). But the negative consequence of becoming a self-conscious art genre was a lapse into formalism and a move away from social engagement into privatised and obsessively subjective 'styles of seeing'. As it waned it fell into empty repetition of its past glories and a tendency towards exoticism, with a sometimes patronising attitude towards its subjects. Many of the more politically committed artists and writers were frustrated that the vital, creative and radical potentials of a photography of the everyday had been squandered or marginalised or merely aestheticised. This became the subject of an intense critique in writings and artworks.

Martha Rosler's highly sophisticated *The Bowery in Two*



*Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974–75) was a series of forty panels of photographs of dilapidated doorways and

shop fronts paired with seemingly endless euphemisms for drunkenness. The work was also published in the form of an artist's book. The images quoted the visual clichés of the over familiar documentary of poverty (she aptly called it 'victim' photography). Rosler's subject was not New York's Bowery district in any external, measurable sense, but 'the Bowery' as a product of the commonplace photographic discourse about hardship.<sup>63</sup> In an essay written at the same time Rosler argued that 'Documentary photography has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or programme of revolutionary politics.'<sup>64</sup> Her contemporary Allan Sekula warned that 'the subjective aspect of liberal aesthetics is compassion rather than collective struggle. Pity, mediated by an appreciation of great art, supplants political understanding.'<sup>65</sup> Museums and book publishers presented photojournalism most often in exhibitions and formats that divorced the images entirely from their context, so that they became repetitive objects

of formal contemplation or instances of 'great photography'. A growing exasperation with the ways in which both mass culture and art had contained photographic realism, keeping it apart from the political, led to a much needed rethinking of documentary.

In addition to these political and ethical dilemmas documentary practices had to confront the fact that everyday life was undergoing a radical change in character, a result of the expansion of international capitalism. This was the onset of postmodernity. The modern utopian stories that cities had told themselves were wearing thin. Urban life was becoming socially divisive, subject to unstable markets, and expensive. Also, with the growth of telecommunications and the decline of urban manufacturing, significant city functions became electronic and thus invisible to the camera.<sup>66</sup> An understanding of the city had to face what the critic Michael Newman called the 'unrepresentability of technology and the ineffability of the multinational corporation that can no longer be identified either with individuals or, any more, with its monumental glass-box offices.'<sup>67</sup> Even so, cities became highly photogenic both in their garish wealth and their poverty. As a recorder of surfaces photography could either luxuriate in these seductive veneers or attempt to connect them to the structures and forces beneath. 'We must be insistently aware', argued geographer Edward Soja, 'of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.'<sup>68</sup> In the 1980s cultural theory began a concerted effort to think through these spatial changes. Fredric Jameson suggested that the postmodern should be grasped as a rapid evolution in social space, and that 'we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied as yet by any mutation in the subject. We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits were formed in that older kind of space ... the space of high modernism.'<sup>69</sup> This bears very directly upon photography, a medium so closely associated with the representational norms, the 'perceptual equipment', of the high modern city. Photography was only going to remain a significant means of engaging critically with this new



environment if it could revitalise itself.

New social and aesthetic possibilities were sought in a number of directions. For many artists the overtly constructed image, owing as much to cinematography as photography, has allowed a depiction of the particular while alluding to more general social forces. For the series *Heads* (2000) Philip-Lorca diCorcia extended his earlier photography of people in public space, bringing flash lighting to the street to blend the reportage of the anonymous citizen with the emblematics of the popular portrait. Ken Lum's work of the 1990s has brought a naturalistic form of staged portraiture together with text we read as speech to dramatise the minor crises and doubts of everyday urban life. Perhaps the most influential artist to reconnect photography to social description of the everyday has been Jeff Wall. His photographic work began in the late 1970s but has had its largest impact in the 1990s. It moved away from photography as direct witness towards a dramatising of a vast range of types

and *Untitled (Overpass)* made nearly twenty years later could have been made in any number of cities and present scenarios experienced by millions. This in itself speaks of the social and artistic consequences of an increasingly international economy and culture.

By contrast others have engaged the politics of the everyday through complete specificity to site and audience. Peter Dunn and Lorraine Leeson's *Docklands Community Poster Project* (1981–84) was a collaboration with a local working community who were being pushed aside by free market capital. Their neighbourhoods had been devastated by the collapse of the docks on the River Thames. The images, reminiscent of 1930s political photomontage, were used at local meetings and displayed as public billboards as a way to raise consciousness and galvanise collective resistance.

Most city spaces have taken on a highly corporate image culture with their advertising hoardings and retail signage. Publicly displayed images are generally advertisements that

gloss over the realities of social relations. As a result many artists have looked to intervene here directly. Victor Burgin's poster *Possession* (1976), Dennis Adams' political photo-sculptures that mimic street furniture, such as *Podium for Dissent* (1985), and Krzysztof Wodiczko's night projections onto symbolic

architecture, are all attempts to disrupt the increasingly alienating urban environment, with its cosmetic veneer of commercial harmony. Likewise the late Felix Gonzales-Torres presented his highly intimate but universal image of a recently vacated double bed on billboards across New York City (*Untitled*, 1991). Made soon after the death of the artist's HIV positive lover, it is a private, wordless image with meanings that vary depending upon the viewer's gender, sexuality and state of health. These are all works that attempt to reassert, in the face of waning democratic participation, the always political and contested character of social space.

In gallery practice there has been a significant re-emergence of a descriptive photography of the built environment. For example Thomas Struth's formal images demand of the viewer a reading of the urban surface as a social document. The multiple determinations of city space can be glimpsed in his careful framing of mixed architecture.<sup>74</sup> Taking advantage of the possibilities of the large format, his



of social situation experienced in the contemporary city. This is achieved by combining the descriptive character of photography with the theatrical possibilities of staging and an acute awareness of genres from the history of painting and cinema. Like Lum, Wall 'casts' his citizens, rehearsing and refining narrative gesture before staging the preplanned scenarios on location. He is based in Vancouver and many of his works are made there. This 'secondary city' is a place with few distinguishing visual features. With its residential, industrial and administrative districts it has a look and feel common to most developed urban centres around the world.<sup>70</sup> His street tableaux of social tension and daily struggle are true to Vancouver, but Vancouver is true to many places. This suits the movement in his photography between the particular and the general or generic. It also suits the increasing internationalism of contemporary art exhibition in the sense that his situations and settings are always at least partly familiar to his audience. Works such as *Mimic* (1982)



detailed and restrained photographs offer themselves up to a slower, penetrative understanding, revealing a genealogy of city space that is unavailable to us when in the street itself.

Although very different in approach Jitka Hanzlová's urban series *bewolmer* (1994–96), whose title means occupants, inhabitants or dwellers, and Boris Mikhailov's large project *Case History* (1998) are each attempts to forge a reflexive mode of documentary that can blend the poetic and the political. Both bodies of work resulted from the social upheavals of Europe's recent history: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the former Soviet Union. The tensions and revelations in their photographs take on a broader resonance in the light of our knowledge that the circumstances of the people depicted have been so directly shaped by the complex economic and political forces beyond the frame.

Some artists have approached the everyday with strategies that owe much to the methods of sociology and ethnography. In *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that*



*say what someone else wants you to say* (1992–93) Gillian Wearing produced a photographic version of the street vox pop, stopping people to ask them to write whatever they felt at that moment on a sheet of paper. The resulting portraits of citizens holding up their messages to camera are both a revealing snapshot of the relation of public space to mental life and a reflexive commentary on popular sociology. In 1992 Jason Evans made *Strictly*, a series of shots of young black men in suburbia dressed in a mix of sportswear and the garb of English dandyism. These images were an example of British fashion photography emerging from its elitism to re-establish itself as a socially relevant form of image making that could also have an audience in the gallery. Evans's practice spans both art and non-art spaces of exhibition and publication. In 1986 the French artist Sophie Calle gave herself over to chance in deciding to follow a man she met in Paris (*Suite Vénitienne*). Assuming the role of detective and voyeur, she shadowed him to Venice. Documenting his movements

and grabbing photographs whenever she could, Calle kept a visual-verbal diary of her vicarious existence. Such chance encounters recall the desire for a free form wandering in the city much cherished in French counter-culture by the Surrealists, and later the Situationists with the idea of *dérive*, or drift, a revolutionary harnessing of the random as a way to break up urban daily habits.<sup>12</sup>

These attempts to describe and alter the contemporary urban experience have certainly been a turn away from the classically defined modes of reportage but it has not been an antirealist turn. Rather these new strategies hint at how artists are struggling to come to grips with the complexities of the city and the possibilities of photography, without falling prey to the superficial surfaces of either. As Victor Burgin pointed out 'the city in our actual experience is at the same time an actually existing physical environment, and a city in a novel, a film, a photograph, a city seen on television, a city in a comic strip, a city in a pie chart, and so on.'<sup>13</sup>

### The Studio Image

In contemporary art the studio has no unifying identity or purpose, and photography has developed many relations to it.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless something of an indicative transition in attitudes can be traced if we look at two connected aspects: the studio as a marker of changing artistic subjectivity and the studio as a space to construct alternative environments.

Modern art is steeped in notions of the studio as a quasi-sacred domain, a mix of lair, prison and playpen. In the twentieth century its popular perception was shaped by the growth in the publicity of art, often through photographs of artists at work. As Barbara Kruger remarked, such images often 'exude a kind of well-tailored gentility, [while] others feature the artist as a star-crossed Houdini with a beret on, a kooky middleman between God and the public.'<sup>15</sup> They were almost invariably men. A whole mythology around masculinity, creation and the studio, which had developed over centuries, became increasingly extravagant. It reached



an extreme in the immediate post-war years with the intensive promotion of American abstract painters.<sup>76</sup> For example Hans Namuth and Rudolph Burckhardt's iconic images from the late 1940s and early 1950s of Jackson Pollock looming over canvases on his studio floor were widely published and central in establishing not just Pollock's reputation but the image of artists in general.<sup>77</sup> This was painting as performance for the lens of the mass media.

The perception of art photography at this time had little to do with studios. It was dominated by mystic landscapes, art photojournalism and an aversion to most things openly theatrical.<sup>78</sup> The studio was strictly commercial, for industry and elite glamour. However, the splicing of photography into fine art practice that began in the mid 1960s resulted in a sudden mixing of studio images and approaches. There was a double shift in the understanding of the space of making. Some practices such as Land art and performance art dispensed with the studio altogether, to be pursued



environmentally, returning to the gallery or page in the form of documentation. Secondly, the studio opened up to new activity that made the space a visible working site rather than a contrived stage of publicity. Photography allowed audiences to enter the studio metaphorically, not so much to see artworks being made, as with Pollock, but to see studio activity as art. Once this was possible artists didn't need necessarily to be makers of permanent objects. They could be makers or doers of things to be photographed.<sup>79</sup>

In *Portrait of the Artist in His Studio* (1971) Hannah Wilke appropriated the privilege and space so often accorded to male artists. She depicts herself glamorously cross-dressed, ironically performing a bookish aloofness. This deliberately understated but telling image was made at the onset of an intense exploration by many practitioners of the relation between social and artistic identities. Extensive series of self-portraits made in the 1970s by artists such as Lucas Samaras, the young and then little known Francesca Woodman, and Urs

Lüthi, experimented in different ways with the idea of the self as something performed rather than revealed, an idea that became central to the art of the following decade, as we shall see. The studio could be used to rework mainstream ideas of the body and subjectivity. If it was traditionally a space set aside from the rest of society, then it could be a place from which to look at it awry, to question its assumptions and suggest alternatives. Thus the studio moved from being a retreat to a vanguard space, where a real engagement with the social world need not mean an obviously realist immersion in it. Constructing rather than 'taking' photographs could also open up makers and readers to a close consideration of the construction of meaning – studio images are built up from nothing and so for artist and viewer everything becomes an active sign within the totality of the image.

In the studio one could sift out and examine moments of social life in order to understand them better. The work of Jo Spence from the 1980s is significant here.<sup>80</sup> Although it had

much in common with photo-performance work of the 1970s her use of the studio grew out of her development of phototherapy (photographic psychotherapy). This was a process that addressed directly the role of representation in the fixing of our social self-image. Spence was among a growing number of theoretically informed artists acutely aware

of how the state (medicine, law, education, etc.) and mass culture (cinema, television, magazines) interpellate us, tell us who we are through coercion and suggestion.<sup>81</sup> Looking at how this socialising of the self actually takes place could be the start of understanding not just oneself but the functions of representation at large.<sup>82</sup> Through collaboration Spence explored the origins of her own consciousness of class, gender and her body by re-enacting situations from her past. She photographed these to externalise her thoughts and memories in order to see what kind of reactions they prompted in her. Accompanied by explanatory writing the photos would be exhibited as a suggestion to the audience to take up the practice themselves. Here the studio (which could be any adaptable space) becomes akin to the analyst's couch, a sanctioned arena where the prohibitions of social life are temporarily suspended in order to voice or act out repressed feelings. Spence often worked fast, in a carnivalesque manner as close to the speed of free association as possible, so the



photography was kept deliberately simple. This also had a political dimension: to be democratic phototherapy needed an accessible technique. However the insistence on the transparency of the image to the performance often negated the viscosity of the photograph, which in some ways restricted its critical and creative possibilities.

The American artist Cindy Sherman began her career in the mid 1970s and has worked almost exclusively in the studio. She is perhaps the best known and most influential exponent of a photography that thinks outwards to theatre, art history, fairy tales, fashion, advertising and most of all cinema. Sherman was at the centre of a wholesale re-expansion of the craft base of photography in art, taking in lighting, acting, costume, make-up, prop design as well as role play. Implicit in her work is an understanding that the photographic images we see daily make use of a wide range of languages and techniques, very few of which are exclusive to photography.<sup>83</sup> Her self-portraiture grew out of photo-performance but



turned away from depicting an artistic identity to address and rework different images of women from the breadth of mass culture.<sup>84</sup> Opposing the myth that the artist is inherently special or singular Sherman asserted her 'self' as an endless accumulation of culturally received personae. This was not a 'laying bare' of the self but a performance of it as a vast set of poses and imitations learned from popular culture. The studio became a parallel space in which to stage social identities.<sup>85</sup> Sherman is often described as an interesting artist but not an interesting photographer, in the sense that her techniques are knowingly second hand and she doesn't use them to search for uniqueness.<sup>86</sup> Like many artists of her generation who were drawn to photography there is a reluctance to talk about the medium as such, which is not surprising given the moribund and regressive discourse that had monopolised specialist art photography by the 1970s. Yet this misses the point. As well as having a remarkable understanding of representations of the body and the

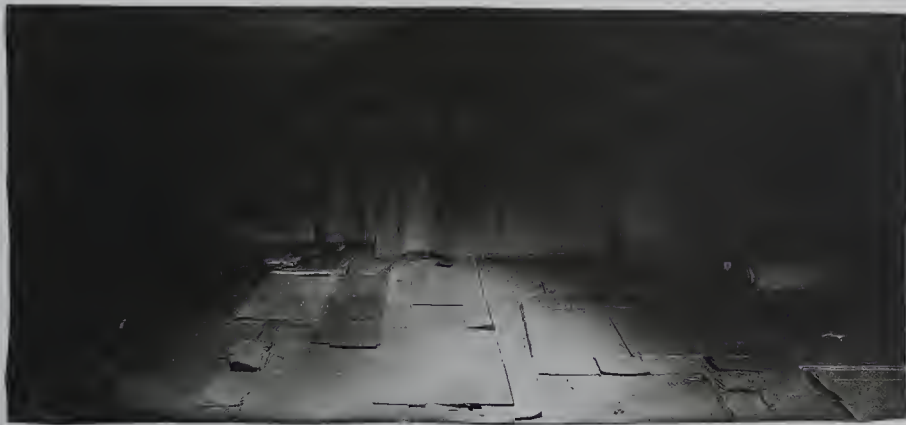
feminine Sherman has been an extraordinarily versatile image maker right from the start of her career. Her photographic accomplishment is not a secondary issue. It is fundamental to a practice that understands the image as a seductive surface and a site of psychical investment for the viewer. Sherman makes clear how the complex photographic construction of the image and the complex construction of the self are indivisible.

A similar movement from the de-skilled to the re-skilled can also be seen in the interactions of photography and the sculptural. Bruce Nauman's early work *Failure to Levitate in the Studio* (1966), like his *Flour Arrangements* of that year, scrambled distinctions between photography, sculpture and performance. Such improvised and perfunctory images junk the glossy look of the studio and the heroic artist. They are impromptu, messy situations in which the open poverty of the gesture becomes the success of the work. In photographs such as *Exploding Paintbrush* (1976) Robert Cumming made

use of a similar anti-illusionism, parodying popular science and in this case painting as well. Since 1975 David Haxton has made photographs of the sculpted remnants of the sets made for his films. Here the image is both autonomous and an offshoot of his other activities. Around the same time the French artist Georges Rousse began to transform disused interiors with paint and physical incisions into the architecture. His photographs do not merely record the transformation, rather the spaces only make pictorial sense as *trompe l'oeil* from the fixed vantage point of the camera. Everything is done with the final image in mind. Similarly the studio tableaux of Boyd Webb grew directly out of a mix of sculpture, painting and performance. From the late 1970s he carefully evolved an idiosyncratic and opulent visual language, rich in narrative allusion. Using found objects, mass produced items, fabrics, paint and sometimes people his images blur the distinction between two and three-dimensional composition, between record and artwork,



studio and stage. James Casebere also began making photo-environments in the late 1970s.<sup>87</sup> His images of model architectural interiors are condensations of the popular memory of spaces. These simulations make manifest what seem like our mental residues of environments perhaps visited, perhaps only ever seen in other photographs or films.<sup>88</sup> Hannah Collins' *Thin Protective Coverings* (1987) are atmospheric spaces constructed from the most rudimentary of materials such as cardboard. These environments are made physical and uncannily enterable by the bodily scale of her highly tactile prints. More overtly extravagant in construction and use of narrative is the work of Gregory Crewdson, particularly his series *Natural Wonder* (1992–97). Concocting surreal exteriors in the confines of the studio he brings a heightened materiality and hallucinatory visual style to scenes of strange ritual. His series *Hover* (1996–97) and *Twilight* (1998) extended this studio sensibility to images made on location.<sup>89</sup> His is a practice indicative of much



contemporary photography that collapses the older distinction between the artifice of the interior and the 'real' outside world. It is here that photography has come closest to cinema in its scale and conceptualisation. This expensive and labour intensive way of working has become possible only recently, with an established art market for photography and support systems for elaborate working procedures. As in cinema there are things that are only achievable in photography with time and a lot of resources. Even so there is of course no equation between scale of production and artistic merit. Simplicity and extravagance are equally important possibilities for photography now, both inside and outside the studio. And as cinema has long understood, the simple and the extravagant constantly haunt each other as effective means of expression.

### The Arts of Reproduction

In his influential essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) Walter Benjamin insisted that any

achievement of photography as art would pale in comparison to the transformation of all art through reproduction.<sup>90</sup> Photography's silent functionalism would be more significant than its artistic potential. If photography became art it would be within a culture it had already shaped in advance of itself, a culture of proliferating images. Mass media and art reproduction were relatively new in Benjamin's time. Debates centred on questions of replacement and substitution: should or could the mechanical arts usurp older forms, and copies usurp originals?<sup>91</sup> Neither has entirely transpired. It seems that no medium is inherently relevant or anachronistic to art (it depends upon what is done with it) and the original has become ever more desirable in a culture of reproduction. It is certainly true that popular understanding of art is filtered through reproduction and that the easy translation of photography to the page has played an important part in its increasingly high profile in contemporary art.

In recent decades artists have been very interested in reproduction, not so much in its relation to originality per se, but in relation to everyday life. How could artists engage with and comment creatively upon an experience of the world that is increasingly mediated by images? The answer came in the form of allegory. We have discussed some allegorical approaches already but the concept deserves particular attention. Few used this old art historical term until it was reintroduced to help define postmodern visual culture. In 1980 the critic Craig Owens looked at how artists were playing off representations and codes against each other, bringing different image forms together. Photography was at the centre of the artistic use of a range of strategies including quotation, parody, pastiche, appropriation, repetition, seriality, montage, collage, intertextuality and dissimulation.<sup>92</sup> Allegory had not returned as an arcane form or a private language but as a thoroughly contemporary mode prompted by mass culture itself.<sup>93</sup>

Conceptualism had been interested in an examination of the photograph as authoritative document. By contrast the practices characterised as postmodern looked to its increasing use as artifice and fiction. In part the shift came from a new poststructural critical framework of contemporary art theory and philosophy, but the primary reason was that Western visual culture was beginning to be dominated by entertainment, distraction, and the imagery of consumerism – a 'society of the spectacle', as Guy Debord

had called it in 1967.<sup>94</sup>

Intimations of an allegorical approach to mass culture had already been present in Pop art since the 1950s. Robert Rauschenberg's mixed media collages and Andy Warhol's photo-silkscreens clearly recognised a saturation of everyday life in mass media even if they often seemed to be merely fascinated by it. At the end of the 1970s however a different sensibility began to form. A number of artists emerged in New York including Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Sarah Charlesworth, Louise Lawler, Sylvia Kolbowksi, Richard Prince and Robert Longo, whose work took up directly the imagery of consumer culture with a more critical engagement. Advertising, fashion, cinema, celebrity and even art culture itself were borrowed and thought through as the domains in which values, opinions and identities are formed.<sup>95</sup> That many of these artists were women examining the depiction of sexuality and objectification is significant. They looked at the ways mass culture tends to reduce



feminine identities to images, displaced onto objects and photographic surfaces in a mix of sexual and commodity fetishism.<sup>96</sup> Sylvia Kolbowksi's series *Model Pleasure* (1984) comprised rebus-like grids of body fragments appropriated from fashion shots.<sup>97</sup> Her recombination of familiar elements could invite viewers to consider the social construction of their own desires and relations to looking. Similarly Sarah Charlesworth's series *Objects of Desire* (1983–88) isolated single elements – pieces of clothing, masks, scarves, dresses, faces – in rich fields of saturated colour, pushing the logic of fetishistic desire so far as to estrange itself.

Mediation and the process of reference became the central concern of early postmodern art. In 1977 the critic Douglas Crimp curated the group show 'Pictures' at the new Artists' Space in New York. This was a key moment in the defining of postmodern practice, introducing the work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo and Philip Smith.<sup>98</sup> Longo's *The American Soldier* (1977) was a small

painted aluminium relief hanging on the wall. This figurative sculpture of a man in what looks like a freeze frame of an ambiguous physical spasm derived from a frame of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1970 film *The American Soldier*. Longo went on to make a short film that comprised a freeze frame of his own recreation of Fassbinder's scene, then a series of photographs of people aping similar gestures, then giant graphite drawings from the photographs. Taken as a whole this series of related works constitutes one of postmodern art's most sustained interrogations of the multiple possibilities of the single image.<sup>99</sup>

The investigation into art as a cultural institution that had been an important strand of conceptualism also took an allegorical turn. The archetypal work here is Sherrie Levine's point blank reproduction of photographs by celebrated modernist 'masters' (1980–82). Her works made 'after' Walker Evans, Edward Weston and others are same-size, conventionally framed copies presented with the discretion

and institutional power of the originals. Levine's gesture dramatises both the technical questions of art reproduction and the relation of women artists to the heroic and generally male art canon.<sup>100</sup> Over twenty years on the work still has the capacity to trouble viewers because the artistic legacy it critiques is still with

us and her gesture is so simple.<sup>101</sup> She presents the single, perfect copy through a screen of mediation that is entirely discursive: one cannot 'see' the intervention at all, it is a function of context. Like many works that engage with reproduction her images find their most powerful expression not in the art magazine or book but in the gallery, the site that most values originality and the singular object.<sup>102</sup> On the wall her 'rephotographs' become auratic in their disruption of aura.

Since the 1960s photography's relation to painting has moved well beyond the anxious debates about replacement to become a set of subtly nuanced meditations on mediums, techniques and cultural meaning. Sylvia Plimack Mangold's detailed drawings and paintings of parquet floors made a succinct link between the labour involved in painstaking photorealist art and the gendered work of cleaning (she is one of relatively few women artists who have worked with photorealism).<sup>103</sup> By contrast the German artist Gerhard



Richter has 'used painting to make photographs' since the early 1960s. His reworking of vernacular images as 'blurred' canvases permits a consideration of the social role of painting in the age of the camera. Freeing the viewer from the indexical immediacy of detail (a tyranny particular to the camera image) he also grants us an important distance from which to consider the often numbing ubiquity of photographs. Allan McCollum's *Perpetual Photos* (1982–89) are semi-abstract blow-ups of paintings photographed from television screens. Lurking in the background décor of TV shows as if in the background of our consciousness the paintings are dragged into visibility, bringing layers of mediation with them – the surface of the television screen, the grain of the photographic emulsion, the gloss of the final print. Andrew Grassie is part of a younger generation of painters working from the photograph.<sup>104</sup> His serial works mimic the replications and typologies of photography. *Why Paint Spacemen?* (1997) is a gallery of official portraits of American and Soviet

to construct a critique from within the imagery of mass culture.<sup>105</sup> An art of the photo-fragment has continued but its imperatives are different now that daily life is itself so often experienced as a shifting collage.<sup>106</sup> Images are consumed en masse and in their half-connection, half-contradiction they produce no coherent picture of the world, and often serve to obscure one. They are experienced quickly, partially, and derive from a vast range of everyday technologies: television, magazines, cinema, billboards, newspapers, the internet, snapshots and so on.<sup>107</sup> Artistic collage and montage thus risk becoming just a mimesis of such incoherence.<sup>108</sup> An important response to this has been a critical poetics of the fragment. Since the 1970s the English artists Yve Lomax and John Stezaker along with the American John Baldessari for example, have found ways to use fragments as concepts or stand-ins for types of thinking about the world. They bring these together to highlight the gaps, contradictions and connections in the way our knowledge is formed. In series

astronauts derived from photographs gleaned from the internet. The paintings bring together questions of the history of technology, the electronic archive and the history of art.

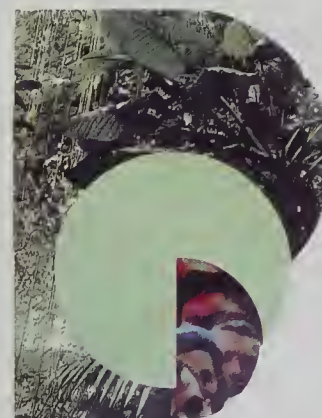
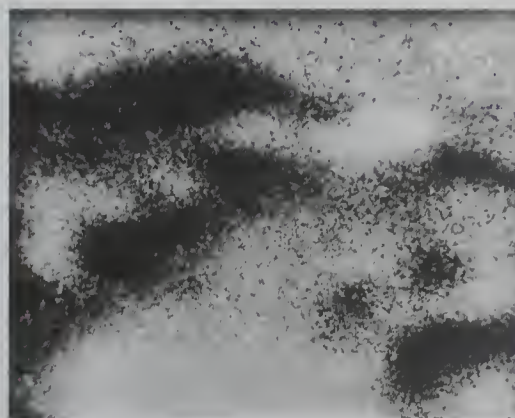
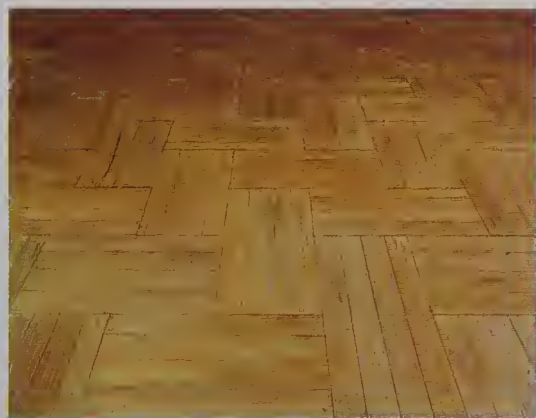
The continuing vitality of the exchange between painting and photography points beyond any simple technical definition of media that would fix their identities once and for all. It seems that there is no single relationship between photography and painting precisely because there is no fixed nature of either medium.

Integral to the allegorical arts of reproduction has been the idea of the fragment. Collage and montage, the most immediate uses of fragments, were taken up by the historical avant-garde when the volume of popular imagery helped produce a mass culture against which the artist often stood. It was not always a political or ideological stance, but it was at least artisanal, reworking manually and privately what mass culture produced mechanically and publicly. Dada art of the inter-war years had used photo cut-ups as 'reality fragments'

such as *Sometime(s)* (1994) Lomax choreographs an array of photo/graphic elements to generate new 'pictures of thought'.<sup>109</sup> Baldessari's *Man and Woman with Bridge* (1984), reproduced overleaf, is one of many of his works that use images as metaphors for mental concepts. Such works show that while our daily visual experience may be in pieces these isolated parts can be brought into suggestive tension.

Allegory brings to the foreground the discursive character of the image, emphasising its origin in yet other images. As a result it is here that some of the closest links between theory and practice have been forged. Many artists working with allegory have contributed important writings on the photographic image (including Yve Lomax, John Stezaker, Barbara Kruger, Sylvia Kolbowski, Mary Kelly, Victor Burgin and Olivier Richon). Close alliances between art and critical writing certainly helped to establish new agendas and introduce the work to its audience. Several early champions of postmodern allegory saw, or wished to see, an anti-

Sylvia PLIMACK MANGOLD Untitled, 1969  
Allan MCCOLLUM Perpetual Photo 73B, 1985  
Andrew GRASSIE Why Paint Spacemen? series, 1997  
Yve LOMAX The Observer Affects the Observed, from Sometime[s], 1994





institutional impulse in its embrace of reproduction.<sup>110</sup>

With its insistence that metaphor and allusion are central to knowledge rather than aberrations or adornments to it, allegory seemed at first to be an inherently transgressive act. Borrowing and reworking were diametrically opposed to traditional ideas of singular authorship and signature style. But this underestimates the creativity, and originality, that allegorical work demands from makers and viewers. It is not a creativity based on myths of private and spontaneous creation but it demands its own skills and intelligences, its own subtle understanding of communication. It has done so for centuries. Allegory has re-emerged as an artistic norm rather than a perversion, widening the possibilities of art in the process. And in photography allegory has found an ideal medium. It is neither pure nor discrete but impure and hybrid. It absorbs and seeps. There is no domain entirely proper to it and so it must always impose itself on other things.



### 'Just' Looking

The hybrid nature of photography becomes particularly acute if we consider artists' approaches to questions of vision and looking. Is there a way of looking specific to photography? Optically, perhaps, but given the diversity of its uses it is difficult to imagine a mode of looking common to all photographs.

In the 1920s and 1930s, when it was becoming clear that the medium was transforming all aspects of culture, Modernist 'camera vision' was often exalted both as an end in itself and as a revolutionary potential for the arts and sciences.<sup>111</sup> The camera was thought of as an 'extension of the eye', an organ invariably singular and understood in physiological or mechanical terms. In the 1940s and 1950s art photographers honed forms of looking that they felt were technically particular to the medium. The result was a heightened visibility of surfaces, volumes and instants. Since the 1970s, however, artists have been much more interested in how

looking is structured through representation at large, how in a highly visual culture images are not merely seen; they condition how, why and at what we look.

Culture licenses certain kinds of looking. Since the nineteenth century the medium of photography has helped underpin a visual order. Its optical and perspectival character was deployed within a world view which naturalised seeing into something supposedly universal and neutral. Vision and the image became central to forms of knowledge and power organised through familiar binaries: culture/nature; subject/object; male/female; white/black; heterosexual/homosexual; healthy/unhealthy; reality/fantasy; sane/insane; and so on. The first term in each would be privileged as positive, the second marked as negative or other. The 'point of view' of the camera could be wedded to a specific ideological point of view, fixing a visual 'common sense' of everyday life.<sup>112</sup> Until the 1970s the social dimension of vision had been largely unaddressed. Art history for example had always given

plenty of thought to vision, but confined it to phenomenology and the psychology of perception, assuming an ideal spectator: 'the' viewer. There was little space for differences

between viewers, and no space at all to consider the inter-connection between vision, knowledge, power and identity. Various social forces, coming initially from feminism, brought about an urgent rethinking of looking through critical writings and art practice. Photography was at the centre of both. How to make looking explicit rather than tacit? How to make photography look back or look at itself?

One approach has been to use the photograph to invoke different cultural modes of looking. That is to say, looking can itself be allegorised. For example cinematic gazes have been reworked by John Stezaker's *Film Still Collages* (1978–84), Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80), Katherina Sieverding's *Nachtmensch* (*Night People*, 1982), Hiroshi Sugimoto's long exposures of movie theatres (1980–), Shirin Neshat's location stills and Larry Sultan's shots of porn film sets (1999). The static photograph allows an estranging of the filmic, opening up a critical distance. Deprived of momentum the lingering photographic frame can allow our customary



absorption in cinema to be teased apart.<sup>113</sup> For a medium to reflect on its own relation to looking it must somehow step outside of its own procedures.<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, when cinema has itself wanted to reflect on the nature of looking it has often done so through the figure of the photographer. Two of cinema's most celebrated meditations on looking are Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966).

The absorption or consuming of the audience that characterises mainstream cinema made it the focus of intensive critical thought about spectatorship. In 1975 theorist and filmmaker Laura Mulvey published her landmark essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.<sup>115</sup> She drew on Sigmund Freud's writings on sexuality and Jacques Lacan's writings on vision<sup>116</sup> to argue that 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled



accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.' Psychoanalytic thought offered a comprehensive and radical understanding of the roles of representation in the formation of identity and sexual subjectivity. Where art had previously celebrated (fetishized, even) the subjective as the 'merely personal' psychoanalysis outlined how that the sense of self was socially formed with the image playing a crucial part in the process.<sup>117</sup> It became clear that looking is never neutral. There is no 'just looking'. It is always active and motivated. It is inseparable from desire and desire is inseparable from power. There may be a 'raw' desire to look shared by us all but this is soon managed and shaped through culture. Mulvey's thinking inaugurated important debates about the political economy of looking. Over the next decades many psychoanalytically informed writings on the image appeared in

cinema journals (particularly *Screen* in the UK and *Camera Obscura* in the USA) as well as art journals and exhibition catalogues. Looking became a subject for many artists, particularly those exploring questions of gender, sexuality and identity.<sup>118</sup>

Gradually it became possible to think through a range of vital questions: what is at stake for the female gaze? For the queer gaze? How are racial identities formed through the image? How to resist through dissident visual strategies? Is voyeurism inherent in looking? Do we always occupy the 'correct' position intended by images? Is there room for variations in spectatorship, for counter-readings?<sup>119</sup> The writings on film were often highly specific to the apparatus of classical cinema, but they opened a space for yet more questions about what photography might and might not share with it: What is the character of the fixed look of photography?<sup>120</sup> How does this fixity operate in a culture that replaces rapidly one image with another? Can a single

photograph hold the attention?<sup>121</sup> Is there a photographic apparatus comparable to cinema, or does the dispersal of the photographic across so many cultural sites demand different approaches?

Combining these dispersed gazes together has led artists to address the cultural separation of modes of vision.

In an untitled diptych from the photo-text series *Zoo* (1978), Victor Burgin compared the voyeurism of a Berlin peep show with the regulatory surveillance of a prison system, bringing together questions of gender, power and desire. Mitra Tabrizian's *The Blues* (1986–87) is an interconnected set of tableaux blending popular cinema and staged photography. They describe encounters between black and white men and women through the imbalances of power that are structured through looking.<sup>122</sup> Keith Piper's mixed media work *Surveillances: Tagging the Other* (1991) layers different institutional gazes (police, surveillance and the histories of slavery) to disclose how black identities are so often restricted in several ways at once.<sup>123</sup> Here the power of photography to help enforce the social order is seen to derive from the cultural repetition of images as much as their fixity: similar representations seen over and over produce the visual stereotype.<sup>124</sup> Richard Sawdon Smith's work with Simon Kennett (1997) explored the body and self image in relation to



HIV and AIDS. In one piece we look at Simon via an image that blurs medical scrutiny with the contemplation of a fine art print. Simon gazes at his own marked body as if caught between different ways of being for the camera. Here the self is understood as something formed and largely performed in the field of representation. Identity is not so much 'written on the body' as an effect of a 'stylised repetition of acts'. When this is refused or confused by an image it opens up a space for thinking and being otherwise.<sup>129</sup>

To foreground looking is to introduce complications into pictorial space and viewing positions. This is clearest in the photographic use of the mirror. It has been a consistent motif throughout photography's history, although its presence has had no single meaning. It is adaptable enough to articulate everything from vanity and confidence to transgression and refusal. It can confirm the photograph as a supremely natural, analogical sign or radically undermine it. Beyond the classical themes of narcissism the mirror has in recent decades



become a way to dramatise our fascination and scepticism about the image. John Hilliard's highly reflexive triptychs such as *Depression/Jealousy/Aggression* (1975) combine the uncertainty of the reflected image with the transformations induced by optical focus to move the viewer through a single scenario with several meanings. In *Fleck Auf dem Spiegel* (*Speck on the Mirror*, 1978) Dieter Appelt obliterates himself with his own breath on the mirror's invisible surface.

Francesca Woodman's intimate explorations of the mirror, particularly in the series *Self-Deceit* (1978–79) are charged as much with doubt as discovery.<sup>126</sup> Stylistically her work has much in common with the spatial and psychical disturbances of Surrealism. The rediscovery of Surrealist photography in the 1980s brought to a wide audience many extraordinarily intense images.<sup>127</sup> Never fully celebrated either by Surrealism's own account of itself or later art history its photographic work was brought to light at a time of great interest in looking and desire. Perhaps most significant have



been the self-portraits of Claude Cahun from the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>128</sup> So often in Surrealism the woman's body was present in so far as it was 'imagined, feared and desired by men' but Cahun (the androgynous pseudonym of Lucy Schwob) insisted on constantly mobile, transgender identities operating outside the confines of heterosexual norms.<sup>129</sup> For instance *What do you want of me?* (1928) replaces the mirror with a double exposure and a triple ambiguity: What do we want of the image? What does the artist want of the image? What does the artist want of the self? There have been few more important questions to the art of recent times. In Wendy McMurdo's images from the late 1990s it is children who seem to encounter their uncanny doubles. They look at themselves with all the intrigue and fascination that we as viewers feel in contemplating the seamless digital compositions.<sup>130</sup> For McMurdo photography, the mirror, the double and the digital are overlapping modes of reproduction to be collapsed

dizzily into a single frame.

Jeff Wall's *Picture For Women* (1979) restages the social and pictorial arrangement of Manet's famous *Bar at the Folies Bergères* (1881–82). In his version it becomes a spatial and visual conundrum in which everything is visible but thoroughly ambiguous.<sup>131</sup> The woman in the image looks into a camera placed centre frame, perhaps via a mirror, but Wall refuses to let the camera 'become' the spectator, insisting on its disembodied presence as a reflection. In direct address the look of the subject in the frame is returned, but to what exactly? To 'us'? To a machine?<sup>132</sup> Either in front or behind, what does it mean to identify with the camera (if that is what we actually do)?<sup>133</sup> As with the mirror, the meaning of direct address is not fixed by the apparatus alone. It can be an assertion of individuality, a demand by the subject to be recognised. In a documentary image or a Hollywood film a look to camera can break our illusion of detached looking, but the passport photo and the police mug shot insist we look



to the lens in subjugation and conformity, where we are more viewed than viewer. Thomas Ruff's *Portraits* (1981–2001) seem to explore this. Expressionless in uniform light his sitters return the blank inscrutability of the camera. They show us their faces, their visible identity, yet their images remain bafflingly reticent. The sitters aim their gaze at the camera; we see it but cannot fully receive it. Roland Barthes came close to defining this enigma when he suggested that direct address 'separates attention from perception, and yields up only the former ... an aim without a target.'<sup>134</sup>

The subject of looking continues to preoccupy photographers and artists because within this abiding uncertainty about what it means to look and be seen, about what a photograph actually is, lies the possibility of other visions.

### The Cultures of Nature

As an invention of modernity photography was central to the desire for a control and ordering of the natural world. It could



map terrain topographically in preparation for urban expansion; it was given a privileged place in the natural sciences; and it could take up the nineteenth-century traditions and attitudes of artistic depiction. The camera was understood as nature's industrial other but also as an apparatus with a particular affinity with organic form. It could produce 'natural signs', images as apparently unmediated and spontaneous as nature itself. For the post-war societies of industrial capitalism however, nature has become an increasingly contradictory and fraught ideal. Artists have inherited it as an attractive problem rather than an uncomplicated given. In art, as we have seen, the medium of photography has itself been approached in a similar way. The result is that nature in photographic art has been a contested subject, represented by an uncertain medium for an often equivocal audience.

Pictorially, much of our thinking about nature derives from the genre of landscape. All genres evolve incrementally,

absorbing and resisting social change, negotiating between the past and the present. Landscape has evolved particularly slowly, much slower than our attitudes to nature. As a result the genre has often seemed unable to respond.<sup>135</sup> This was beginning to be felt by many artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s for whom neither pictures nor sculpture as traditionally defined were attractive, particularly in their artificial separation of observer from observed. The various forms of Land art constitute an important response to this. For example the work of Hamish Fulton, based entirely on walking, has exemplified a broadly held desire for an immersive, processual relation to the environment. There is a solitary romanticism here but not at the level of the photographs and texts which document the artist's journeys through different terrains. These declare to the viewer that the documentation will always fall short of the physical experience. This is not nature transformed by crafty technique into a seductive image; it is a pointing beyond the autonomy

of the frame, a characteristic of photography in much Land art. Robert Smithson's *Mirror Displacements* of the late 1960s formed part of an exploration of entropic spaces on the borders between the urban and the undeveloped. He placed a set of mirrors temporarily in the landscape to reflect the surroundings. The resulting images are a literal embodiment of the poverty of the photograph as a means of environmental representation.

Like the documentation made of his celebrated earthwork *Spiral Jetty* (1970) these photographs are ultimately fugitive impressions of actions and site specific thought processes rather than unified pictures for aesthetic contemplation. Smithson's use of photography was expressive of a kind of archaeology of our knowledge of nature, a need to discover not what nature essentially is but how it has come to be understood, how its representations have evolved. His was an art which might engage the natural in an intimate, physical way but only to bring us closer to a disclosure of our always unstable, always mediated relation to it. This was an important realisation – an understanding of nature would require a reflection on the nature of understanding.

Within the genre of landscape, photography manifested this condition as a tension within the compositional frame. It turned to a depiction of 'negotiations with nature'. In North America this first emerged in the mid 1960s as 'social landscape' photography.<sup>136</sup> The touring group



exhibition 'New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape' (1975) was an important marker. It took its title from nineteenth-century studies commissioned as official records of the Western states.<sup>137</sup> Those images were imbued with an iconography absorbed from landscape painting and expressed the kind of idealised spatial domination for which they were made.<sup>138</sup> The New Topographics photographers adapted this to reflect on the ultimate consequences of that domination: suburban sprawl, industrial blight and the reduction of nature to a leisure amenity, or real estate. They assumed a deliberately distant aesthetic of formal description in order to ironize and perhaps politicise the predicament. The effect was a dissonance between the 'beautiful picture' and the land as a site of conflicting socio-political forces. It dramatised the gap between the viewers' contemplative distance and their social implication as citizens.<sup>139</sup> Photography of this kind has continued notably through the influential 'new colour' photographers who emerged in the



1970s, such as Richard Misrach, Stephen Shore and Joel Sternfeld. Misrach's elegant photographs of disused military bases in the US desert blend a reserved description with the aesthetics of the trace, somewhere between the classical landscape image and documentary.

New Topographics included the work of the German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher. Their teaching led to a continuation of a strand of a social landscape photography in Europe. Many of their ex-students have moved away from the practice but some of the work of Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth and Axel Hütte adheres to those aims. More broadly the descriptive and pictorial attractions of this approach have led to a renaissance in social landscape photography which began in the 1980s.<sup>140</sup> It has been helped by the move towards very large prints that hold the attention of the gallery viewer in a very different way to the precious and small formats of the past. This has allowed photography to assume the scale and modes of attention formerly ascribed to painting.



Historically the contemplation of nature and its representation has been highly gendered, particularly in modernist photography.<sup>141</sup> In the work of Edward Weston for example, there was often an implicit conflation of women and nature as subject matter. A fascinated scrutiny of the luxurious print masked a fetishism of the surface of the female body as form.<sup>142</sup> Here and elsewhere in art and mass culture 'woman' was positioned as essentially natural within the field of representation.<sup>143</sup> More generally this field is underpinned by an everyday language that is permeated by a feminising of nature. Barbara Kruger's montage *Untitled (We won't play nature to your culture)* (1982) is a categorical refusal of this. Her appropriation of the rhetoric of advertising is significant. Consumer culture is now the main source of popular imagery of nature, not art. This is because the primary function of advertising is to present factory commodities as if in harmony with the world.<sup>144</sup> A whole generation of cultural studies students and photographers has been introduced to this idea

through Roland Barthes' famous analysis of an advert for *Panzani*, a brand of food products sold in France.<sup>145</sup> Condensed here is the popular mythology that masks processed product as natural harvest. The goods are 'there', denoted in the image but what really matters is connotation, the endowment of extra qualities when a product cannot justify itself (here a rustic 'Italianicity' for *Panzani*). Barthes predicted that as commodities became increasingly similar, more emphasis would be placed on what they can be made to connote at the level of the image, what qualities can be attached rather than brought out. 'Naturalness' is the most mobile of connotations: an apple represents a computer manufacturer, a fish may symbolise a financial service and the image of planet Earth from outer space can embody just about anything. Nature, suggests theorist W.J.T. Mitchell, is 'like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a potentially limitless reserve of value.'<sup>146</sup> Richard Prince's appropriated cigarette advertisements (1980–) seem to



reveal this. Framed as high gloss images of ‘Marlboro men’ these estranged icons trigger chains of potent association, connecting myths of national origin, cowboys and the American West.<sup>147</sup> Prince’s subject matter here is reference itself. His is an archetypally postmodern gesture that sees nature as fully conditioned and contained by culture. Much of that containment is the result of our saturation in the same kinds of images seen over and over. *Small is Not Beautiful* from Vik Muniz’ series *Personal Articles* (1996) makes a neat joke of this. His fake newspaper reports the official banning of snapshot cameras from Yosemite National Park, California. This is a place with a popular image monopolised almost exclusively by Ansel Adams’ large format monochromes.<sup>148</sup>

In a more acerbic assault the English artist/activist Peter Kennard wedded postmodern appropriation to political photomontage. *The Haywain, Constable (1821)*, *Cruise Missiles USA (1983)* was made at a time of great concern about the US weapons base at Greenham Common in England. Kennard

pasted nuclear missiles into a reproduction of John Constable’s nationally symbolic painting.<sup>149</sup> The site was picketed by women protesters

for nearly twenty years, becoming a focus for popular debate about nuclear arms and the meaning of nature in post-war geopolitics.<sup>150</sup>

The geopolitical and, more generally, the international, surface in many recent representations of nature. Sometimes this is explicit and sometimes it can be glimpsed as a background condition. Allan Sekula’s epic *Fish Story* (1989–95) is one of very few photographic projects that have attempted to represent the vast scale of global economics.<sup>151</sup> He looks beyond the familiar opposition of city and country to make visible the maritime as the missing third term in the contemporary world picture. He is mindful of the ocean as an over-romanticised space of unknowable nature. Instead he reveals the ‘the social in the sea’, the space of the now intercontinental movement of goods.<sup>152</sup> By contrast Hiroshi Sugimoto’s elegiac and mysterious seascapes (1980–), pare down his view of the world’s oceans to a consistent, simple horizon. Seen together they emphasise the fundamental

connections between the world’s bodies of water as much as their particularity.

Global movement can also be felt in photographic work made at much smaller, localised levels. Ingrid Pollard’s *Pastoral Interlude* (1987) was made at a critical moment in British postcolonial culture. Her series of watercoloured photographs speak eloquently of the common assumption that the visitor to the English countryside, or the beholder of the landscape image, will be white. The often ungraspable relation of the global to the local can be seen in many of the works of Gabriel Orozco. *Cats and Watermelons* (1992) is one of his mischievous interventions into daily life. In an apparently casual snapshot he brings together two separate kinds of nature – pet food and fresh fruit. It is a sculptural incident in a supermarket that sells produce from around the world. His gesture is a self-consciously humble act but it reveals something of our contradictory attitudes to our current management and representation of nature. And the nature of representation.

### Afterword

The ways in which artists approach photography are now informed as much by its rich legacy in the art of the last thirty years as by its everyday uses. So of course there is little consensus in the current understanding of photography. The social functions of the medium have mutated and shifted a great deal over the twentieth century, particularly since the late 1960s. As a result, our understanding of what photography ‘is’ has also mutated and shifted. If the definition of the medium is permanently in question it is less because of some ineffable essence than because culture continues to do different things with it.

Thus photography continues to fascinate, both as a set of image-making technologies and as a means of social representation. Significantly, its place in art has grown more central over the last thirty years as its place in contemporary culture has grown less central. Rather than becoming marginal, its eclipse by other image technologies has given photography much needed space to breathe. As a result its creative and critical possibilities now seem wider than ever.





1 Typical of these surveys was 'The Art of Photography 1839–1989', shown at London's Royal Academy of Arts (which saw itself as 'throwing open its doors to photography'), the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, catalogue: Mike Weaver (ed.) *The Art of Photography 1839–1989*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1989; and 'Photography Until Now', The Museum of Modern Art, New York, catalogue: John Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989. For a critique of the latter exhibition see Abigail Solomon Godeau, 'Mandarin Modernism: Photography Until Now', *Art in America* 78:12 (December 1990) 140–49, 183.

2 Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*, Penguin, London, 1968.

3 The 'job of the artist which no one else does is to dismantle existing communication codes and to recombine some of their elements into structures which can be used to generate new pictures of the world.' Victor Burgin, *Work and Commentary*, Latimer New Dimensions Ltd, London, 1973, n.p.

4 See Otto Steinert, Museum Folkwang, Essen, 1981.

5 Thierry De Duve, et al., *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade. Theory and History of Literature Series*, 51, University of Minnesota Press, April 1991.

6 See Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon Press, London, 2002, 26–34.

7 Recent survey exhibitions and books on conceptual art include *l'art conceptuel, une perspective*, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989; Jack Goldstein and Anne Rommer (ed.), *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996; John Roberts (ed.), *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain, 1966–1976*, CameraWork, London, 1997; *Chemical Traces. Photography and Conceptual Art, 1968–1998*, Ferens Art Gallery, Kingston upon Hull, 1998; Michael Newman and Jon Bird (ed.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, Reaktion, London, 1999; Alexander Alberto and Blake Stinson (ed.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1999; *Live In Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965–75*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2000.

8 See Jeff Wall, 'Marks of Indifference', Aspects of Photography in 1980s, Conceptual Art, in Goldstein and Rommer (ed.) *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996; Reprinted in part in Elisabeth Janus (ed.) *Veronica's Revenge: Contemporary Perspectives on Photography* (1998) 73–100.

9 See Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' (1960) in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O'Brian, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992, 85–89. Greenberg's Modernism was not inherently anti-representational. He recognised the intrinsically descriptive character of photography; see, for example, 'The Camera's Glass Eye; Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston' (1946), reprinted here in the Documents section.

10 This impurity is also the reason why photography could not be contained, ultimately, by that aspect of conceptualism which aimed at a pure reflection on the conditions of art as art.

11 The artist John Hilliard discusses how Jeff Wall's argument is only possible with hindsight, in an interview with John Roberts in Roberts (ed.) *The Impossible Document*, op. cit., 105–26. Reprinted in John Hilliard, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1994, 79–94.

12 In 1974 New York's *Artforum* magazine published one of its most influential and critical articles on photography. 'On the invention of Photographic Meaning' by the artist/writer Allan Sekula was a lucid critique of the clubbish connoisseurship that was threatening to overwhelm all thinking about the social role of photography. See Allan Sekula, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning', *Artforum*, XII:5, 1975. Reprinted in Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography*, Macmillan, London, 1982, 84–109.

13 For example, in London the Photographer's Gallery opened in 1971 while the collectively run Half Moon Gallery in east London was set up in January 1972, adding darkroom facilities and café in 1975. The following year the collective set up the magazine *CameraWork* (later the name of the whole enterprise). For an outline of the north American situation see Lewis Baltz' excellent overview, 'American Photography in the 1970s' in Turner (ed.), *American Images: Photography 1945–1980* (1985), 157–64.

14 *Flash Art International*, February–March 1975; *Studio International*, July–August, 1975; *Artforum*, 15:1 September, 1976.

15 Even within its more progressive tendencies there were divergent approaches. In 1979 London's Hayward Gallery presented 'Three Perspectives on Photography', giving viewers separate sections: Photographic Truth, Metaphor and Individual Expression; Feminism and Photography; and A Socialist Perspective on Photographic Practice. See *Three Perspectives on Photography*, Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1979.

16 An interesting path through this can be gleaned from the reviews of exhibitions in North America throughout the period by the photography critic A.D. Coleman. See A.D Coleman, *Light Readings: A Photography Critic's Writings, 1968–1978*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1979.

17 For an engaging discussion of this see Geoffrey Batchen's opening and closing chapters of *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997.

18 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Allen Lane, London, 1978 (first published as a series of essays in the *New York Review of Books*); Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire* (Paris, 1980), trans. Robert Howard, *Camera Lucida*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 1980.

19 The 1970s also saw the beginning of critical interest in Walter Benjamin's writing on art and culture from the 1920s and 30s, particularly his essay 'The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936).

20 This is the point at which colour imagery began to dominate photography in art. Colour photography was all but absent from art until the late 1970s. Besides commercial and technical barriers black and white was generally used in critical art of the 1970s due to its anti-illusionism and cheapness, while art photographers were always anxious about the vulgarity of colour. A key exception was the New Colour Photography that emerged in North America. This often took American vulgarity as its subject matter. See Sally Eauclaire, *The New Color Photography* (1981).

21 A fourth term here might be 'presentation format'.

22 The group exhibition 'Another Objectivity' (1989) was an important announcement of a break with the postmodern art of the previous decade. It brought together artists who had been working with 'straight', socially descriptive photography for some time with younger photographers sharing their approach. It included Bernd and Hilla Becher, Hannah Collins, Jeff Wall, Thomas Struth, John Coplans, Craigie Horsfield and Suzanne Lafont. See Jean-François Chevrier and James Lingwood (ed.) *Un'altra obiettività/Another Objectivity*, Idea Books, Milan, 1989.

23 See Allan Sekula, 'Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987.

24 Duchamp himself did not take up the photograph directly as a readymade. His choices were mass-produced objects – a bottle rack, a snow shovel, a urinal, and so on. However a lesser-known work is his *Compensation Portrait* (1942) published in the catalogue for the 'First Papers of Surrealism'. 'Every participant in the exhibition ... chose at random a photograph of an unknown person to represent him.' Duchamp was represented himself by an image of a sharecropper photographed by Ben Shahn during the American Depression. See Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, Revised and Expanded Edition, Delano Greenidge Editions, New York, 2000, 766.

25 See Molly Nesbitt, *Atget's Seven Albums*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Canon Fodder: Authoring Eugene Atget', *Photography at the Dock* (1991), 28–51; Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces', *Art Journal*, XLII (Winter 1982), republished in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986, 131–59.

26 See Benjamin Buchloh 'Gerhard Richter's Atlas: the Anomic Archive', *October*, 88 (Spring, 1999).

27 See Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids' *October*, 9, (Summer 1979), republished in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, op. cit.

28 Mark Durden and Lydia Papadimitriou, 'Sans-Souci. An Interview with Christian Boltanski', *Creative Camera*, 315 (April–May, 1992), 19–23.

29 See Hal Foster, 'The Archive without Museums', *October*, 77 (Summer 1996), 97–119; and Allan Sekula, 'Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea (Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs)', *October*, 102 (Fall, 2002).

30 'I wanted to uplift them out of their original context and make them into something more than they had been ... to give them a different kind of status first and foremost, and to heighten their beauty and their pain and sadness, too, from the ordeal of being photographed.' Carrie Mae Weems in Vince Aletti, 'Dark Passage', *Village Voice*, New York, December 22, 1992.

31 See Warren Neidich, *American History Reinvented*, essays by Lynda Day, et al., Aperture, New York, 1989; Adam, Hans Christian (ed.), *The North American Indian: The Complete Portfolios by Edward S. Curtis*, Taschen, New York, 2002.

32 The expression is borrowed from Walter Benjamin's remarks on the questioning of the formation of history. See Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in Hannah Arendt (ed.) *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, 256–57.

33 Roland Barthes, 'The Scandal of Horror Photography', *Creative Camera*, July, 1969. Republished in Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1979 and later in David Brittain (ed.), *Creative Camera: 30 Years of Writing*, University of Manchester Press, Manchester 1999.

34 The word 'Evidence' derives from the Latin *videre*: to see.

35 Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message' (1961), in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (1977).

36 Barthes' discovery of the images in *Camera Lucida* was the result of 'browsing', particularly in *Le Nouvel Observateur*. See David Company, 'Conceptual Art History, or, a Home for Homes for America', in Bird and Newman (ed.) *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, op. cit., 123–39.

37 See Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, op. cit., 87–118.

38 For a discussion of the tension between the artwork and the artless document see Walter Benjamin's 'Thirteen Theses Against Snobs', in *Einbahnstrasse* (Berlin, 1928), trans. *One Way Street*, New Left Books, London, 1979; reprinted by Verso, London, 66–67.

39 John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966. For a close discussion of Szarkowski's approach see Christopher Phillips, 'The Judgement Seat of Photography', *October*, 22 (Fall 1982), reprinted in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (1989), 15–47.

40 The image is attributed to Matthew B. Brady (or a member of his staff). Barthes later includes this same image in *Camera Lucida*, where for him it is not just a matter of the 'thing itself' – the man insistently there, but the relation to time. Barthes sees him alive but knows he 'has been' and is 'going to die'. *Camera Lucida*, 95–96. By 1980, when *Camera Lucida* was published, the photograph had been attributed to Alexander Gardner and is titled in Barthes' text *Portrait of Lewis Poyne*, 1865.

41 See Scott Rothkopf, *Mel Bochner: Photographs 1966–1969*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London; Harvard University Art



Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2002, 34–41.

42 Roland Barthes used the term 'anchorage' to describe how text is commonly used to stabilise a photograph, emphasising one of its possible meanings and repressing others. See Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', in *Image-Music-Text*, *op. cit.*

43 The spirit of these works was eventually seen as a necessary but insufficient interrogation of the instrumental photograph. A simple dismantling would have to be rethought. As Stanley Cavell put it: 'To say that photographs lie implies that they might tell the truth; but the beauty of their nature is exactly to say nothing, neither to lie nor not to. Then what purpose may be served, or disguised, in attempting to deny so obvious a fact, in attempting instead to mean that emptiness? If the purpose is to counter those, real or imagined, who bluntly claim photographs never lie, then the counter only replaces the Village Idiot by the Village Explainer. There must be some more attractive purpose. I believe the motto serves to cover an impressive range of anxieties centred on, or symptomatized by, our sense of how little we know about what the photograph reveals: that we do not know what our relation to reality is, our complicity in it; that we do not know how or what to feel about those events; that we do not understand the specific transformative powers of the camera, what I have called its original violence; that we cannot anticipate what it will know of us or show of us.' Stanley Cavell 'What Photography Calls Thinking', *Roriton*, 4:4, 1985, 1–21, reprinted in *Raritan Reading*, Rutgers University Press, 1990, 47–65.

44 Their first major publication was titled *Anonyme Skulpturen: Eine Typologie technischer Bauten* (*Anonymous Sculptures: A Typology of Technical Constructions*), Art Press Verlag, Dusseldorf, 1970 (see illustration in this volume, page 71). In 2002 the Bechers were awarded the Erasmus prize for sculpture.

45 See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Warburg's Paragon? The End of Collage and Montage in Post-war Europe', in Schaffner and Winzen (ed.), *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*, Prestel, Munich and New York, 1998, 50–60.

46 See Gus Blaisdell, 'Bldgs', in *Three Photographic Visions: Baltz, de Lappa, Labrot*, Trisolini Gallery, College of Fine Arts, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio (1977), 5–19.

47 Kynaston L. McShine (ed.), *Information*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970, 189. The keynote image section of *Information* also included a photograph of *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913–14), Duchamp's earlier work in which chance and the index are central ideas.

48 Most accounts of this image derive from Man Ray's autobiography, *Man Roy: Self Portrait*, André Deutsch, London 1963.

49 Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America', *October*, 3 (Winter 1976–1977), 2–15. This is an essay of crucial importance which, as it cannot be made into an extract, is not reprinted in this volume, by agreement with the author. Readers are encouraged to consult it in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originolity of the Avont-Gorde and Other Modernist Myths*, *op. cit.* In 1968 Lucy R. Lippard also cited *Dust Breeding* as a precedent for the art of the late 1960s ('The Dematerialisation of Art', *Art Internotionol*, 12:2, February, 1968, 31–36). For an extended discussion of the trace in American West Coast art of the last few decades see Ralph Rugoff (ed.), *The Scene of the Crime*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997.

50 *Dust Breeding* even seems to prefigure the horizontal canvases of Jackson Pollock onto which he dripped paint in a process of controlled chaos. Duchamp's preferred phrase was 'canned chance'.

51 As Philippe Dubois has pointed out 'Photography itself is essentially first and foremost a process. A photograph is also admittedly an image, but one that is absolutely and ontologically inseparable from the action that brings it into being: the photograph is a trace.' 'Photography and Contemporary Art', in Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé (ed.), *A History of Photography: Social and Cultural Perspectives* (1987), 241. See also Régis Durand, 'Event, Trace, Intensity', *Discourse*, 16:2 (Winter 1993–1994), 118–26; reprinted here in the Documents section.

52 Robert Pincus-Witten, 'Bruce Nauman: another kind of reasoning' *Artforum*, February, 1972, 30–36.

53 Indeed while the dust gathered on the glass Duchamp hung a sign on the wall to protect it: 'Dust Breeding: to be Respected'. See Henri-Pierre Roché, *Victor*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1977, 65.

54 Lucy R. Lippard (ed.) *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972... (1973)*. Although contemporary art and art history often treat documentation as artworks like any other it is important to remember that attitudes to the status of the documentation varied a great deal.

55 See Edward Ruscha (in collaboration with Mason Williams and Patrick Blackwell), *Royal Road Test*, self published, 1967.

56 Burden's *Shoot* was also documented in a very short film. It shows 'everything' but as a result it diminishes the performance.

57 Distance is central to Walter Benjamin's notion of aura. See Walter Benjamin, 'A Short History of Photography', (1931) in *One Way Street*, *op. cit.*, 250.

58 See Fred Lonidier, 'The Health and Safety Game', *Praxis*, 6, 1982, 77–97. Lonidier's work is also discussed by Allan Sekula in 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary' (1976–1978), to be found most readily in Sekula's *Dismol Science: Photo Works 1972–1996*, University Galleries of Illinois State University, 1998, 117–38.

59 This sense of the 'having been' is the cornerstone of Roland Barthes' definition of the photograph in *Comero Lucida*, *op. cit.*

60 While working on the project Ristelhueber had in mind as her single visual reference Man Ray and Duchamp's *Dust Breeding*. (See Ristelhueber's statement in the Documents section.)

61 Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', *October*, 12, 1980. Extract reprinted here in the Documents section. Owens stresses that allegory 'is consistently attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete – an affinity which finds its most comprehensive expression in the ruin ...', 70.

62 Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz's highly informative *Bystander: A History of Street Photography*, Thames & Hudson, London (1994) elects to conclude in the mid 1970s. Similarly Robert Lebeck's *Kiosk: A History of Photojournalism*, Steidl (2002) closes around the same time. Both studies define their subjects classically and produce artificially clean endpoints as a result. Street photography and photojournalism continue still, although their roles and practices have had to change dramatically. (Westerbeck does point to the vitality and necessity of photo-reportage in the emergent modern cities outside of the West.)

63 This piece later formed part of the publication *Martha Rosler: 3 Works*, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1981. It also included Rosler's influential essay 'In, around and afterthoughts on documentary photography'.

64 Martha Rosier, 'In, around and afterthoughts on documentary photography' *op. cit.*, reprinted in Bolton (ed.) *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (1989).

65 Alan Sekula, 'Dismantling Modernism – Reinventing Documentary', in *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks 1973–1983*, *op. cit.*

66 See Paul Virilio, 'The Invisible City', *Lost Dimension*, Semiotext (e)/Autonomea, New York, 1991.

67 Michael Newman, 'Revising Modernism, Representing Postmodernism: Critical Discourses of the Visual Arts', in Lisa Appignanesi (ed.), *Postmodernism*, Institute of Contemporary Arts; Free Association Books, London, 1989, 149.

68 See Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, Verso, London, 1989.

69 Jameson, Fredric 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146, 1984. Republished in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of late Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

70 As Wall put it, 'important historical experiences are now had in the secondary cities.' Bill Jones, 'False Documents: A Conversation with Jeff Wall', *Arts Magazine*, 64:9 (1990), 53.

71 Andreas Gursky, however, has moved away from the straight descriptive image to produce highly formal, often digital, meditations on pattern in contemporary life.

72 See Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (ed.), *Theory of the Dérive*, Actar, Barcelona, 1996.

73 Victor Burgin, *Some Cities* (1996).

74 See Geraldine A. Johnson (ed.), *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension*, Cambridge, 1999.

75 Kruger's words were part of a text panel in the exhibition 'Picturing Greatness' that she curated for The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1988. See Stephanie Emerson (ed.), *Barboro Kruger*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2000, 216.

76 The imagery of the Bauhaus is the exception here with its blend of artist as technocratic pioneer and worker.

77 See 'Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?', *Life* magazine, 8 August, 1949. For a discussion of Pollock and *Life* magazine see Timothy J. Clark, 'Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionism', in Serge Guilbaut (ed.), *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and Montreal 1945–1964*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990, 171–243. See also Caroline Jones, 'The Romance of the Studio and the Abstract Expressionist Sublime' in *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Post-war American Artist*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, 1–59.

78 Artistic photography has always had its overtly theatrical aspects but these tended to be suppressed by Modernism as aberrations. The Surrealist photography of the 1920s and 30s, for example, has found its largest audience only in the postmodern climate of the last twenty years.

79 This was radically new in relation to the modernist practices which had sidelined the important if piecemeal history of theatrical photography that includes Surrealist photography and the nineteenth-century performance images of Julia Margaret Cameron, Henry Peach Robinson and others. These are areas that have been rediscovered in the last two decades by critics and artists and have had a great influence on recent photography.

80 See Jo Spence and Jo Stanley (ed.), *Cultural Sniping*, Routledge, London, 1995; Jessica Evans, 'An affront to taste? The disturbances of Jo Spence', *The Comerawork Essays: Context and Meoning in Photography*, Rivers Oram Press, London, 1997; John Roberts, 'Jo Spence: Photography, Empowerment and the Everyday', in *The Art of Interruption: Reolism, Photography and the Everyday*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, 199–215; and Steve Edwards, 'The Machine's Dialogue', *The Oxford Art Journal*, 13:1, 1990, 63–76.

81 On the concept of interpellation see Louis Althusser's classic text 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Pour Morx* (Paris, 1965), trans. *For Morx*, Allen Lane, London, 1969.

82 Spence had worked as a high street photographer and was well aware of the intimidation of the studio where one's self image is handed over to photographers who 'know best'.

83 For a discussion of the impurity of photographic language see Umberto Eco, 'Critique of the Image' in Burgin (ed.) *Thinking Photography*, *op. cit.*, 32–38 and Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' (1964), in *Image-Music-Text*, *op. cit.*

84 In the mid 1970s Sherman studied at Buffalo State College, New York where her tutors included Les Krims, who had worked with directorial, theatrical photography since the 1960s.

85 Peggy Phelan points out that 'The imitative pose, Sherman found, was almost too easy to frame with her camera. Her work suggests that the camera itself demands the imitative pose because it can only read, speak and reflect the surface'. Peggy Phelan, 'Developing the Negative: Mapplethorpe, Schor, Sherman', *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993). See also Judith Williamson, 'A Piece of the Action' *Consuming Passions: the Dynamics of Popular Culture*, Marion Boyars, London; Rosalind E. Krauss, *Cindy Sherman 1975–1993*, Rizzoli, New York 1993; and Laura Mulvey, 'Cosmetics and Abjection: Cindy Sherman 1977–1987', *Fetishism and*



Curiosity, British Film Institute, London, 1996. Extract reprinted here in the Documents section. The *Untitled Film Stills* of the 1970s included some of the only shots Sherman has taken outside the confines of the studio. Under the increasing influence of Surrealist photography her images moved closer to the materiality of the body, collapsing pictorial space until the body itself became the ground rather than figure of the image.

86 See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Photography after Art Photography', *Photography at the Dock*, *op. cit.*, 103–23.

87 An important early exhibition that looked at the emergence of this kind of work was 'Fabricated to be Photographed', curated by Van Deren Coke, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1979 (16 November–30 December). Catalogue, Van Deren Coke, *Fabricated to be Photographed*, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1979.

88 See Hal Foster, 'The Expressive Fallacy', *Recordings: Art, Spectacle and Cultural Politics*, Bay Press, Seattle, 1985, 69–71.

89 One of Gregory Crewdson's images from *Hover* is included here in the Works section. *The Cultures of Nature*.

90 This idea was also expressed in Benjamin's earlier essay 'A Short History of Photography' (1931): 'It is significant indeed that the debate has raged most fiercely around the aesthetics of photography as art, whereas the far less questionable social fact of art as photography was given scarcely a glance. And yet the impact of the photographic reproduction of artworks is of very much greater importance for the function of art than the greater or a lesser artistry of a photography that regards all experience as fair game for the camera.' *One Way Street*, *op. cit.*, 253.

91 As well as Walter Benjamin's writings see the statements gathered in Christopher Phillips (ed.) *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings 1913–1940*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Aperture, New York, 1989. André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1956, and Hal Foster, 'The Archive Without Museums', *October*, 77 (Summer 1996), 97–119.

92 Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', *October*, 10 (Spring 1980), 67–86 and 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism (Part 2)', *October*, 11 (Summer 1980), 58–80; reprinted in Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture* (1993), 52–87.

93 For a further discussion of allegory see the extract from Owens' text included in the Documents section.

94 See Guy Debord, *Le Société du Spectacle* (Paris, 1967), trans. *The Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red Press, Detroit, 1970.

95 Walter Benjamin had suggested that the commodity form is itself allegorical, deferring desire, masking the labour of its genesis and coming to us first as image. So when artists began to borrow it from it the effect was doubly allegorical. See Walter Benjamin 'Central Park', reprinted in *New German Critique*, 34 (Winter 1985) 59–77. See also Michael Newman, 'Revising Modernism, Representing Postmodernism: Critical Discourses of the Visual Arts', in Lisa Appignanesi (ed.), *Postmodernism*, *op. cit.*, 129; and Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Telos, St. Louis, Missouri, 1980.

96 For a discussion of the sexual (Freudian) and economic (Marxist) notions of fetishism as they intersect in contemporary representation see Laura Mulvey's excellent introduction to her *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996).

97 See Sylvia Kolbowski 'Playing with Dolls', in Squiers (ed.), *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, Bay Press, Seattle, 1990, 139–54.

98 See *Pictures*, Artists Space, New York 1977. Crimp later updated his influential catalogue essay to include the work of other emerging postmodernists such as Cindy Sherman. See Douglas Crimp, 'Pictures', *October*, 8, Spring, 1979, 75–88; reprinted in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (1984), 175–88.

99 Robert Longo and Richard Prince, *Robert Longo: Men in the Cities*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1986.

100 See Douglas Crimp, 'The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism', *October*, 15 (Winter 1980) reprinted in his collection, *On the Museum's Ruins* (1993), 44–65.

101 See Howard Singerman, 'Seeing Sherrie Levine', *October*, 67 (Winter 1994), 78–107.

102 I echo Craig Owens' discussion of Robert Rauschenberg's collage work which 'acquires its fullest measure of significance only when seen in situ', remaining 'in potentia until it is seen in the museum where it opens a dazzling mise-en-abyme ...' Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2', *Beyond Recognition*, *op. cit.*, 77.

103 See Linda Nochlin, 'Some women artists', *Arts Magazine*, February, 1974, reprinted in Gregory Battcock (ed.), *Super Realism*, Dutton, New York, 1975, and Nanmi Salaman, 'Transparency Transposed', in Salaman and Simpson (ed.), *Postcards on Photography: Photorealism and the Reproduction* (1998).

104 See Salaman and Simpson (ed.) *Postcards on Photography*, *op. cit.*

105 The term 'reality fragment' is used by Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, 77.

106 A clear sign that mass culture had fully assimilated collage was Frank and Caroline Mouris' *Frank Film* (1973). This was an eight-minute film comprising 11,000 cut-out magazine images, animated in perpetual movement. It is voiced over by Frank's deliberately tedious account of his empty life story, leavened only by the fact that he had made this film about it. It won an Oscar.

107 As Victor Burgin put it: 'Today, we are inundated with images. More often than we contemplate images, we consume them. We "flip", "zap", and "channel surf" on endless waves of images from glossy magazines, newspapers, snapshots, rented videos, broadcast and cable TV shows, films, CD-ROM, and so on. Moreover, what we consume is less often the "image", an imaginary totality, than its synecdochic representatives: the "bite", the "clip". Today's puzzle pieces ... refuse to add up to a coherent whole, and no calm reigns before their disjointed visions of hell.' Victor Burgin, 'The Image in Pieces', in Amelunxen, Iglhaut and Rotzer (ed.), *Photography after Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age*, G + B International, 1977, 26–35.

108 See Thomas Y. Levin, 'Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord', in Elisabeth Sussman, Mark Francis, Peter Wollen (ed.), *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: the Situationist International, 1957–1972*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, 73–123.

109 Hilary Gresty in dialogue with Yve Lomax, 'The World Is Indeed a Fabulous Tale', in Nigel Wheale (ed.), *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Routledge, London, 150–62.

110 See Douglas Crimp, 'Appropriating Appropriation', in Paul Marincola (ed.), *Image Scavengers: Photography*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1982, 27–34; reprinted in *On the Museum's Ruins*, *op. cit.*, 126–37; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Living with the Contradictions: Critical Practice in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics', *Screen* (Summer 1987); reprinted in Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices*, *op. cit.*, 124–48; Scott Rothkopf, 'Hit or Myth', *Artforum*, 40:2, October, 2001, 133–34.

111 This was encapsulated in the 1929 exhibition and book *foto-auge / oil et photo / photo-eye*, Akademischer Verlag Dr. Fritz Wederking & Co., Stuttgart, 1929; reprinted by Thames & Hudson, London, 1974.

112 This was well summarised by Susan Sontag: 'The act of photographing is more than a passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep happening.' Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Penguin, London, 1978, 11–12.

113 See Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Several Eisenstein Stills' (1970), *Image-Music-Text*, *op. cit.*, and Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish', *October*, 34 (Fall 1985) 81–90.

114 Similarly, one of cinema's most sustained meditations on the theme of time is Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962, released 1964), a film consisting almost entirely of photographic stills.

115 Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* (Autumn 1975), 6–18, reprinted in *The Sexual Subject: The Screen Reader in Sexuality*, Routledge, London, 1992, 22–34.

116 Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905), Standard Edition, Vol. 7, 136–243; Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as a formative function of the "I" as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', *Écrits* (Paris, 1966); Routledge, London, 1977.

117 The theories of Jacques Lacan have been important here, particularly 'The mirror stage as a formative function of the "I" ...', *op. cit.*, and *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1977).

118 An important moment in this was the exhibition 'Difference: On Representation and Sexuality', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984, which toured to the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in 1985. Catalogue: Kate Linker (ed.), *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality* (1984).

119 For reasons of space I must sketch in these ideas only briefly. Other interesting starting points include Kate Linker, 'Engaging Perspectives: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis and the Problem of Vision', in Kerry Brougher (ed.), *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* (1996), 217–42; and Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Macmillan, London, 1987.

120 See Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1982; Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' and Jean-Luc Comolli, 'Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspectives and Depth of Field (Parts 3 and 4)', both in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986.

121 See Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish', *October*, 34 (Fall 1985); reprinted in Squires (ed.) *The Critical Image* (1990), 155–64; and Victor Burgin, 'Diderot, Barthes, Vertigo', in James Donald and Cora Kaplan (ed.), *Formations of Fantasy*, Methuen, London, 1986, 85–108.

122 See Griselda Pollock, 'Veils, Masks and Mirrors', in Tabrizian's monograph *Correct Distance*, Cornerhouse, Manchester, 1990.

123 See Sean Cubitt, 'Keith Piper: After Resistance, Beyond Destiny', *Third Text*, 47 (Summer 1999) 77–86.

124 See Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse', *Screen*, 24: 6 (1983); reprinted in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality*, *op. cit.*, 312–31.

125 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York, 1990, 179.

126 See Francesca Woodman: *Photographic Work*, Wellesley College Museum and Hunter College Art Gallery, 1986.

127 See Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston (with an essay by Dawn Ades), *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1985.

128 See David Bate, 'Mise-en-Scene of Desire', *Mise-en-Scene*, catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1994 and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'The Equivocal "I": Claude Cahun as Lesbian Subject', in Shelley Rice (ed.), *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999, 111–25.

129 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Just Like a Woman', *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work*, Wellesley College Museum and Hunter College Art Gallery, 1986, 11–35; reprinted in *Photography at the Dock*, *op. cit.*, 238–55.

130 See Gilda Williams, 'Identity Twins: The Work of Wendy McMurdo', *Wendy McMurdo* (1998), 33–43. An extract is reprinted here in the Documents section. For a discussion of the child's relation to the mirror as an aspect of identity formation see Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage ...', *op. cit.*

131 See Thierry de Duve, 'The Mainstream and the Crooked Path', de Duve, *et al.*, *Jeff Wall*, Phaidon Press, 1996, 26–53.

132 See Craig Owens, 'Photography en



- abyme', *October*, 5 (Summer 1978), 73–88; reprinted in Owens, *Beyond Recognition*, *op. cit.*, 16–30; Umberto Eco, 'Mirrors', *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, Macmillan, London, 1984, 202–26.
- 133 See Kaja Silverman, 'The Visible World', in *The Threshold of the Visible World*, Routledge, London, 1996, 125–27; and Régis Durand, 'How to See (Photographically)', in Patrice Petro (ed.), *Fugitive Images: from Photography to Video*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995, 141–51.
- 134 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981), 111. See also Charles Wolfe, 'Direct Address and the Social Documentary: "Annie Mae Gudge" as Negative Subject', *Wide Angle*, 9:1, 1987, 59–70.
- 135 As Malcolm Andrews has suggested, 'We don't have to imagine, with the aid of alluring images of Arcadian natural simplicity, what it must have been like to live in Nature; we are all too aware of our dependency on Nature now. More crucially still, we feel Nature's dependency on us. Landscape as a way of seeing from a distance is incompatible with this heightened sense of our relationship to Nature as a living (or dying) environment. As a phase in the cultural life of the West, landscape may already be over.' Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
- 136 See Nathan Lyons (ed.), *Toward a Social Landscape*, Horizon Press, New York, 1966; Thomas H. Garver, *Twelve Photographers of the American Social Landscape*, October House, New York, 1968; and William Jenkins, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York, 1975. For an overview of colour art photography as it emerged in the US in the 1970s see Sally Eaclaire's three volumes: *The New Color Photography* (1981); *New Color/New Work* (1984); and *American Independents: Eighteen Color Photographers* (1987).
- 137 The exhibition featured the work of Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joe Deal, Frank Gohlke, Nicholas Nixon, John Schott, Stephen Shore and Henry Wessel Jr.
- 138 See May Castleberry (ed.), *Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West*, and Sandra S. Phillips, Aaron Betsky, Eldridge M. Moores and Richard Rodriguez (ed.), *Crossing the Frontier: Photographs of the Developing West, 1849 to the Present*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1996.
- 139 David Bate discusses the tension between a politicised representation of nature and the desire for a conservative aesthetic in 'Notes on Beauty and Landscape', in Wells, Newton and Fehily (ed.), *Shifting Horizons: Women's Landscape Photography Now*, I B Tauris, London 2000. Bate's text is excerpted here in the Documents section.
- 140 Two key exhibitions that marked this were *Another Objectivity*, curated by James Lingwood and Jean-François Chevrier (Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Pezzi Museum of Contemporary Art, Prato, 1988) and *The Epic and the Everyday*, curated by James Lingwood (Hayward Gallery, London, 1994).
- 141 Deborah Bright, 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meaning of Landscape Photography', *Exposure*, 23:4 (Winter 1985), revised in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Context of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (1989), 125–42.
- 142 See Roberta McGrath, 'Re-Reading Edward Weston', *IenS*, 27, 1987, 26–35. See also Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?', in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (ed.), *Women, Culture and Society*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 1974; Liz Wells, Kate Newton and Catherine Fehily (ed.), *Shifting Horizons: Women's Landscape Photography Now*, *op. cit.*, and Deborah Bright, 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men ...' *op. cit.*, revised in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Context of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (1989), 125–42.
- 143 See Peggy Phelan's Survey essay in Helena Reckitt (ed.), *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon Press, London, 2001, 36–38.
- 144 See Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, Marion Boyars, London, 1978; and Victor Burgin, 'Art, Common Sense and Photography' (1976), in Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography*, 1982.
- 145 See Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' (1964), *Image-Music-Text*, *op. cit.*
- 146 W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', in Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.
- 147 Edward Buscombe notes that the distinctive Saguaro cactus of Monument Valley, USA, was brought to the area by film director John Ford. It is rooted in the popular imaginary far more permanently than the soil of Colorado. See Edward Buscombe, 'Inventing Monument Valley: Nineteenth-century Landscape Photography and the Western Film', Patrice Petro (ed.), *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995.
- 148 See Vik Muniz, *Seeing Is Believing*, Arena Editions, New Mexico, 1998.
- 149 Muniz prefers to see Adams as an illusionist rather than a descriptive realist.
- 149 In its pursuit of an ideal, Constable's imagery was itself a conscious misrepresentation of rural life and labour. See John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730–1840*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, 142.
- 150 See Peter Kennard, *Dispatches from an Unofficial War Artist*, Lund Humphries, London, 2000; Barbara Harford & Sarah Hopkins, *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, The Women's Press, London 1984; Judith Williamson, 'Nuclear Family? No thanks!', *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture*, Marion Boyars, London, 1986, 213–21; John Kippin, *Cold War Pastoral: Greenham Common*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2001.
- 151 Another notable international project is Taco Anema's and Michel Szulc Kryzanowski's global photographic study of energy production and consumption. See Taco Anema and Michel Szulc Kryzanowski, *World of Energy*, De Voorbeelding, Holland, 2000.
- 152 The social geographer David Harvey has highlighted this problem: 'The interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds (of commodities) in the same place and time. But it does so in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or the social relations implicated in their production.' See David Harvey, 'The Experience of Space and Time', *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1989.





# MEMORIES AND ARCHIVES

photography was pressed into service as a tool of classification and ordering.

Medicine, colonialism, real estate, the legal system and even the family album used photography as a supposedly neutral form of knowledge. By the 1960s artists, philosophers and historians all became interested in how knowledge is produced and where the ideas and forms of representation that regulate society come from. Coupled with this, the twentieth century had accumulated more images than it could effectively manage. Popular memory, history and the photographic were becoming inseparable. The works in this section look at the ways in which art has approached the archival photograph. These include anarchic attempts to disrupt classification; meditations on the relation between photography and memory; the interplay of the private and the public; and the pressing need to look again at what official histories have left out.

Gerhard RICHTER

Atlas

1962-

Sheet 9: Newspaper photographs,  
1962-68

11 cuttings, 1 photograph

52 × 67 cm [20.5 × 26.5 in]

As a painter Richter works extensively from photographic source material.

*Atlas*, an ongoing project since 1962.

comprises newspaper photographs,  
working sketches, found photographs

and Richter's own photographs made as studies for paintings. His work is

informed by an understanding of

private memory and public history.

*Atlas* moves between the personal

scrapbook and the social document.

It was first published as a book and also

exhibited as a self-contained work in

1972, with 341 panels, and again in 1997.

with 633 panels.







Thirteen Most Wanted Men  
1964

Silkscreen on canvas  
915 × 610 cm [360 × 240 in]

Installation, New York State Pavilion, World’s Fair, 1964

Warhol was commissioned to make a mural for the New York State Pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair. The title and the photographs were derived from a booklet issued by a police department. The portraits, enlarged to form a 30-foot high grid of silk-screen prints, subverted the familiar ‘Wanted’ posters in which institutional photographs enter the public arena. Criminal identification photographs were already steeped in popular mythology by the early 1960s. This made the use of real images of actual criminals too troubling for the Fair’s sponsors, who deemed the mural inappropriate. It was overpainted within hours of being installed.

Most of the source photographs that Warhol used for his screenprints from the early 1960s onwards – featuring subjects such as celebrities, crime, accidents and suicides – were collected by the artist himself from newspapers, magazines and photographic archives.



Andy WARHOL  
Photobooth Portraits  
1963–66  
Photobooth machine prints  
l. to r., Holly Solomon;  
Jim Brodey and Gerard Malanga;  
Mary Woronov

As well as deriving screenprint subjects from found and archival photographs, in the early 1960s Warhol used photobooth machines as an easy, inexpensive way to photograph friends and acquaintances. A number of the photographs were the source of screenprint portraits, such as *Ethel Scull 36 Times* (1963) but these photo strips can also be seen as a self-contained series, which explores Warhol’s fascination with the detached, repetitive, machine-made image.

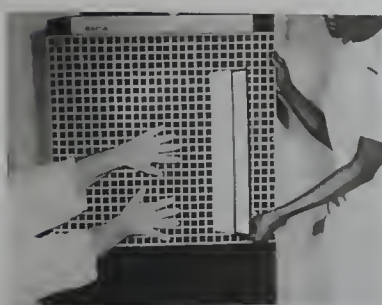
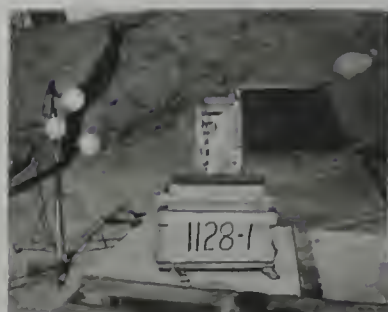
‘Except for the ones where Andy’s in the picture, and a few others ... he wasn’t present when they were taken ... [They] were done, apparently, with the idea that he needed a kind of photo morgue that portraits could be made from. The ones that got made were of the people who could buy the portraits.’  
– Gary Indiana, *Andy Warhol Photobooth Pictures*, Robert Miller Gallery, New York, 1989

## EVIDENCE

1977

Art: 11's book, 11x11 black and white photographs, quarto, clothbound

*Evidence* is a book of 50 photographs selected from thousands in the archives of US federal and industrial institutes and corporations. They are reproduced without captions, depriving them of their documentary status. Out of context their meaning is obscured, throwing viewers into speculation about the lack of self-evidence in even the most apparently utilitarian image. The very strangeness of these photographs resists any simple reinvention of them as art.







So1 LEWITT

Autobiography

1980

Artist's book, offset, black and white photography, 124 pages

28 x 28 cm [11 x 11 in]

LeWitt is best known for his modal systems-based structures and wall drawings and his transformation of the idea of the artwork into a set of instructions that can be carried out to create the piece. His artist's books also pursue a single strategy or instruction. Here, across 124 pages there are over one thousand black and white photographs which document every object in the artist's living and working space, coolly conveying the camera's apparent mechanical indifference to what it photographs. Despite its rigour and the dry wit of the title this is LeWitt's most personal work.



#### Allen STELLA

Blasphemy Allegories (Color and  
Black and White)

1. Color photograph, hand  
painted text and object  
2. Color photograph, hand  
painted text and object  
3. Color photograph, hand  
painted text and object

These photographs are shown framed  
on a wall before which, on a reading  
table, is a text which speculates on  
ways the images could be interpreted.  
The text evolved over five years, when  
the work was first shown in 1971. It  
took the form of a spoken recording.  
Stella approaches the photographs  
as a fragmentary and incomplete  
utterance, reliant upon language and  
context for its social significance.  
The text which is an integral part of this  
work is reprinted here in the Documenta  
section, pages 210-12.

#### John RAJDES, ART

Blasphemy Allegories (Color and  
Black and White) (Color and  
Black and White)

Black and white and color  
photograph mounted on museum  
board, hand painted text  
of color and black and white

In the *Blasphemy Allegories* series, possible  
sentences are constructed from the  
artist's selections of film stills and  
images photographed from television.  
These are classified alphabetically  
according to a wide range of criteria,  
such as subjects, poses, locations  
and so on, which reflect the unconscious  
and arbitrary processes of personal  
recollection. In mainstream cinema  
our looking is regulated by the film's  
narrative structure, but in the isolated  
film still the eye can be set loose.  
Rajdes's various series of film still  
montages create fluid networks of  
connections, inviting the viewer into  
the processes of seeing-making.











opposite

George BLAKELY

A Cubic Foot of Photographs

1978

colour photograph collage

30,5 × 30,5 × 30,5 cm (12 × 12 × 12 in)

collection, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California

Much of Blakely's work concerns the conventions of popular photography, which he regards as both a type of image making and a social practice. The images in this sculpture are all different yet the same in kind. Thus the work is repeatable as an idea but unrepeatable in its detail. This bundle of photographs, subsumed into an impenetrable and untouchable block, echoes the preoccupation of Minimal artists with standardised materials and manufacture. Here the domestic snapshot is seen as a similar example of an industrially produced, anonymous form.



David LEVINTHAL

Untitled

1975

Sepia toned Kodalith print

Published in David Levinthal and Gary Trudeau, *Hitler Moves East: A Graphic Chronicle, 1941-43*, 1977

Levinthal collaborated with the political cartoonist Gary Trudeau on this book of photographs, maps, graphics, diaries and archival material. It reworks the format of the illustrated history book to chart Nazi military advances on the Soviet Union during the Second World War. The photographs were openly faked. Toy-sized models and backgrounds were painstakingly transformed through grainy, shaky and mis-exposed images which mimicked the effects of reportage photography. This work anticipated postmodern art's concern with simulation and the interplay of fact and fiction in the production of knowledge.



Mari MAHR

A Few Days in Geneva [detail]

1988

Gelatin silver print

1 print from the series, 61 × 91 cm | 24 × 36 in | each

Mahr constructs her allegorical collages by bringing together family photographs, resonant objects and specially taken shots. These are assembled and photographed to become flat images that work both as single frames and as short enigmatic narratives. The tableaux create imaginary spaces evocative of dreams and dim memories. Mahr came to England from Hungary in the 1970s. Her work shares with much of the European art and literature of post-war displacement a preference for the 'magic realism' of odd perspectives, scales and combinations held together by the logic of form and memory rather than 'real' time and space.





Donigan CUMMING

April 27, 1993, from Emily

Phillips

(2004)

Colour, computer print

112 x 76.5 cm (44 x 30 in)

Collection, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa

Cumming has developed a form of constructed documentary photography which neither claims to be objective nor indulges in artifice but explores a space in between. Most of his work concerns old age, where the present is overwritten by the past. The woman (Nettie Harris) who is the subject of this photograph part of a series, collaborates with the artist in modelling and recreating the evidence of her past and present life.

Without trying to escape the image of her own physical collapse, she exhibits her body without shame, as it is. All is reinvented, nothing is really natural in these plots in which Cumming adopts the viewpoint of an imaginary witness. Nettie Harris is a magnificent character who serves as her own model. It's the staging of her real life that she remounts.

Patrick Rieglers, *Donigan Cumming: Diverting the Image*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario, 1993



Sophie CALLE

The Blind [detail]

1986

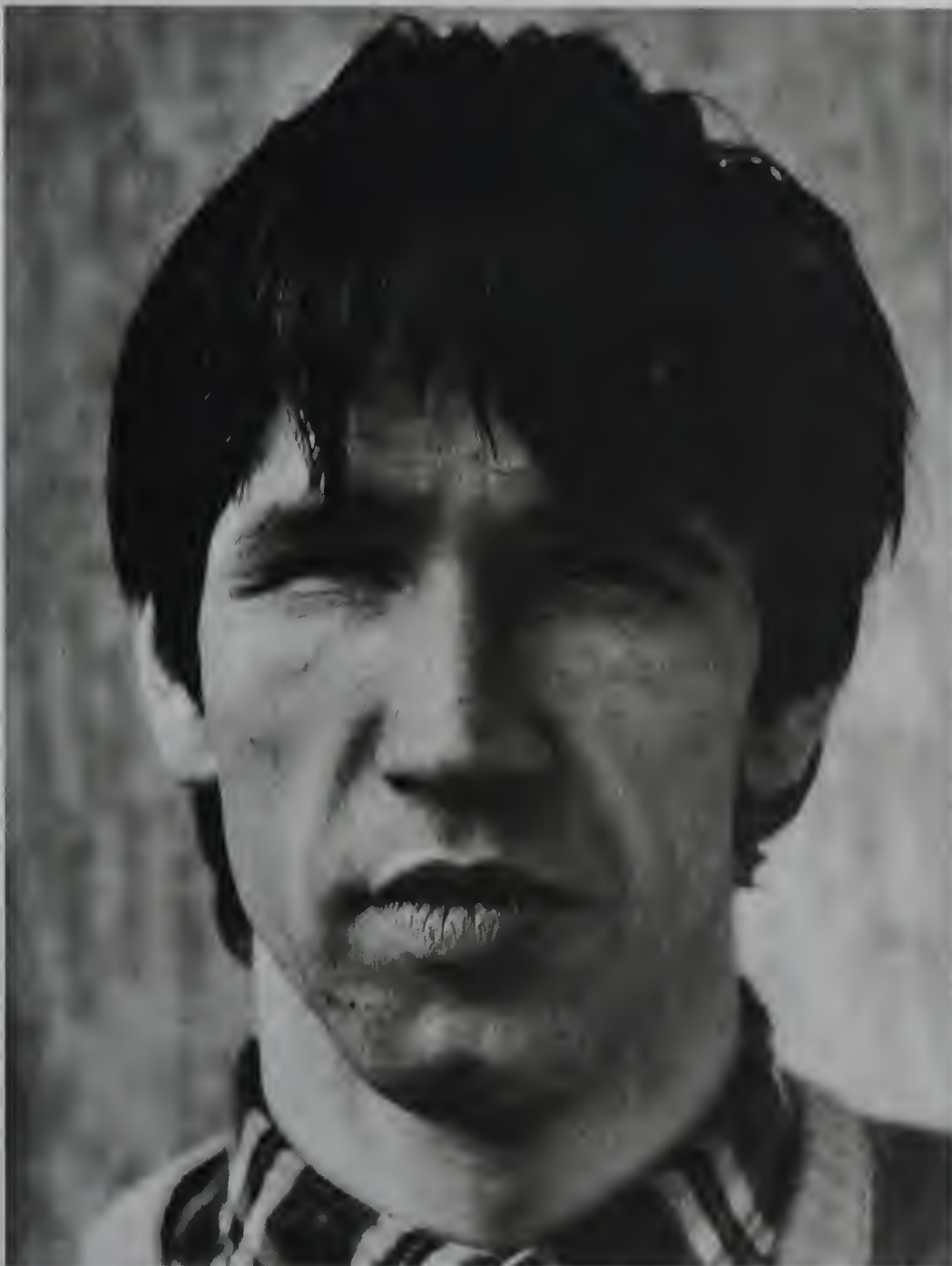
Series of black and white photo portraits with text panels and colour photographs

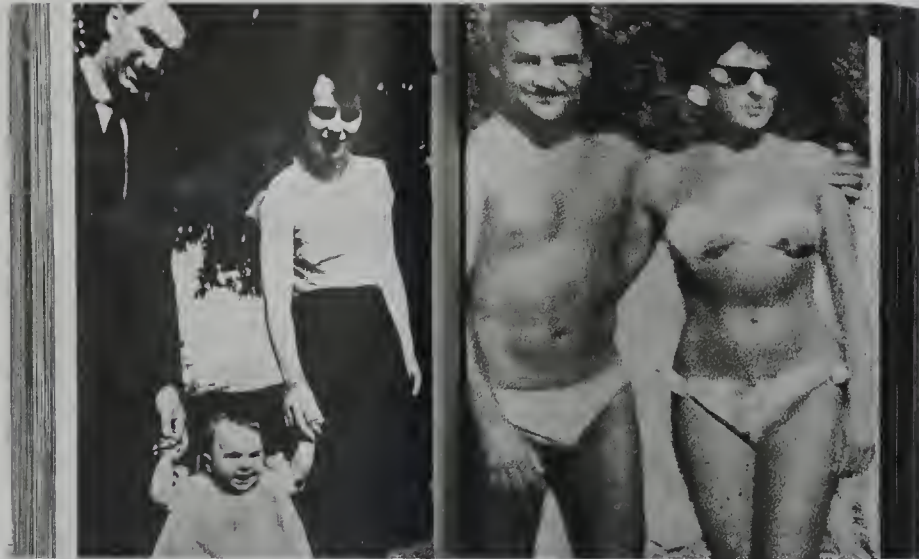
Various dimensions

'For me, the most beautiful thing is this painting. My brother-in-law said to me: "It's a boat. If you like, I'll give it to you." I had never seen boats in a picture. It has a slightly raised surface so I can feel three masts and a main sail. I often touch it in the evening. On Wednesdays there are programmes about the sea. I listen to the TV and I look at that boat.

'The sea must be beautiful too. They tell me it is blue and green and that when the sun reflects in it, it hurts your eyes. It must be painful to look at.'

Calle spoke with people who had been blind since birth about their ideas of beauty. Many of them had highly visual impressions. From these a triptych for each person was made comprising his or her photographic portrait, a text recording the verbal description of what was perceived as beautiful, and images corresponding to what was described. Calle's systematic working method owes much to conceptual art but also borrows from the disciplines of sociology and ethnography. From collaboration there emerges a combination of creative statement and material evidence.





Christian BOLTANSKI

Menschlich [Humanity]

1994-95

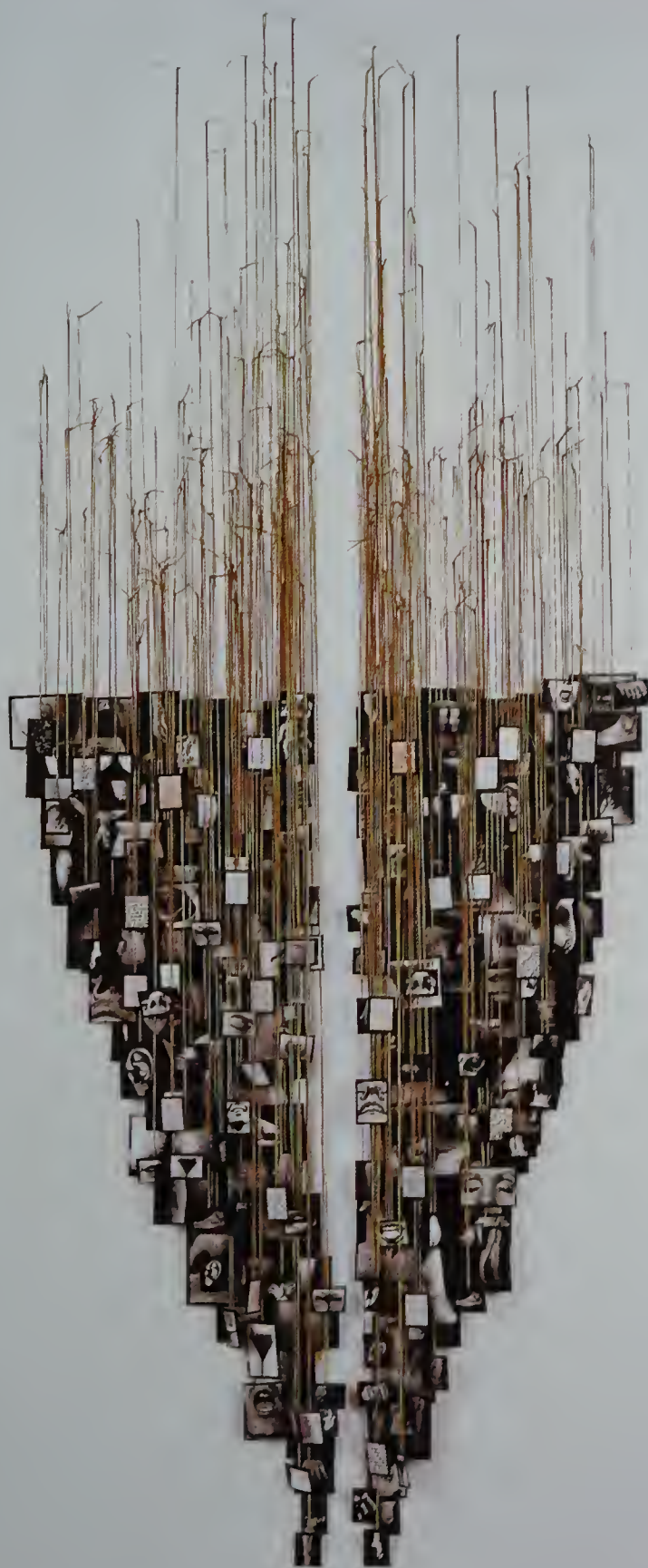
Artist's book, offset, black and white photographs, softbound

26.5 × 21 cm [10.5 × 8 in]

Thouet Verlag/Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, 1994

*Menschlich (Humanity)* brought into a single gallery installation over 1,300 of the photographs of people taken from a variety of archival sources, including documents from the Second World War, which Boltanski had used in previous works. It was also published, as shown here, as an artist's book printed on newsprint-like paper. In both formats, differences between types of people become apparent in some pictures but remain elusive in others. The atrocities of the twentieth century are evoked but not directly imaged. Instead these deliberately mixed and unidentified photographs come to stand in for people cut adrift from history and memory.





Annette MESSAGER

*Mes Voeux (My Wishes)*

1988-91

Framed gelatin silver prints,  
text, string

Dimensions: variable

Collection, Musée d'Art Moderne  
de la Ville de Paris

*Mes Voeux (My Wishes)* is a series comprising individually framed photos and in some versions, fragments of text which refer to the images, pinned by strings to the gallery wall. The images are an array of female and male body parts of people of various ages. Each example of the work can be taken in as a unified field but as the viewer's eye moves in, the whole ensemble dissolves into a shifting pattern of associations. Messager fragments the body into named parts – eyes, ears, genitals, mouths, hands, and so on – so that the images become a visual equivalent of nouns. The movement of the eye around the work becomes an involuntary listing that accumulates but can never retain the entirety.

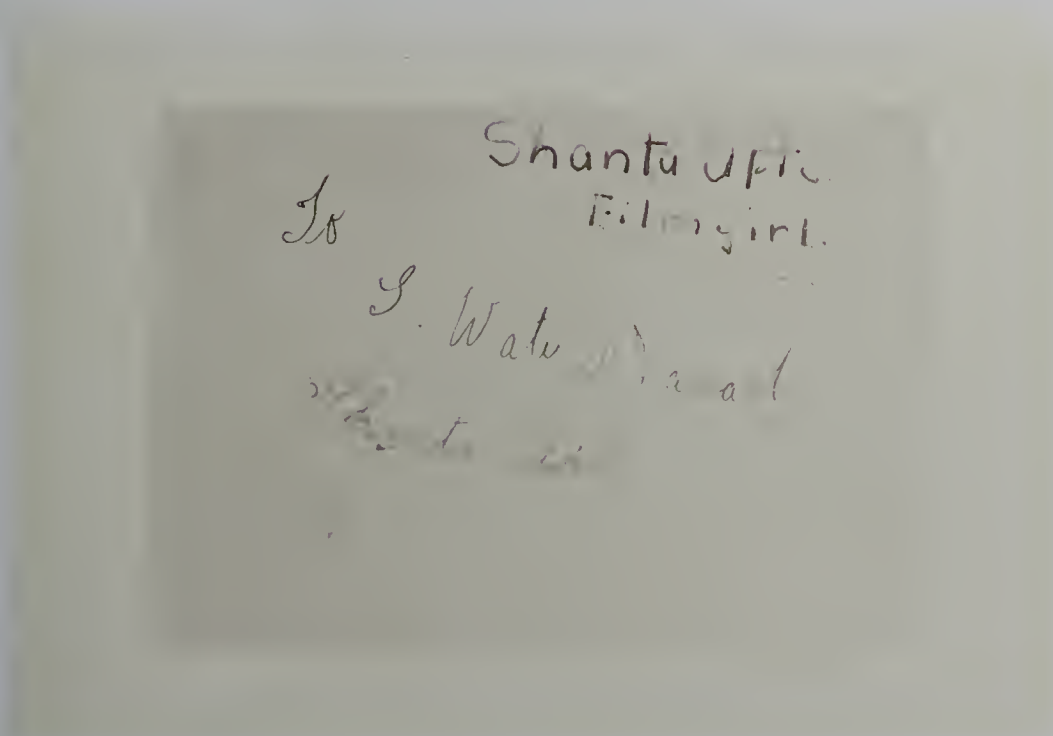


John DIVOLA  
Hallways  
1995  
Gelatin silver prints  
3 prints from the Continuity series, 20.5 × 25.5 cm [8 × 10 in] each  
from top, Nos. 1, 4, 25  
These images come from the 1930s archives of Warner Brothers film studios. Then as now separate parts of scenes were often filmed days or weeks apart so continuity shots were taken as records of lighting, decor and objects but even these photographs were made on a 10 × 8 inch plate camera to exacting specifications. Divola collected these stills over a number of years, grouping them not by film but by type (*Hallways*, *Evidence of Aggression*, *Mirrors*, and *Incidental Subjects*) to draw attention to the film industry's standardisation of images of the world. 'Like so many of the images on which we base our contemporary sense of reality, these photographs offer a representational ground that has a familiarity born of repeated viewing ... the millions of such images seen in a lifetime form the internal visual index of what we accept to be real.'  
– John Divola, *Continuity*, 1997



opposite  
Zoe LEONARD and Cheryl DUNYE  
The Fae Richards Photo Archive  
[detail]  
1993-96  
Black and white photograph with ink inscription  
Fae Richards, 1908–73, is a celebrated African-American Hollywood actress and singer invented by photographer Leonard and filmmaker Dunye. The archive comprises publicity stills and album snapshots recreated in period style. These chart the star's career from typecast Hollywood roles to later work in 'race films', as well as her richly layered personal life, providing a complex portrait rather than simply a cipher for invisibility in mainstream cinema. The project demanded all the resources of photography and filmmaking, using cast, crew, props, wardrobe, sets, lighting, make-up, locations and printing skills. Both exhibited and published in a book, the photographs were also central to Dunye's influential feature film *The Watermelon Woman* (1996).





left

Mohini CHANDRA

Album Pacifica [detail]

1997

Framed reversed photographs, inscription

Dimensions variable

Chandra collected photographs of members of her Fiji Indian family, who now live in different countries around the world. The images are placed facing inwards in their frames, so that all the viewer can see are studio stamps and handwritten notes. Together the photographs form a symbolic unification of a dispersed family

'While viewers are denied the actual photograph, they are able to conjure up an "imaginary" photographic landscape ... the work evokes a space in which their own histories and experiences can be imagined.'

— Mohini Chandra, statement, 2002



Max DEAN

As Yet Untitled

1993-95

Interactive robotic shredding machine, photographs

Dimensions variable

Dean's interactive installation allows the viewer to choose the fate of photographs.

A robotic arm picks up a snapshot from a container and presents it to the viewer.

Holding a hand up to the robot's light sensors, the participant can instruct it to save

the photograph in an archival box. The robot is programmed to shred images

continuously unless instructed otherwise, so that to watch passively is to participate

in an act of destruction.





Joachim SCHMID

Archiv

1986-95

Photographs mounted on board

40 x 50 cm [16 x 20 in] each

*from top left, No. 201, 1992; No. 200, 199; No. 600, 199*

Schmid collects everyday forms of photography, assembling them onto sheets, classified by generic type – family snapshots, postcards, celebrity photos, and so on – and their shared formal characteristics, such as composition, tonality and size. No attempt is made to ‘interpret’, beyond the acts of gathering and collating. Viewers are invited to manoeuvre between contemplating the images individually or as whole arrangements. Despite the uniqueness of each image what emerges is the systematic, serial nature of photography in mass culture.



Karen KNORR

Contemporary Art, from the Visitors

1998

Cibachrome print mounted on aluminium

91.5 × 91.5 cm [36 × 36 in]

*The Visitors* is a suite of photographs that forms part of *Academies*, an eight-year project exploring the underpinnings of cultural institutions. Knorr's compositions parody the structures and hierarchies of traditional European museums. A monkey appears in some images, such as this one, heightening awareness of the location, in which it is an incongruous outsider. This series was photographed at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, a postmodern conversion of a railway station, which itself questions and reinterprets the architecture of older museums. *Contemporary Art* is named after one of the books beside the monkey, by Catherine Millet. The other book is *La Haine de l'Art* (*Hatred of Art*) by Philippe Dagen, art critic of the newspaper *Le Monde*. Both of these works discuss why the majority of the French public seem to appreciate little of the art made since the Impressionists.



Candida HÖFER

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris VII

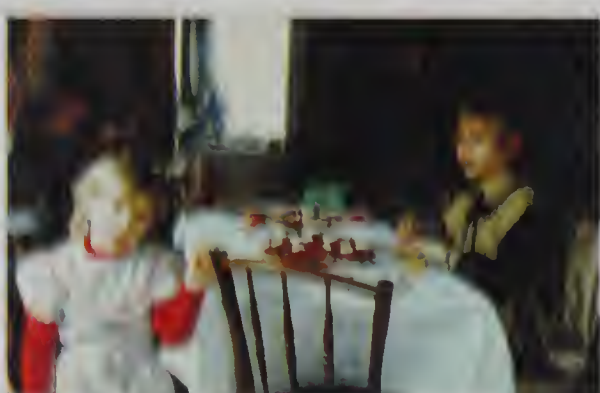
1998

C type print

85 × 85 cm [33.5 × 33.5 in]

Höfer's series of formal photographs of libraries describe the spatial organisation of knowledge that is dictated by books and documents. Libraries are not only functional but also culturally significant buildings, yet as knowledge slowly takes the additional form of electronic data their architectural remit is beginning to change. These intensely descriptive photographs offer up the interiors to be read in terms of form, function and social symbolism. Like the book, the photograph has its origins in a pre-electronic, mechanical stage of communication, so there is a structural resonance here between Höfer's images and the subject matter.





Appendix 1: 1980

1980: 1980

1980: 1980

1980: 1980

1980: 1980

Shirley has photographed her family life for over twenty years. Her two daughters and son are the main subjects. The images range from portraits and domestic scenes to cityscapes and landscapes made in her own mind, including urban and natural forms. In addition, Shirley has taken the form of portraits from these years, including Shirley's portraits, including the image of her son, which is accompanied by a small portrait of what could be a child or her mother. The order is loosely chronological so that the viewer's ideas change in Shirley's family life and her own life and her photography. The presentation makes the viewer be reminded by a history of a construction from fragments and her portraits photography is filtered through several experiences in her life in the image space. The viewer is reminded in place of a single word and Shirley's space is opened up for several interpretations.



# OBJECTIVE OBJECTS

The 'straight' photograph – clear,

frontal, centred – is often understood as the least creative and thus most artless kind of image. It doesn't draw attention to itself and often substitutes for what it depicts. Photographers of the New Objectivity in Germany of the 1920s and 1930s saw it as being in tune with the spirit of industry. The Surrealists embraced Eugène Atget's empty street photographs because their immediacy was so disarming. In *Camera Lucida* (1980) Roland Barthes described how he found the straight portrait the most profound and moving kind of image, because it appeared to give such direct access to its subject matter. Artists embraced the straight photograph at a point when art was shedding itself of the expressionism associated with modernist painting. It was a utilitarian image made with a mass-produced tool. It blurred the distinction between image and object, representation and reality. It could document sculpture, it could be repeated, or it could simply record. The ambivalence of the straight image has made it one of the most prevalent forms of photography in art.

Edward RUSSCHA

Book: *Building on the Sunset Strip*

1966

Artists' book; street – black and white photographs, text, accordion-folded and glued, yellowed

10 x 14.5 cm (1 x 5.5 in) closed, 11 cm (4.3 in) extended

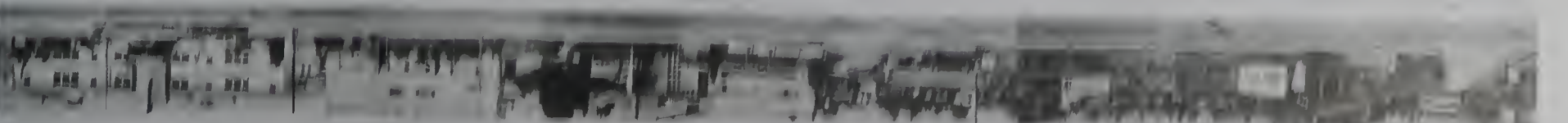
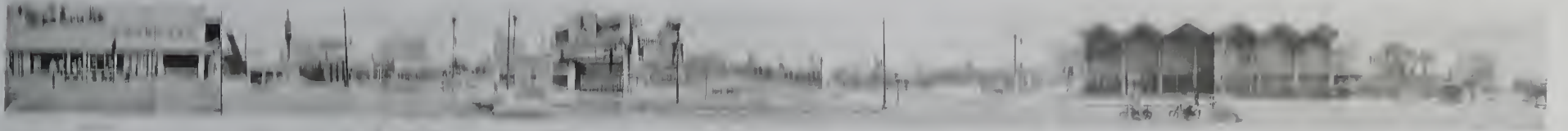
Collection: Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California;

Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris

Copyright: Edward Ruscha included in the book, 1966, and detail

Standing from a moving car. Ruscha photographed both sides of Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard. The images were assembled as a long strip with the corresponding street numbers typeset beneath. This was accordion-folded into a small book to fit the palm of the hand. It has the feeling of a cinematic tracking shot, the camera moving past the scene mechanically with indifference to the subject. This is one of Ruscha's mass-produced photo books made between 1963 and 1971. Each had a single everyday subject described by its title and the photography, although carefully considered, adopted the utilitarian look of what he described in a 1965 *Artforum* interview as 'technical data, like industrial photography'.







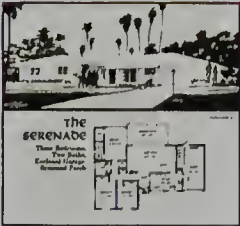
chair, n hence v; chaise (longue) and chaise; (as) cathedra, cathedra (adj and n), cathedra; element *hedra*, *hedron*, q.v. sep.  
1. *Cir hedra*, a seat (cf *Cir hesthal*, to sit, and, ult, *E sit*), combines with *katu*, down (cf the prefix *cano-*), to form *kathedra*, a backed, four-legged, often two-armed seat, whence *L cathedra*, I.L. bishop's chair, M.L. professor's chair, hence dignity, as in 'to speak *ex cathedra*', as from—or as if from—a professor's chair, hence with authority, *L cathedra* has LL-M.L. adj *cathedrālis*—see sep. CATHEDRAL; and the secondary M.L. adj *cathedrales*, whence *E legal cathedrales*.

# Homes for America

D. GRAHAM

- Belleplaine  
Brooklawn  
Colonia  
Colonia Manor  
Fair Haven  
Fair Lawn  
Greenfield Village  
Green Village  
Plainsboro  
Pleasant Grove  
Pleasant Plains  
Sunset Hill Garden
- Garden City  
Garden City Park  
Greenlawn  
Island Park  
Levittown  
Middletown  
New City Park  
Pine Lawn  
Plainview  
Plandome Manor  
Plasantside  
Plasantsville

Large-scale tract housing developments constitute the new city. They are located everywhere. They are not particularly bound to existing communities, they fail to develop either regionally characteristic or separate identity. These projects date from the end of World War II when in southern California speculators in 'cooperative' builders adapted mass production techniques to quickly build many houses for the defense workers were concentrated there. This 'California Method' consisted simply of determining in advance the exact amount and lengths of pieces of lumber and multiplying them by the number of standardized houses to be built. A cutting yard was set up near the site of the project to saw rough lumber into those sizes. By mass buying, greater use of machines and factories produced parts, assembly line standardization, multiple units were easily fabricated.



"The Serenade" Cape Cod unit, D.G.

Each house in a development is a tightly constructed shell although this fact is often concealed by fake (half stone) back walls. Shells can be added or subtracted easily. The standard unit is a box in a series of boxes, sometimes interruptedly called 'pillboxes'. When the box has a sharply oblique roof it is called a Cape Cod. When it is longer than wide it is a ranch. A



Two entrances, Bayside, four doors, Bayside, Bayside, D.G.

two-story house is usually called 'colonial'. If it consists of contiguous boxes with one slightly higher elevation it is a 'split level'. Such arbitrary differentiation is antagonistic to the basic structure with the possible exception of the split level whose plan simplifies construction on discontinuous ground levels).

There is a recent trend toward 'two house houses' which are two houses split by adjoining walls and having separate entrances. The left and right hand units are mirror reproductions of each other. Often sold as private units are strings of apartment-like quadrilateral cells formed by subdividing laterally an extended rectangular parallelogram into as many as ten or twelve separate dwellings.

Developers usually build large groups of such related houses sharing similar floor plans and whose overall grouping possesses a discrete flow plan. Regional shopping centers and industrial parks are sometimes integrated as well into the general scheme. Each development is sectionalized into linked and areas containing a series of identical or superficially related types of houses all of which have uniform or staggered setbacks and level plots.



Sit-back, Bayside City, New Bayside

The logic relating each sectional part to the entire plan follows a systematic plan. A development contains a limited set number of house models. For instance Cape Cod or Florida project advertises eight different models.

- A The Sonata
- B The Concerto
- C The Overture
- D The Ballet
- E The Prelude
- F The Serenade
- G The Nocturne
- H The Bluespeak



Center Street, Bayside, Bayside, Bayside, Bayside, D.G.

- In addition, there is a choice of eight exterior colors:
- 1 White
  - 2 Mountain Grey
  - 3 Nickel



10000 00000

- 4 Washburn Green
- 5 Lawn Green
- 6 Pastel
- 7 Coral Pink
- 8 Colonial Red

As the color series usually varies independently of the model series a total of eight houses utilizing four models and four colors might have eight colors but eight in 2 301 possible arrangements.

Don Graham

Joseph KOSUTH

One and Three Chairs

1965

Wooden folding chair, colour photograph of chair to scale, photographic enlargement of dictionary definition

Dimensions variable

In this early work Kosuth presented a chair and two representations of it – a photostat of a dictionary definition and a photograph. The photostat and the chair are mobile whereas the photograph needed to be made of the chair in situ, tethering the piece to its specific site. This is one of a number of Kosuth's *Proto-Investigations*, a name given retrospectively to a related series of works with three parts exploring the semantic and cognitive relations between objects, definitions and images

Dan GRAHAM

Homes for America [detail]

1966-70

2 panels, colour and black and white photographs, texts  
101.5 x 84.5 cm [40 x 33.5 in] each

Revised version produced in 1970 of the artist's original 1966 paste-up for *Arts Magazine*

Graham's Kodak Instamatic snapshots and his text describing new modular tract housing were originally intended to be inserted in a non-art magazine such as *Esquire*. Both the words and the images mimicked the language of suburban property developers' brochures. However when the text was published, in *Arts Magazine* in 1966, Graham's intention was compromised. The editor replaced his images with a Walker Evans photograph. Graham also showed photographs from this series as a slide presentation, as mounted photographs and as a page mock-up of the article he had hoped to publish. *Homes For America* doesn't fit comfortably with either the printed page or the gallery wall yet it was one of the most significant precursors of the interrelationship between the two which developed from the late 1960s onwards.



Rowing Development, Bayside, Bayside, Bayside, Bayside, D.G.



Rowing Development, Bayside, Bayside, Bayside, Bayside, D.G.





John BALDESSARI

An Artist Is Not Merely the  
Slavish Announcer ...

1967-68

Synthetic polymer and photo  
emulsion on canvas

150 x 114.5 cm (59 x 45 in)

Collection, Whitney Museum  
of American Art, New York

This mundane photograph of a car park met none of the criteria for art at the time it was made, yet here it is printed onto a fine art material, canvas. The text beneath seems intended to be instructive, but it is divorced from its original context, a book used for art teaching. Baldessari treated the text as a 'readymade' and had a sign painter copy it out for him. This work, part of a series which represented a turning point for the artist, confounds assumptions about what is 'good' painting and photography. It also denies modernist distinctions between the visual and the verbal. The choice of image is typical of the kind that conceptual artists would use when invoking photography as exemplary of the artless and the everyday.

AN ARTIST IS NOT MERELY THE SLAVISH  
ANNOUNCER OF A SERIES OF FACTS,  
WHICH IN THIS CASE THE CAMERA HAS  
HAD TO ACCEPT AND MECHANICALLY  
RECORD.







• • • • •

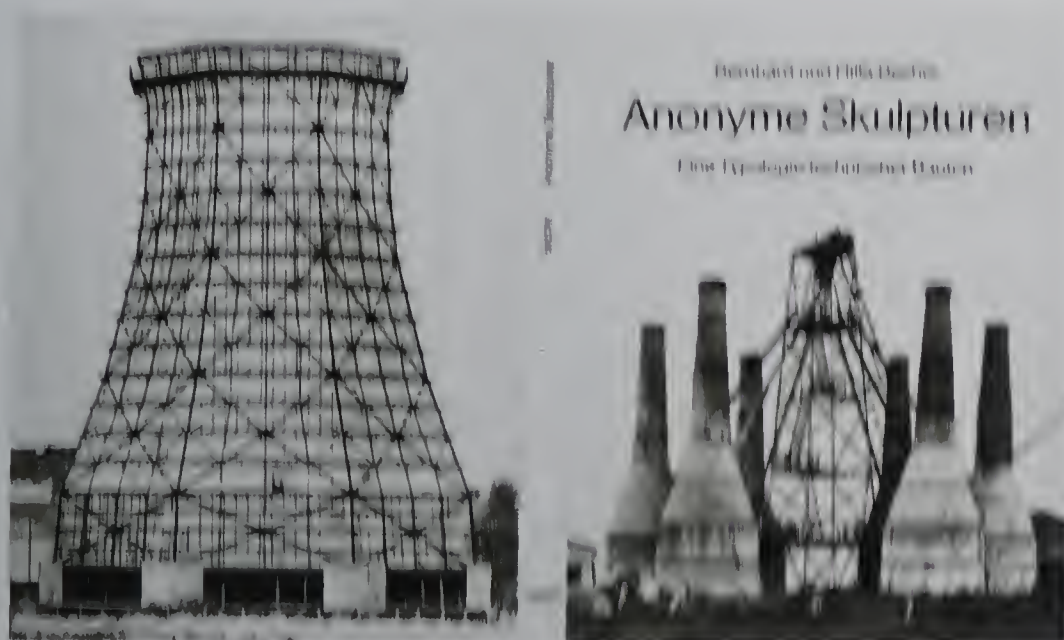
9. 10. 11.

[2]  $\mathcal{H}_1 \cap \mathcal{H}_2 = \emptyset$ ,  $\mathcal{H}_1 \cup \mathcal{H}_2 = \mathcal{H}$ ,  $\mathcal{H}_1 \cap \mathcal{H}_3 = \emptyset$ ,  $\mathcal{H}_1 \cup \mathcal{H}_3 = \mathcal{H}$ ,  $\mathcal{H}_2 \cap \mathcal{H}_3 = \emptyset$ ,  $\mathcal{H}_2 \cup \mathcal{H}_3 = \mathcal{H}$ .

A path along the floor proportions 1 to 21 units photographical photographs printed to the actual size of the objects, and picture attached to the floor so that the images are perfectly congruent with their objects.

Victor Kargin enlisted in the Russian Army in 1942, returned in 1946 as a Sergeant.

The else specificity of this early work by Broughton contradicts the usual mobility of photographic images. Here the idea that a photograph replaces the object is made literal. Actual size photographs were stapled to the floor so that they replaced their referent. The use of black and white images emphasized photography as a process of representation rather than adding the dimension of colour.

[illegible]

With the publication of this book and the exhibition of their work in the same year by the Museum of Modern Art, they mark the end of the American historicist style. They were the last of a generation of American photographers who were largely self-taught in the craft of composition and technical art. They did not make social photographs of industrial structures and workers as both their French scientific objective images did. Although in this sense photographic art and always appears in series of the same type of structure. The American images are more significant as records of the industrial of nature and industry and their beauty is brought as much to their subject as their artistic importance. At the end of the twentieth century, the American style in photography is the last of a generation of American photographers.

The illustrations are part of a documentation of historical buildings which, apart from the seven houses dealt with here, include: power stations, high tension pylons, radio telescopes, oil pumps, drilling bases, refineries, drilling rigs, factory halls, and syntheses. In this book we have objects of architectural interest in a broad sense whose shapes are the result of calculation and technical processes of design and are optimally evident. They are generally buildings, but, since they belong to the 19th and 20th styles, their possibilities completely contradict the aims of the task of design.







## Keith Arnatt

### TROUSER – WORD PIECE

'It is usually thought, and I dare say usually rightly thought, that what one might call the affirmative use of a term is basic - that, to understand 'x', we need to know what it is to be x, or to be an x, and that knowing this apprises us of what it is **not** to be x, not to be an x. But with 'real' . . . it is the **negative** use that wears the trousers. That is, a definite sense attaches to the assertion that something is real, a real such-and-such, only in the light of a specific way in which it might be, or might have been, **not** real. 'A real duck' differs from the simple 'a duck' only in that it is used to exclude various ways of being not a real duck - but a dummy, a toy, a picture, a decoy, &c.; and moreover I don't know **just** how to take the assertion that it's a real duck unless I know **just** what, on that particular occasion, the speaker had it in mind to exclude . . . (The) function of 'real' is not to contribute positively to the characterisation of anything, but to exclude possible ways of being **not** real - and these ways are both numerous for particular kinds of things, and liable to be quite different for things of different kinds. It is this identity of general function combined with immense diversity in specific applications which gives to the word 'real' the, at first sight, baffling feature of having neither one single 'meaning,' nor yet ambiguity, a number of different meanings.'

John Austin, 'Sense and Sensibilia.'

left and opposite

Keith ARNATT

Trouser-Word Piece

1972

Black and white photograph, text

2 panels, 100.5 × 100.5 cm

[39.5 × 39.5 in] each

Collection, Tate Gallery, London

In one version of this work Arnatt was photographed in a street wearing the placard; in another this image was reproduced on one side of a small card while the text – a quotation from *Sense and Sensibilia* by the analytic philosopher J.L. Austin – appeared on the reverse. Austin argued that to prove what something is, it is necessary to prove what it is not. The photograph and Arnatt's pose adopt the rhetoric of 'straight fact', promising something clear and uncomplicated. However the neutrality of Arnatt's statement contains within it the seeds of its own doubt. What is a real artist? Is he one? If not, then what is he? Is the text his speech at all? With his disarming title Arnatt further undermines any stable position of judgement.



Richard HAMILTON

The Critic Laughs

1968

Laminated photo offset lithograph and screenprint with enamel paint and collage

34 × 26 cm [13.5 × 10 in]

This work began as a combination of two found objects – a set of novelty candy teeth attached to the lower part of an electric toothbrush. The title alludes to Jasper Johns' metal sculpture *The Critic Smiles* (1959), a toothbrush with molars for bristles. Before making it into a multiple, Hamilton photographed it and retouched the photograph. From this an offset litho print was made which was then laminated to give it a 'photographic' gloss before the addition of more hand painting. This slippage between the handmade and industrial and commercial processes is characteristic of much of Hamilton's work.



Bas Jan ADER  
*All My Clothes*  
1970  
Gelatin silver print  
20,5 x 25,5 cm [8 x 10 in.]

Ader's photographs, films and texts documented his ephemeral performed actions, which viewed the human sensibility as both frail and heroic. Photography was an ideal medium for his work due to the tension between its material presence and its deferral of the solidity of the world. *All My Clothes* looks like the emptied contents of a suitcase, implying either the artist's recent arrival, his imminent departure or just a need to take stock at a moment of uncertainty. It also seems to imply that if the artist took the photograph he was either naked or wearing borrowed clothes.

opposite

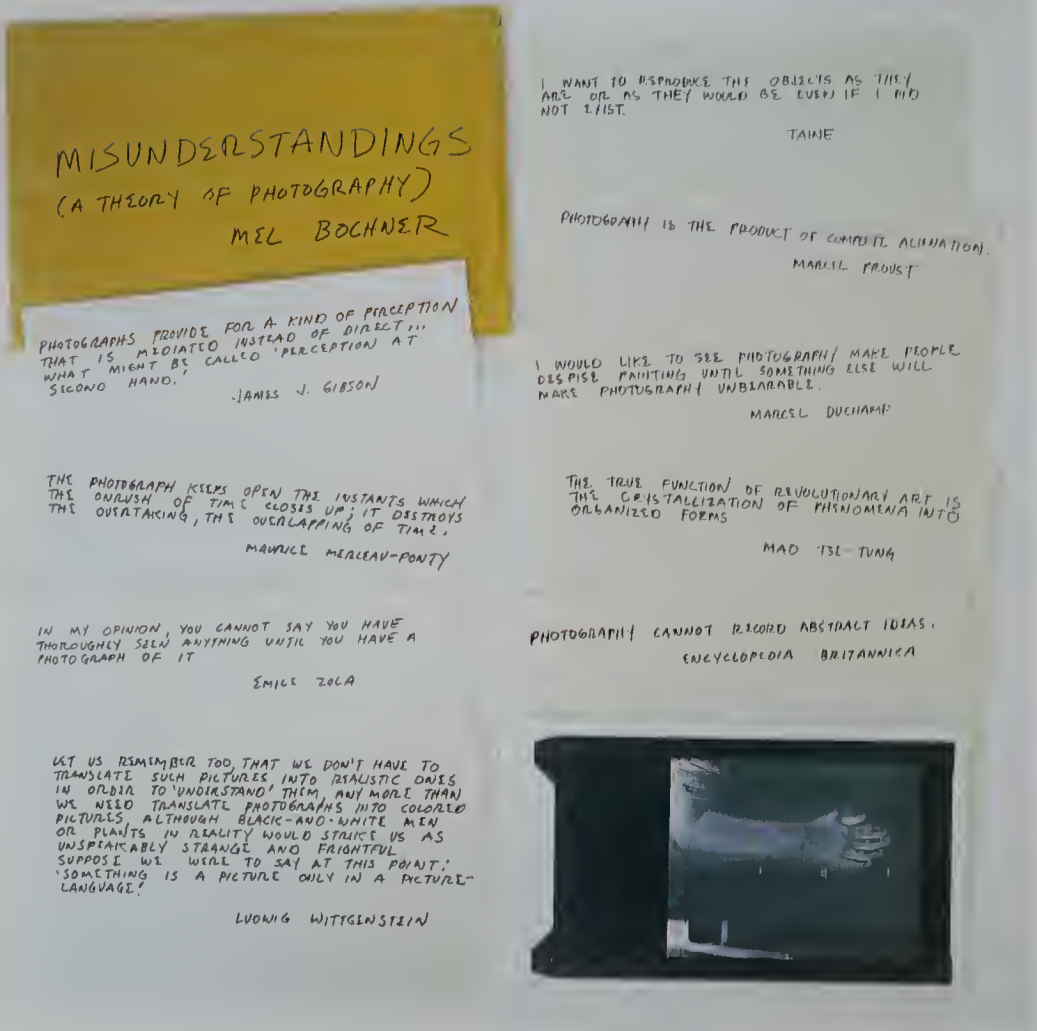
Eleanor ANTIIN  
*100 Boots* [details]  
1971–73

2 from the series of gelatin silver prints, originally used for 51 black and white halftone printed postcards  
20,5 x 25,5 cm [8 x 10 in.] each

From 1971 to 1973 Antin mailed a series of 51 photographs printed as postcards to around 1,000 addressees. The cards depict fifty pairs of rubber boots – which Antin viewed as a single 'persona' – as they 'travel' across the United States from California to New York. They are seen towards the end heading for The Museum of Modern Art, New York, where the cards were ultimately displayed in an exhibition. The actual boots also appeared there – they could be glimpsed through a doorway posed as if listening to the radio or lying on a mattress. Later, all the images were collated into a book of the project.







Mel BOCHNER

Misunderstandings (A Theory of Photography)

1967/70

10 photo offset prints of 9 texts and one image, in manila envelope

This was the last photographic piece made by Bochner before he moved to sculpture and installation. It concluded an intensive investigation into the connections between photography, vision and knowledge. Rather than taking up photography as a transparent means of conveying ideas, Bochner's work subtly questioned whether this notion, so central to much conceptual use of photography, was even possible. The nine texts are printed as facsimiles of handwriting on index cards. Each is a quote attributed to an authoritative source, but Bochner invented three of these himself and has never revealed which ones. The photograph, an image of the artist's arm laid against a measuring scale, is reproduced at much less than its actual size and in negative. It is a reworking of part of another work called *Actual Size (Hand)* which was originally reproduced 1:1 and in positive (see page 23). Bochner arrived at a form and method of distribution suited to his engagement with photography, a free-standing work which is the result of careful reflection.

Diane MICHALS

A Failed Attempt to Photograph Reality

1975

Gelatin silver print

28 x 35.5 cm [11 x 14 in]

Michals is a successful commercial photographer but is best known for the books and photo-narratives he has made since the 1960s. Most of them integrate a subtle use of handwritten script as captions. Here, however, the caption is the image. This is still a photographic work, in the sense that Michals wrote on photographic paper and presents it to us just like his other images. It is a gelatin silver print. As with much of his work this piece concerns the folly of an objectivity which equates seeing with knowing or understanding. Despite its gentle, poetic wit this work shares some common ground with the more analytical conceptual photography of the time.





William WEGMAN

John

1970

gelatin silver print

35,5 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)

Wegman here draws attention to a condition highly specific to the medium of photography – the reversibility of the negative. Rarely is this consciously exploited in art, although ‘flipping’ images is commonplace in commercial magazine layouts. Language is read left to right but the ‘reading’ of a photograph is not so linear. A reversed image retains all of its objectivity, providing it excludes text or other clues. Here Wegman uses language in the form of the name tag to disrupt a simple reading and complicate our relationship to the subject.



John HILLIARD

Cause of Death/ [3]

1974

photograph and text (museum board)

100 x 100 cm (40.1 x 40.1 in) each

The same image is cropped here in four different ways. Each has a separate title, suggesting different narratives. The shrouded body alludes to sensational news photos which depend on explanatory captions to guarantee the visual 'fact'. Instead of fixing our reading Hilliard suspends certainty by undermining a stable relation to the image. In the 1970s Hilliard examined every technical aspect of photography. Each was isolated in turn and rigorously explored.



Horizon Rib, from *Cancellations*

1974

Septa-toned gelatin silver print

23.5 × 34.5 cm [9.5 × 13.6 in.]

From 1974 to 1980 Barrow produced the *Cancellations* series comprised of objective photographs – rectilinear and plainly descriptive – which are scored across diagonally with a variety of tools applied to the negative. Since the images follow the language of straight photography the cancellation seems to refer as much to the subject matter or choice of view as the print itself. The cross draws attention to something ('X marks the spot') but also negates and obliterates it. It can also be seen as a play on the tension between art and reproduction. In the 1970s criteria were being established for valuing photographs, including limited editions. Unlike photographers, printmakers traditionally 'cancel' their plates after a finite edition. Here Barrow scores his negative in order to create a work.



Eggleston's 1976 exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, was the first occasion when the museum displayed colour photography as art. Seventy-five images were selected from a group of 375 taken around Eggleston's homeland in Memphis. The show was accompanied by the influential book *William Eggleston's Guide*. While his work shared with conceptual art a focus on the everyday, Eggleston's images showed an affection for image making which was out of step with both the critical climate of the time and the traditions of monochrome art photography. His approach also has cinematic affinities; he made location stills for John Huston's *Annie* (1982) and his work was an inspiration for David Byrne's *True Stories* (1986).

'Eggleston's use of colour in his photographs is unspectacular, incidental. He uses it so subtly that we are no longer aware of it as a separate component of the process by which we perceive an object visually.'

— Thomas Weski, *William Eggleston: The Hasselblad Award*, 1998







Lewis BALTZ

West Wall, Resim Corporation, Element No. 10, from *The New Topographics* (Los Angeles: Parkes, near Irvine, California, 1975)

Gelatin silver print

15 × 23 cm [6 × 9 in.]

Baltz had photographed tract housing and commercial lots since the end of the 1960s but rose to prominence when his work was included in the 1975 group exhibition 'New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape', which took its cue from nineteenth-century topographical photographs used as land records. Baltz focused with a detached aesthetic on the advance of urban planners' developments and streamlined corporate structures into the American landscape. Despite the detailed visual description the work's neutrality avoided it being caught up in any particular social or political viewpoint. Nor did it fit comfortably with Minimalism, conceptual art or photographic formalism. The reserved visual approach echoed an ambivalence towards the subject matter.





Lynne COHEN

Police Range

1986

Gelatin silver print

20.5 × 25.5 cm [8 × 10 in]

Since the 1970s Cohen has photographed interiors, empty of people, which tend to be non-public spaces of work or leisure. In their cool detachment the photographs draw attention, through absence, to the activities that we never see. For Cohen photography is primarily a descriptive, objectivising medium that encounters the world and re-presents it. Her use of photography developed from her earlier Minimalist work. Her images share Minimal art's austerity and meticulous finish, resembling anonymous archival records.



FISCHLI & WEISS

Still(er) Nachmittag [Quiet

Afternoon] [detail]

1984 85

Colour and black and white  
photographs

40.8 × 30.5 cm [16 × 12 in] each

1. to n., Still(er) Nachmittag

[Quiet Afternoon]; Heronry,

Edenage, Confidence

In this series Fischli and Weiss use the photograph as a quick visual brace to hold together ramshackle assemblages of objects. In these various improvised situations, sculpture blends with photography. The result is the object's equivalent of posing, made all the more comic by pseudo-classical titles. Extending this work the artists made a kinetic sculptural film in 1987 called *The Way Things Go*. The aesthetic is similar to the photographs but it is a thirty-minute chain reaction in which the objects fall, swing, collide, burn and slide into each other in a linear sequence around the studio floor.

Charles RAY

No

1992

Professional colour photograph of  
a fibreglass dummy of the artist  
96.5 x 76 cm [38 x 30 in]

Ray is best known for his highly finished sculptures that disrupt habits of perception. These have included scaling up a child's model fire truck to the size of the real thing and a domestic table upon which everyday objects rotate at an imperceptibly slow speed. The work always hinges on a meticulous attention to detail and a perfection that makes them both fascinating and deliberately distant. *No* is a professional photograph of a fibreglass replica of the artist. Such dummies have a veracity that we habitually describe as a 'photographic likeness'. Paradoxically they appear even more lifelike when they are themselves photographed.





Gabriel OROZCO

Until You Find Another Yellow Schwalbe [details]

1995

40 cibachrome prints

32 × 47 cm [12.5 × 18.5 in] each

Made while the artist was living in Berlin, this series of 40 photographs recalls the repetition inherent in classificatory photography and industrial manufacture. Moving through the city on his yellow Schwalbe ('Swallow'), Orozco parked and photographed it whenever he encountered a similar one. The Schwalbe is a product of the formerly socialist East Germany. Its design tries to marry the commodity styling of high capitalism and the utility of a practical mode of transport. It is the product of a specific moment in Europe's social history. Orozco's choice to limit the piece to yellow suggests the possible range of colours demanded by the open market while alluding to the underlying sameness of mass production.



Michael SNOW

Flightstop [detail]

1979

60 suspended fibreglass models, tiled with photographic images

Lifesize

Permanent installation, Eaton Centre, Toronto

For this public sculpture Snow photographed the entire surface of a Canada goose in close up. Images were then tiled onto the surface of sixty fibreglass models, creating a form of three-dimensional photography in which a single bird can be viewed simultaneously in sixty variations of flight motion. *Flightstop* recalls the nineteenth-century chronophotography of Etienne Jules Marey, whose methods of recording motion included a photographic gun capable of 'shooting' the sequence of a bird in flight. It also prefigures the contemporary cinematic technique known as time-slice, where the camera appears to circle around a subject frozen in movement.



Gillian WEARING

Sixty Minute Silence

1996

Rear projection video, 60 mins, colour, Sound

Screen size variable

Wearing here explores the relation between photography and the moving image. A group of police officers pose as if for a formal group photograph. Posing involves 'turning oneself into a photograph' – holding oneself still in preparation for the image, but Wearing's apparatus is a video camera and her 'sitters' (even though they were in fact professional actors) cannot hold their pose indefinitely. As the hour goes by the subjects' at first motionless silence is slowly disrupted by fidgeting and coughing. Wearing's choice of the police as subjects is not arbitrary. Cameras have an entrenched authority and exert power over us, be it in the photobooth, the family snapshot or the police station. Historically, photography has been a way of fixing identity controlled by those in power. Here Wearing allows us to gaze at the Law unravelling into a formless group of uncomfortable individuals.





Neal FLOYER

Light Switch

1992/93

Projected 35mm slide and slide projector

Dimensions: variable

An actual size image of a light switch is beamed onto the wall at the customary height. The slide projector is itself made into an integral part of the visual experience of the work. Many of Floyer's pieces occupy a space between sculpture and photography, taking the form of visual puns and *trompe l'oeil*, addressing the specific features of their immediate environment.



John HILLIARD

Debate: 18 per cent Reflection

1996

Colour photograph, aluminium

120 x 151 cm (47 x 62 in.)

Hilliard presents, or blocks, us with a grey rectangular surface. To the sides we see an exhibition of figurative painting in progress. The rectangle alludes both to monochrome painting and to the 'grey card' placed before the camera by photographers to help calculate accurate exposure. The artist Jeff Wall has pointed out that ever since the blank canvas was accepted as a legitimate artwork, all figurative painting is a 'painting on a painting'. While the monochrome is a technical possibility in photography, it does not occupy the privileged place it does for painting. Here we are reminded that prior to taking a photograph the camera must first 'took' at a blank grey surface. As with painting, abstraction precedes representation.

# TRACES OF TRACES

A photograph is an image that bears

the mark of the real. The light that illuminates the world is the light that records its image. In this sense all photographs are traces. However the world itself contains traces or marks. These have been of enduring interest to artists. A photograph of a trace is perhaps the opposite of the 'decisive moment'. It is the moment after. It records the marks made by the world on the body and by the body on the world. Both performance and conceptual art utilized the photograph as a means of recording traces. More recently, documentary photography has moved beyond the recording of 'events' to include the aftermath. For all their diversity, the works in this section share a certain forensic quality, engaging with the scientific use of the photographic image.

John DIVOLA

Untitled

1974

Gelatin silver print

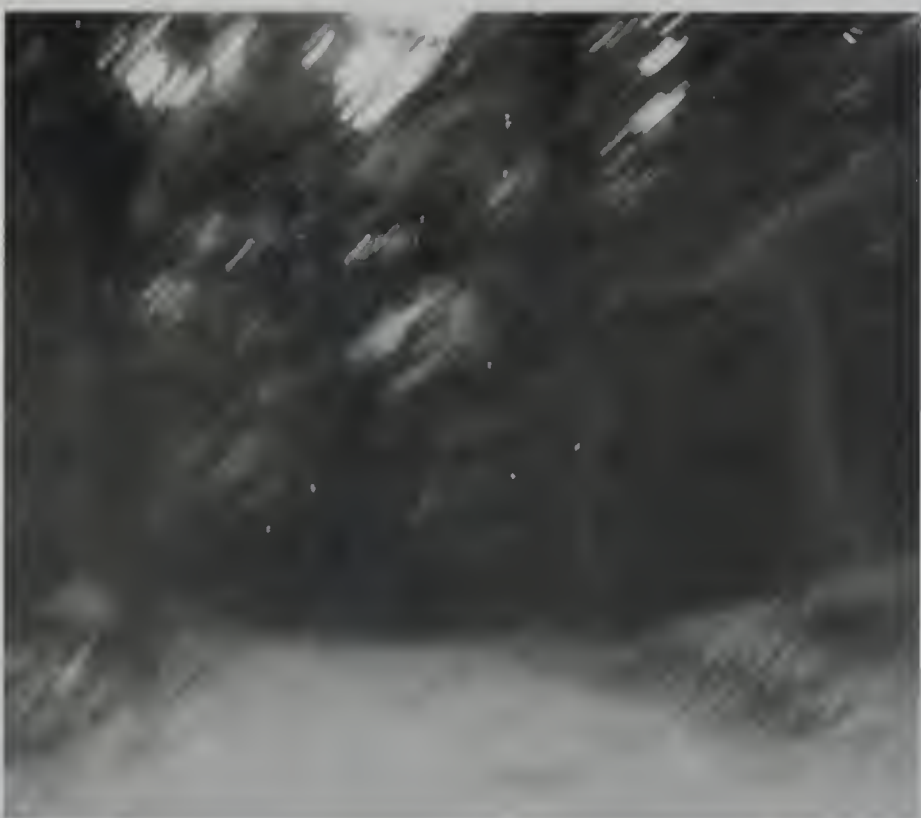
35.5 × 35.5 cm [14 × 14 in]

From the *Vandalism* series, 1973-75

Divola explores relationships between the natural and the artificial, the objective and the subjective. In the *Vandalism* series he blurred the distinction between found evidence and constructed performance. The marks recorded by the camera appear intentional yet their meaning is elusive. Has the camera 'encountered' them or have they been made especially for it? The photographs preserve the ambiguous status of the traces. In fact Divola had himself broken into these condemned buildings, which he 'vandalised' creatively before photographing them.







## VITO ACCONCI

1950–

Italy

At the end of his performance, he took home with him photographs

of himself in motion.

Acconci made these Kodak Instamatic snaps at the moment he hit the ground in a series of consecutive broadjumps along a woodland path. *Jumps* fuses the conceptual practice of carrying out a pre-planned idea with the performance of actions that take into account the body's presence. 'Camera shake' is usually regarded as a dysfunction of photography because it obscures the subject matter and betrays the physical presence of the photographer, undermining the sense of objectivity. Such failures of the body are characteristic of much of Acconci's performance work.





Giuseppe PENONE

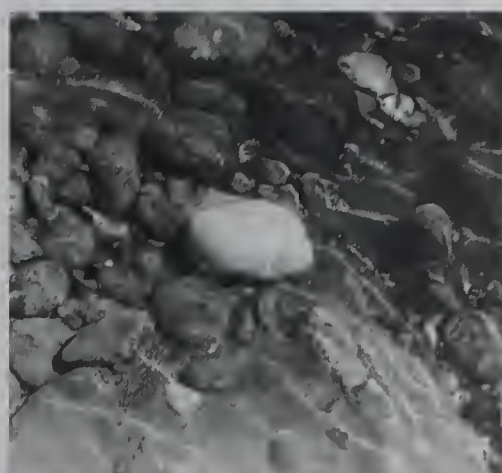
Svolgere la propria pelle/la pietra  
[Unroll your skin/stone]

1971

Engraved stone

Documentation photograph:

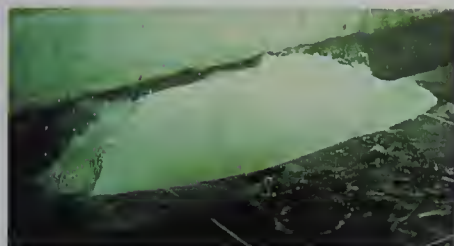
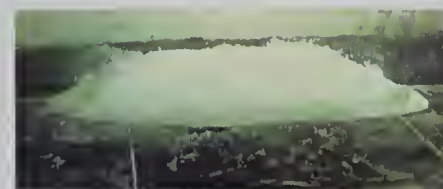
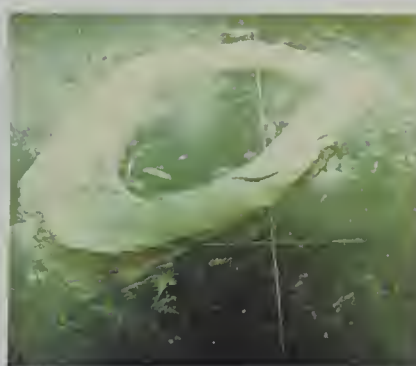
In the spirit of the Arte Povera movement, Penone's sculptural and photographic work searched for an elemental purity in which the trace is a matter of touch and physical connection with the material environment. Onto a plain stone the artist permanently engraved an image of his fingerprints – traces of the physical evidence of his existence – before casting it into the water to lie alongside other stones on a river bed. The action was documented in photographs. Since 1970 the artist has used the autographic motif of his hand and fingerprints in many works.











Bruce NAUMAN –

Flour Arrangement

1966

/ tinted black and white  
photographs

Various dimensions

Collection, Hallen für Neue  
Kunst, Schaffhausen

Nauman formed and reformed  
arrangements of flour on his studio floor,  
photographing them over a one month  
period. Evident here are many concerns  
that inform his later work – visual  
/verbal punning, an interest in formless  
materials and behaviour, and the  
deferral of the real event through  
a photographic or filmic trace.

Jan DIBBETS

The Shortest Day at the Van Abbemuseum, 1970

1970

Colour photographs

215.5 × 79 cm [85 × 71 in]

Collection, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

At the winter solstice Dibbets photographed a window of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, at ten minute intervals, from dawn to dusk, making 80 photographs which demarcate time and light mathematically. The piece was originally devised as a slide sequence but in the photographic montage the grid of the window is repeated and time is spatialised. The photograph itself has the scale of a large window. Most of Dibbets' works are calculated in advance and executed according to strict rules and co-ordinates. Their aesthetic impact derives from their adherence to a seemingly blind objective system.







Mac ADAMS

Mystery of Two Triangles

1978

2 gelatin silver prints

20.5 × 25.5 cm [8 × 10 in] each

From *Mysteries* series

*Mysteries* is a series of concentrated diptychs and triptychs in which there are just enough clues to set in motion narratives of crime or intrigue. Their tableau style draws from theatre, cinema, performance art and detective fiction. Here the photograph is a sign that is also to be read as a container of signs. Objects, gestures and traces are pieced together by the viewer. In the process, mechanisms of photography as narrative and evidence are revealed.

*opposite*

Robert CUMMING

Light Boat on Night Pond

[details]

1975

Gelatin silver prints

20.5 × 25.5 cm [8 × 10 in] each

Cumming's photographic works from the 1970s often took the form of experiments or demonstrations. A process or principle, sometimes absurd, would be followed through and documented methodically. Although much conceptual photography of the period opted for de-skilled Kodak Instamatic snapshots, Cumming used a technically exacting 10 x 8 inch plate camera. This deepened his ironic take on the scientific ideal in which visual detail is valuable data.



Susan HALLER

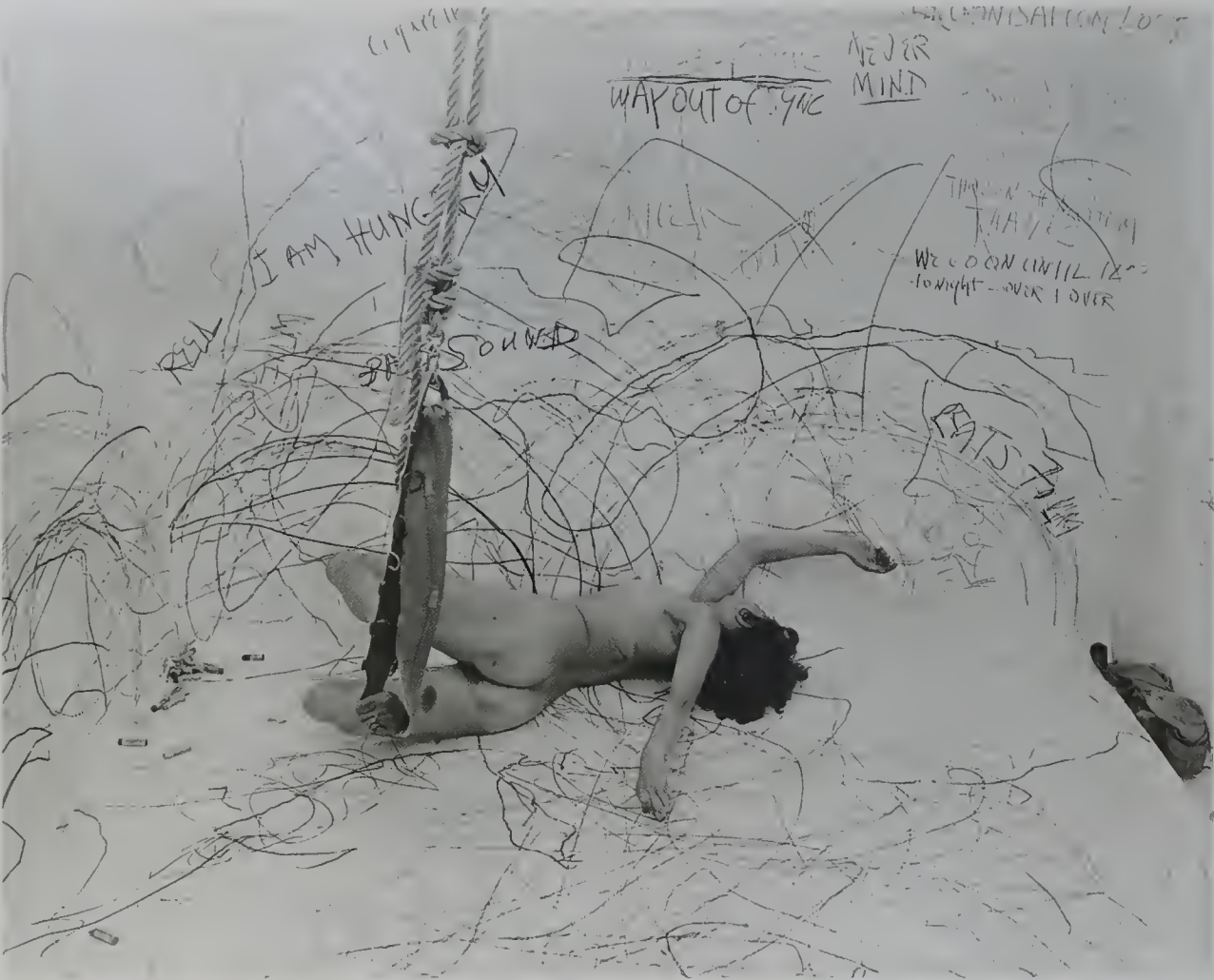
Untitled

1972

Silkscreen print, dye and iron burns on fabric

109 × 76 cm [43 × 30 in]

This image is reminiscent of Pop art's use of everyday domestic products. The burn marks, however, indicate the use of a real iron to make direct and iconic traces, introducing senses of time, process and performance which differ from those associated with photography. 'Low' domestic work is here made inseparable from the labour of making 'high' art. Likewise, canvas is replaced with a nondescript fabric. This work condenses many of the concerns and strategies of feminist art practice that later came to characterise the 1970s.



Carolee SCHNEEMANN  
*Up to and Including Her Limits*  
1973-76  
Photographic documentation  
of Performance in Berlin, 1976  
Schneeman's live work has entered  
broader circulation, including art history,  
in the form of photographs. Although  
this piece was relayed as live video to  
an audience, the photographs allow the  
event to be represented without being  
substituted, preserving the integrity  
of the performance.

'*Up to and Including Her Limits*  
was the direct result of Jackson Pollock's  
physicalized painting process ...  
I am suspended in a tree surgeon's  
harness on a three-quarter-inch manila  
rope, a rope which I can raise or lower  
manually to sustain an entranced period  
of drawing ... My entire body becomes  
the agency of visual traces, vestige of the  
body's energy in motion.'

—Carolee Schneemann, statement, 2002



Hannah WILKE  
*S.O.S. Starification Object Series*  
1974-79  
10 gelatin silver prints, 15 gum  
forms mounted in frames  
Prints, 15 x 10 cm [6 x 4 in] each  
This work derived from a performance  
in which the power structures of  
audience and 'star' were explored.  
Semi-naked, Wilke flirted with an  
audience while they chewed gum.  
She then collected the pieces of gum  
and moulded them into shapes which  
resembled female genitalia. These were  
applied to her body for a series of post-  
performance photographs and then  
exhibited beneath the photographs,  
blurring distinctions between the trace  
as image and as tactile object.





Ana MENDIETA

Untitled, from the *Silüeta* series  
1978

Black and white photograph of  
*silüeta* with fertilized grass

50.5 × 40 cm [20 × 16 in]

Collection, San Francisco Museum  
of Modern Art

This is one of a number of photographs that document a group of intimate performance actions. Mendieta sought ways of constructing a harmonious relationship between her physical self and nature, rather than seeking heroic mastery over the landscape. Using her silhouette as either a positive volume or a negative space, the artist used natural processes to make an impression of her body's trace in the landscape. Here, after fertilizer was applied to the ground where Mendieta had been lying, the trace of her form remained visible in the new grass which grew there. In other works she used materials such as clay, fire or ice. As images the photographs have a visionary force. As documents they record the playing out of solitary rituals of self-discovery and revelation.





Jeff WALL

The Destroyed Room

1978

Transparency in lightbox

159 × 234 cm [62.5 × 92 in]

Depicting the aftermath of the vandalism of a woman's room, this three-dimensional set and its two dimensional composition for the camera are carefully nuanced. Disorder is creatively mimicked, so that what appear to be chance details are revealed as intentionally placed. This staging allows the viewer to connect the illusionism of photography with painterly representation. On the side of illusion a figurine of a woman is left standing on the chest of drawers as a stand-in for the missing occupant, while on the side of anti-illusion Wall leaves us to glimpse the interior of his studio through the side doorway. The large scale of the actual work fills the viewer's field of vision. It was first installed flush to the glass window of the street level Nova Gallery in Vancouver. Backlit, the lightbox gave the partial illusion of a real space while emphasising its origin in commercial spectacle.

*opposite*

Gordon MATTA-CLARK

Office Baroque

1977

Cibachrome print

101.5 × 76 cm [40 × 30 in]

In a disused office building in Antwerp, Matta-Clark made arc-shaped incisions across the wall and floors. His photographs push the limits of the descriptive document just as his architectural interventions break the perceptual habits of built space. The photographs are collaged together, a process that declares the work of the hand. The revealed edges of the film emulate the revealing of the internal structure of the architecture. This interplay of traces, moving between permanence and impermanence, was characteristic of much of Matta-Clark's site-specific work.







## Section 1: RICHIE

LONG WALL, 1983 (PART OF A SERIES OF 1983)

1983

LONG WALL, 1983 (PART OF A SERIES OF 1983)

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In the summer of 1978, Richter photographed the surface of an oil sketch on canvas from various angles and distances and under different lighting conditions. Conventional photographs of paintings for reproduction are straight, transparent, frontal and Cartesian. This often suppresses the sense of texture and three-dimensionality. Here the images highlight the laboured surface, which escapes comprehension by a single photograph. Richter's abstract paintings, such as the subject here, play on the worked surface, whereas his figurative paintings that derive from photographs smooth out surface to approximate a photographic screen

## Richard LONG

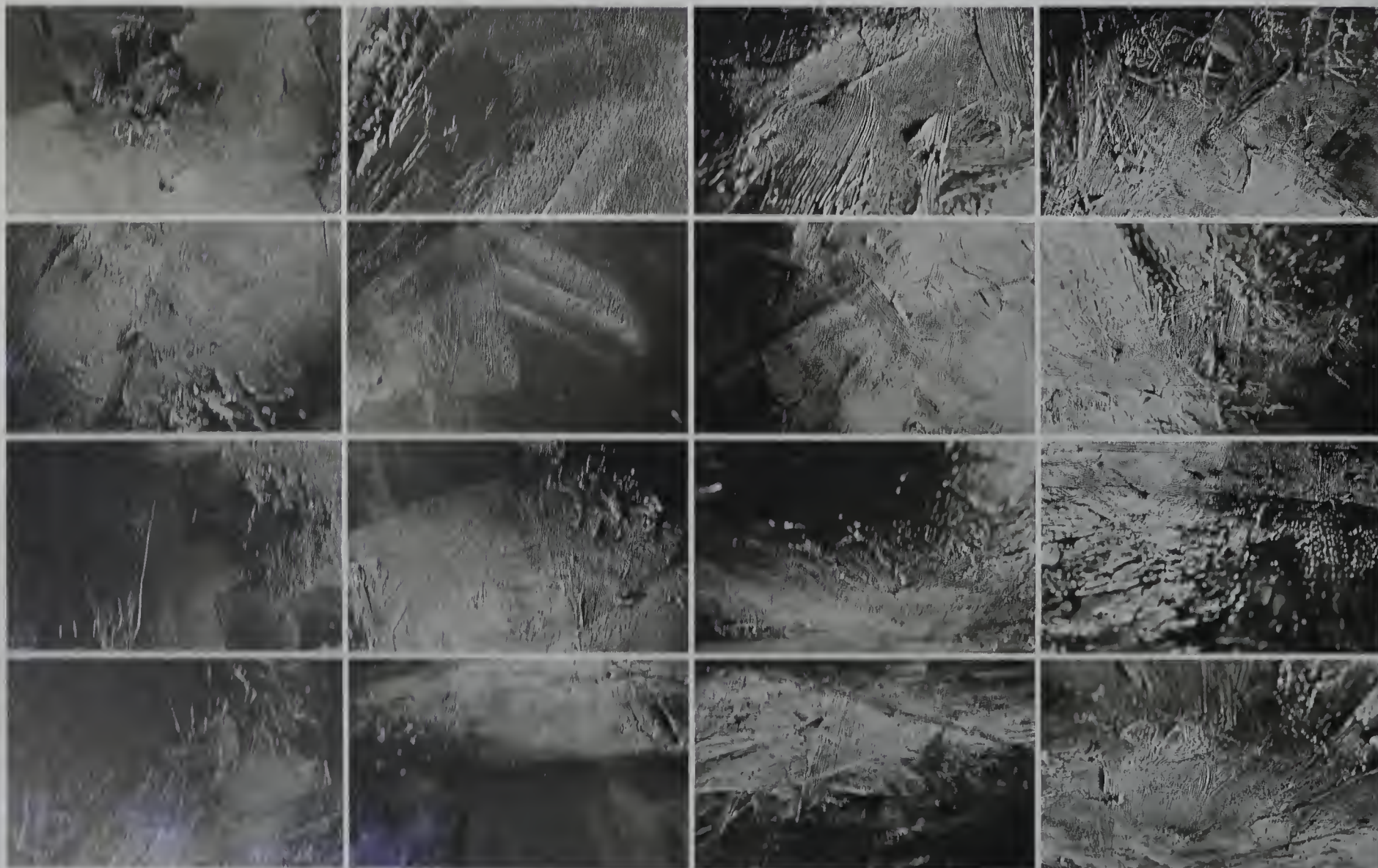
'SHADOWS AND WALL MAPS'

A DRY WALL BY A RESTING PLACE NEAR THE END OF A 21 DAY WALK IN NEPAL 1983

Black and white photograph, text

88 x 124 cm (34.5 x 49 in)

A number of the photographs which form part of Long's documentation of walks in different terrains invoke several ideas of the trace in the same image. Here the image documents a moment on a walk, the ephemeral trace of water on a dry wall and the shadow of the artist himself. Although this image is not typical of the focus on larger areas of land in much of his photography, it is related to his installed works which use splashed and smeared mud from rivers where he has travelled.



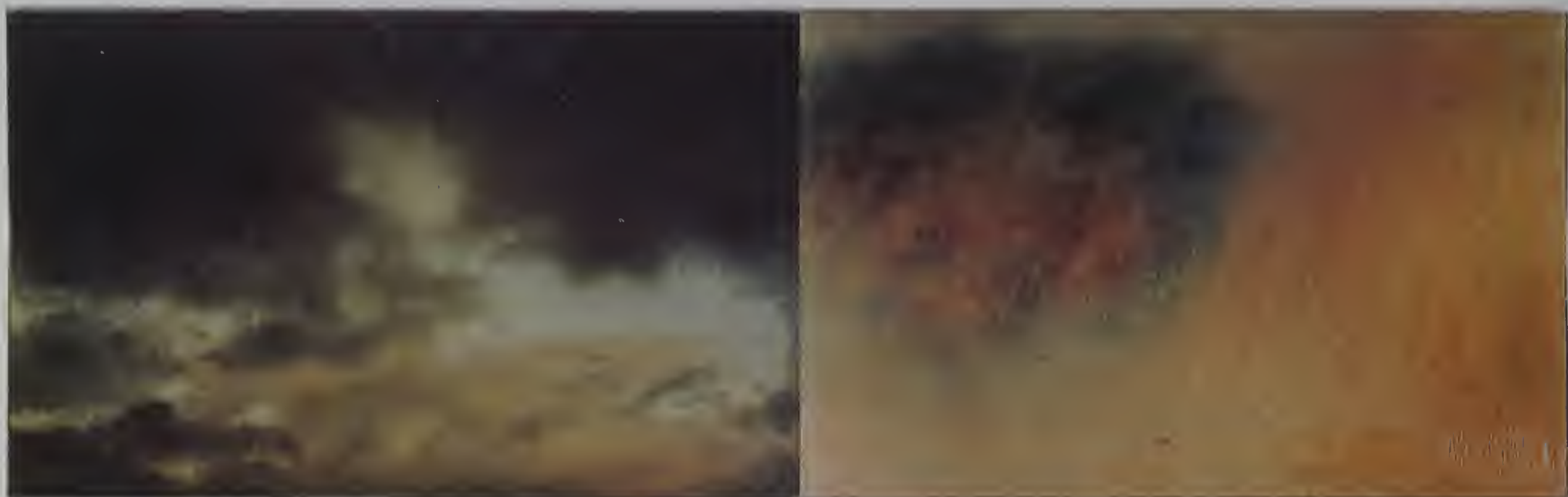




## SHADOWS AND WATERMARKS

A MUD WALL BY A RESTING PLACE NEAR THE END OF A 21 DAY WALK IN NEPAL

1983



# Genevieve CADRE

Le corps en ciel (1999, 100x100 cm)

1999

Photographie, peinture sur l'acrylique, simulation d'un

corps en ciel (1999, 100x100 cm)

Installation, Décor d'art contemporain (de Montréal, Canada), galerie

de l'Université de

Montréal. Les images de corps en ciel sont agrandies à une échelle presque

cinématographique, et se fondent dans une abstraction. Beaucoup de ses

œuvres traitent la peau comme une surface qui se déforme, mais qui

reste une surface. Ici, elle joue avec la photographie, qui est elle-même

une surface. Ici, elle joue avec la photographie, qui est elle-même

une surface. Ici, elle joue avec la photographie, qui est elle-même

une surface. Ici, elle joue avec la photographie, qui est elle-même

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une surface. Ici, elle joue avec la photographie, qui est elle-même

TRACE OF TRACE



Fall

1991

1. BLACK AND WHITE AND COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY, 20 PRINTS, 100% COTTON PAPER, 110x110 CM

2. COLOR FROM THE SERIES, 140x110 cm, 100% COTTON PAPER

Ristthueber produces large-scale projects, many of which have focused on traces. Her «entire images» of the Kuwait deserts and oil fields were made immediately after the Gulf war in 1991. Shot from the ground and the air, the muteness of the imagery is a counterpoint to the spectacle of traditional war photography and media stimulation, translating as both what has been done and fact. *Fall* is a literal but laconic title that allows visual information such as relative scale to remain unresolved, frustrating the desire to interpret. As well as forming a gallery installation, *Fall* was conceived as a book where the images are printed full bleed on each page.





Cindy SHERMAN

Untitled No. 175

1987

Cibachrome print

120.5 × 181.5 cm [47.5 × 71.5 in]

Unlike Sherman's earlier untitled film still images, here the physical body is almost absent, just glimpsed in the sunglass reflection. Its effects, however, have created a scene of abject catastrophe. This provokes reflection on the extent to which self-portraiture, particularly for women in a male dominated society, is rooted not so much in the body itself as the signs that indicate its presence. In this image and others of this period Sherman explored femininity through its traces in such a way that staging a missing event seemed to echo the search for identity. There are remnants here of portraiture but also of performance and cinematic spectacle. There is also an oscillation between the forensic gaze of the camera and bravura display for it.





Richard MISRACH

Playboy No. 94 [Ray Charles], from *Desert Cantos*  
1989-91

Colour coupler print

101.5 × 582 cm [40 × 50 in]

Misrach's *Desert Cantos* is a grand project exploring the landscapes of the American West. Several of the cantos have focused on the traces left at the nuclear test sites in Nevada. Misrach came across two copies of *Playboy* magazine that had been used for casual shooting practice, the bullets passing right through them. He made a number of images of separate pages. Rephotographed, they create a visual allegory of a particularly American blend of pornography, celebrity and consumerism, all marked at a fundamental level by violence.







opposite

Adam FUSS

Untitled

1992

Unique dye destruction print photogram

101.5 × 76 cm [40 × 30 in]

The work of this photographer is cameraless – a highly crafted and carefully refined form of the photogram. To make this image photographic paper was placed beneath shallow water, in total darkness. A snake was let loose and as it slipped through the water a flashgun was set off. The photographic paper was retrieved and processed.

The event is seen for the first time as a unique trace image.

‘An echo is a good way to describe the photogram, which is a visual echo of the real object ... It’s as if the border between the world and the print is osmotic.’

– Adam Fuss quoted in Stephen Frailey, ‘Thin Air: Adam Fuss’ Photographs’,

*Artforum*, November 1993



Willie DOHERTY

Factory III

1994

Cibachrome print mounted on aluminium

122 × 183 cm [48 × 72 in]

This is one of several photographs with an accompanying video piece, titled *Reconstruction*, made in Derry near the border between the north and south.

They were shot in a derelict factory during a ceasefire, as allegories of political possibility. Since the 1980s Doherty has focused on the conflict in Ireland.

His photographs avoid the imagery typified by media coverage of the situation, presenting instead an iconography of empty streets, landscapes and traces.





Rut BLEES LUXEMBURG

Liebeslied

1997

C-type print mounted on aluminium

150 × 180 cm [59 × 71 in]

Blees Luxemburg wanders the city at night to photograph its overlooked surfaces. *Liebeslied* [love poem], is the title image of her second body of work on the city at night. The first, *London: a Modern Project*, used the visual estrangement of night photography to depict anonymous architecture. Motorway flyovers, tower blocks, car parks and garages were transformed into surfaces revealing social structures and urban behaviour. Here the camera comes in closer to record more intimate traces – lines of text written and then blotted out on a public stairwell.



Anthony HERNANDEZ

No. 17, from Landscapes for the Homeless

1989–95

Cibachrome print

76 × 101.5 cm [30 × 40 in]

This series depicts areas of Los Angeles where rough sleepers try to pass the night invisibly and safely. The images document not just the traces that are left behind but the daytime absence of the people. Hernandez avoids fixing the category of 'the homeless' as a simple form of visual knowledge. There is deliberate ambiguity in the project's title: a 'landscape' is both a type of image and a type of place. The term 'for' replaces 'of', suggesting that these spaces are actually intended for an economically produced class of people.





Joel MEYEROWITZ

Winter Garden, World Financial Center, from After September 11: Images  
from Ground Zero  
2001

C-type print

76 × 101.5 cm [30 × 40 in]

Meyerowitz was the sole photographer permitted to document the aftermath of the collapse of the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, after the City Museum of New York assisted him in his attempt to make a photographic record within the cordoned area known as ground zero. Using a large format camera he documented the site daily, recording the shattered physical environment and the actions of the firemen and site workers in its midst. In place of the spectacle of moving images, the necessary slowness of still photography allows it to have a tempered, memorial function. In their stillness these images echo the paralysis that follows from shock, perhaps aiding the working through of the traumatic memory of the event.



# THE URBAN AND THE EVERYDAY

The city, modernity and photography are intimately linked. The modern city understood itself through its own image. Street photography reached a peak in the middle of the twentieth century in the form of art photojournalism. The freelance documentary photographer, a kind of hunter-gatherer, found outlets for images in popular magazines, books and occasionally galleries. The flow and the micro-dramas of everyday life could be frozen and then reanimated by captions and longer articles. 1960s vanguard art embraced photography with an anti-documentary impulse, leaving art photojournalism sidelined. At the same time Western cities began a wholesale transformation in their appearance, function and demographics. This new urbanism was not easily readable by the camera. The look of buildings and people could mask their functions as much as displaying them. Much of the city's operation had become electronic and therefore invisible. Many of the works in this section mark a recognition that the contemporary city can be understood as a kind of palimpsest: while its surfaces may be spectacularly photogenic, underlying them are complex social and political relations.

Bill OWENS

It's hard to hunt ..., from *Suburbia*

1972

Gelatin silver print

15 × 21.5 cm [6 × 8.5 in]

This image and its accompanying text first appeared in *Suburbia*, one of several photo books self-published by Owens in the 1970s. The book form allowed Owens to reveal American suburbia as less homogenous than its architecture might imply. He avoided the 'photo-essay' style employed in magazines such as *Life*, instead presenting single images, often captioned with quotes from the people depicted. The book was influential in two ways. It highlighted publishing as a possibility for photographers uneasy with the conventions and limitations of the gallery, and the use of images with dialogue encouraged later practitioners to expand the possibilities of combining image and text.





It's hard to hunt because you're always trespassing all the housing developments which are taking over the open fields. Since there are more people and more houses, the game is moving further out





Lee FRIEDLANDER

Albuquerque

1972

Gelatin silver print

19 × 28.5 cm [7.5 × 11 in]

Collection, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona

Friedlander's work of this period represents the conclusion of classical street photography. Both formalist and anti-formalist, it transformed what had hitherto been considered 'bad composition' into a tightly defined visual style through unexpected framing and the use of visual obstacles.

'His crowded, tense and often humorous images, and skein-like interlocking of pictorial elements were so complex, and so thoroughly defied traditional photographic composition, that they were ... interpreted by some as metaphors for the obdurate chaos that is modern life.'

– Lewis Baltz, 'American Photography in the 1970s', in *American Images: Photography 1945–1980*, 1985





Joel MEYEROWITZ

Fifth Avenue and 52nd Street

1974

Dye transfer print

60 × 90 cm [24 × 36 in]

Meyerowitz first came to prominence with street photographs shot primarily in New York. He was one of a number of photographers, including Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand, who were inspired by Robert Frank, Walker Evans and especially Henri Cartier-Bresson. Their work became an attempt to explore the formal parameters of street photography, which they approached self-consciously as a genre. As such it was in its final stages before cities, and art photography of the urban environment, began to change dramatically. Meyerowitz subsequently moved into a less frantic, more distant style of photography, depicting architecture, city views and landscapes with the precision of a large format plate camera.



Douglas HUEBLER

18/Variable Piece No. 70

1971

Black and white photographs, text

Dimensions variable

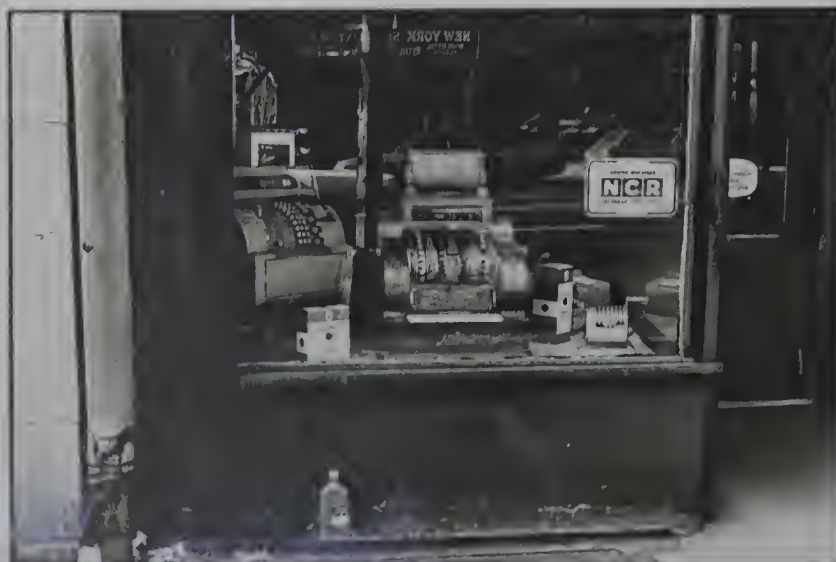
*Variable Piece No. 70 (in process) Global*, of which this work is one part, was the culmination of the artist's previous Variable Pieces, an ongoing project during Huebler's lifetime from its conception in 1971.

'Throughout the remainder of the artist's lifetime he will photographically document, to the extent of his capacity, the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner. Editions of this work will be periodically issued in a variety of topical modes: "100,000 people", "1,000,000 people", "10,000,000 people", "people personally known by the artist", "look-alikes", "overlaps", etc.'

'In November 1971 a number of photographs were made in New York City to document various aspects of "everyone alive" and one was randomly selected to represent: AT LEAST ONE PERSON WHO REMINDS THE ARTIST OF SOMEONE HE KNOWS. That photograph and a contact proof print join with this statement to constitute the form of this work: 18/Variable Piece No. 70: 1971.'

— Douglas Huebler, November 1971

TECHNICAL DATA



plastered      stuccoed  
rosined      shellacked  
vulcanized  
inebriated  
polluted



What does  
possession  
mean to you?



7% of our population  
own 84% of our wealth

*The Economist*, 15 January, 1966

Victor BURGIN

Possession

1976

Offset poster

109 × 84 cm [43 × 33 in]

*Possession* was a public poster made for a group show in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. Its jarring use of image and text was an experimental disruption of the rhetorical smoothness of advertising. Both words and picture were 'found' – a quote from the *Economist* magazine and a photo from a picture library. The work aimed to bring questions of desire into the field of the economic, drawing attention to their separation in capitalist culture. It is one of very few works Burgin made for 'the street': he later viewed as questionable the privileging of this space over the gallery as if it were inherently more democratic. A local radio station's interview of onlookers captured the essence of Burgin's interest in the 'scripto-visual' aspects of communication, whereby image and language are conjoined and filtered through unconscious mental processes:

'[old man]: It's a very good poster but ya see worse than that in the streets of a night-time ... they're cuddling and kissing each other in the middle of the bloomin' street. Well, it's only affection isn't it, not passion ...

'[interviewer]: You read it as "what does passion mean to you?" That was a slip. It says "Possession".

'[old man]: Ay, I did. That's what I thought it was ... passion ... I was just lookin' at the picture and that caught me eye ...

– Radio interview, reprinted in Victor Burgin, *Between*, 1986

*opposite*

Martha ROSLER

The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems [detail]

1974-75

Black and white photographs, text

45 panels, 20.5 × 25.5 cm [8 × 10 in] each

This series was made as part of an attempt to rethink documentary photography at a time when it had become disconnected from the project of effecting real social change. Rosler photographed the doorways and shopfronts of New York's Bowery district in a 'ready made' clichéd style. The images were accompanied by euphemisms for drunkenness. The title alludes to the notion that such images and words neither describe the situation nor connect it with a broader political context.



Jeff WALL

Mimic

1982

Transparency in lightbox

198 × 229 cm [78 × 90 in]

Collection, Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto

This was one of Wall's first staged outdoor photographs. Here 'street photography' is reconstructed so that an instance of racial and sexual tension in contemporary urban life is acted out for the camera by a small quick gesture. The subjects appear unaware of the camera positioned in front of the scene. We as viewers see more of the event than any of them. Such 'invisible' camerawork is common in narrative cinema but impossible in traditional documentary, yet the image has the feel of both. When the work is seen installed its scale increases its visual intensity. At a natural viewing distance the subjects appear lifesize.





Dennis ADAMS

Podium for Dissent

1985

Black and white photograph, aluminium, wood, enamel, steel cable

681 × 571.5 × 488 cm [268 × 225 × 192 in]

Battery Park Landfill, New York

Adams has made many site specific installations incorporating photographic images into street architecture. Here an iconic image of President Reagan was sheared in two and a platform behind the lower section provided a podium for public use. The work parodied the manner in which leaders give speeches in front of giant images of themselves. The podium made a rupture, both actual and allegorical, in the seamlessness of politics in the age of mass media. Adams made a platform from which any citizen could speak. Even when not in use, it functioned sculpturally as a critical reflection upon the relations between politics and civic life.

Krzysztof WODICZKO

South Africa House Projection

1985

Photograph projected onto the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square, London

Wodiczko projects images onto symbolic buildings in a dissident version of the state spectacles common to modern cities. Artangel commissioned him to make a series of projections in central London. He projected images such as a photograph of a tank onto monuments in Trafalgar Square as a response to a *son-et-lumière* display celebrating British imperial history. That week a delegation from the apartheid regime in South Africa arrived in London to request funds from the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, which they received. Wodiczko quickly improvised a response, swinging one of his projectors around to beam a Nazi swastika onto the pediment of South Africa House on the east side of the Square. After two hours the police forced the withdrawal of the projection. Soon afterwards a postcard was made of the image. For those who actually saw the projection or who bought the card, this image became inextricably associated with the building.









opposite

Thomas STRUTH

Vico dei Monti, Naples

1988

Gelatin silver print

86 × 64 cm [34 × 25 in]

Struth has been making large scale street photographs since the 1970s. A slowness and deliberation is adopted in the visual description, encouraging the viewer to read the images as complex interactions of elements. Rather than focusing on single buildings, the camera takes in architectural relationships that have gradually accumulated over time. The edges and boundaries are as significant as the buildings themselves. In this way the image becomes a form of social history.

below

Cindy BERNARD

Ask the Dust: Dirty Harry [1971/1990]

1990

Colour photograph

11.5 × 58.5 cm [11.5 × 23 in]

No. 18 of a series of 21 photographs

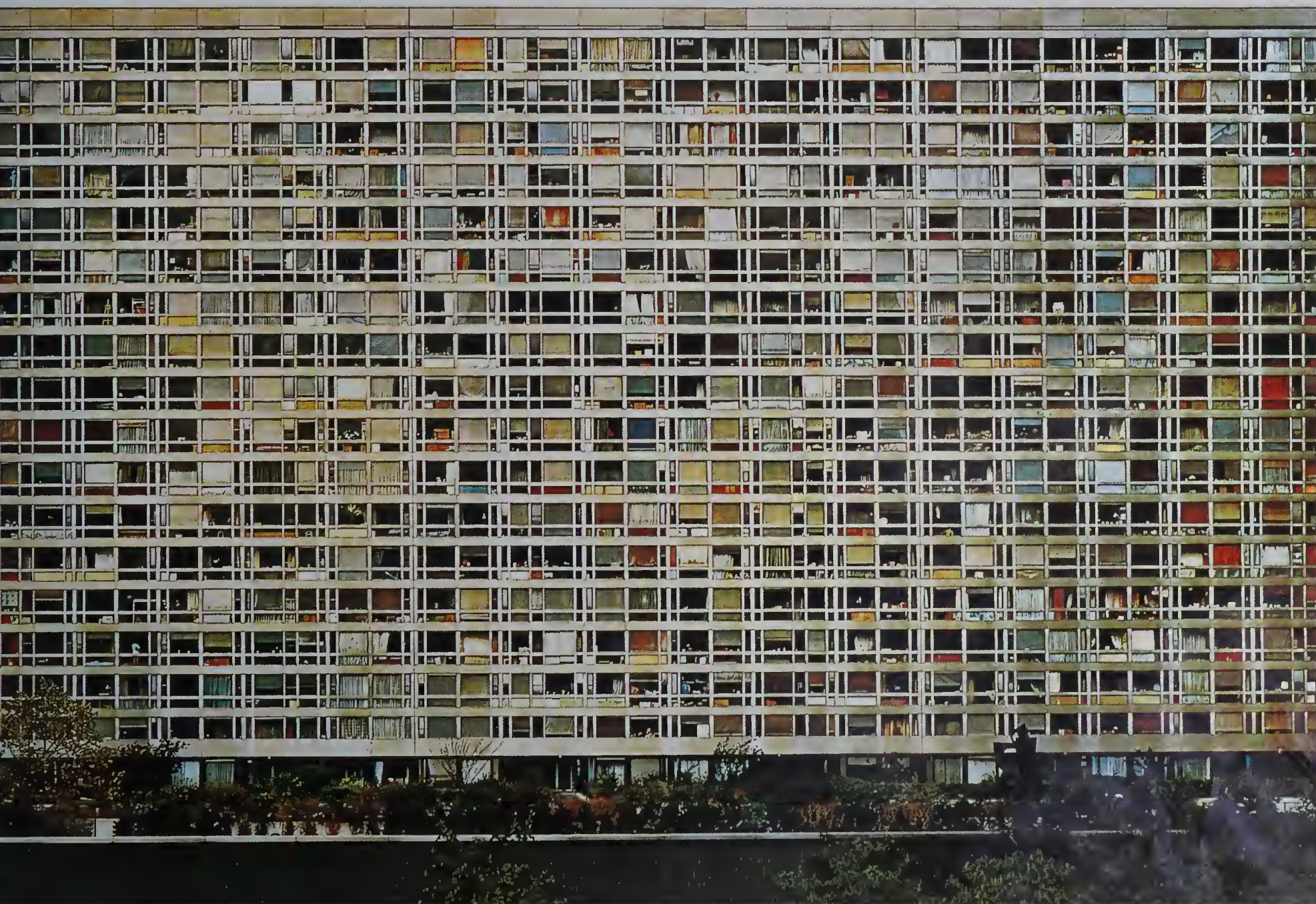
*Ask the Dust* is a set of twenty-one photographs taken at sites that have been used in popular movies. They are shot from angles suggestive of the original camera positions and Bernard prints the images in the same aspect ratio as the films themselves. The audience may recall situations in the films and mentally project them onto the images. The series was meticulously researched using archive production notes to track down the often nondescript, generic locations. Cities have become mythologized through cinema so that they are experienced as a mixture of social memory and cinematic fantasy. Bernard's photographs echo this by blending the genres of documentary, crime scene photography and the film production still.











Andreas GURSKY

Paris, Montparnasse

1993

Chromogenic print

156 × 300 cm [61.5 × 118 in]

Collection, Museum Ludwig, Cologne

Gursky's use of the grand overview is reminiscent of epic landscape painting.

There is a physical detachment here that is echoed in his preference for recording everyday life as formal patterns within the image. Printing at such a giant scale brings the spectator's view of the work into parallel with the photographer's own view of the scene itself. The formal organisation of the image weakens its connection to the everyday just as daily life is made abstract and formal by social organisation.

Gursky's descriptive photography has much in common with the all-over compositions of colour field painting and the grids of Minimalism.





Thomas RUFF  
Nacht 141  
1993  
C-type print  
190.5 × 190.5 cm [75 × 75 in]  
Ruff's *Nachtbilder* (*Night Pictures*) were partly prompted by TV coverage of the Gulf War. Images made by night vision cameras were a new contribution to the mass spectacle of warfare, developed like so much of our imaging technology by the military themselves. Although it has a green cast and a lack of definition this kind of picture is endowed by mass culture with a high degree of truth value 'beyond human vision'. Ruff used a light intensifier with his camera to make his own version of this technology, producing uncanny images of urban surveillance.



Sato's interest in photography stemmed from an initial engagement with sculpture.

The *Breath-Graphs*, so called for their registering of the transience of human life, are long exposures which record the effects of a moving light source which he has shone within the viewfinder's field of vision. This old technique, often called 'painting with light', predates flash photography and was used to illuminate large interior spaces.

Sato creates a form of photographic time that separates itself from the instantaneousness associated with street photography.





Catherine OPIE

Untitled No. 30, from Freeway

1994

Platinum print

5 × 18 cm [2 × 7 in]

Opie avoids the clichés of the utopian or dystopian city and instead produces ambivalent images that neither glorify nor denounce. The series borrows the modernist language of heroic architectural photography, but instead of implying a bold era the toned, archival prints project an imaginary future in which freeways are monuments of a past civilisation. Opie shoots from below to eliminate cars and leave the elevated roads as singular structures to be interpreted by future archaeologists.



Gabriel OROZCO

Island within an Island

1993

Cibachrome print

40.5 × 51 cm [16 × 20 in]

Several of Orozco's photographs are records of his improvised activity. The artist participates in the urban environment, exploiting a simplicity of means both in his choice of materials and in his deceptively simple use of the camera. The modesty of the engagement highlights the boundary between alienation from city life and fugitive involvement with it. In keeping with this they are presented as relatively small and plainly framed photographs, like diaristic notations. Although it is an essential part of Orozco's working method his photography is rarely exhibited alone. It is usually accompanied by his equally important work in sculpture and installation.



Haze

1998

Serigraph on 6 felt panels with felt text panels

173 × 175 cm [68 × 69 in] overall

*Haze* is part of *Public Sex*, a series of grand scale urban images which Simpson renders cinematic with fragments of text that reflect her interest in fractured narratives and broken communication. Small text panels draw viewers into an intimate involvement with the image before they move back to take in the vista:

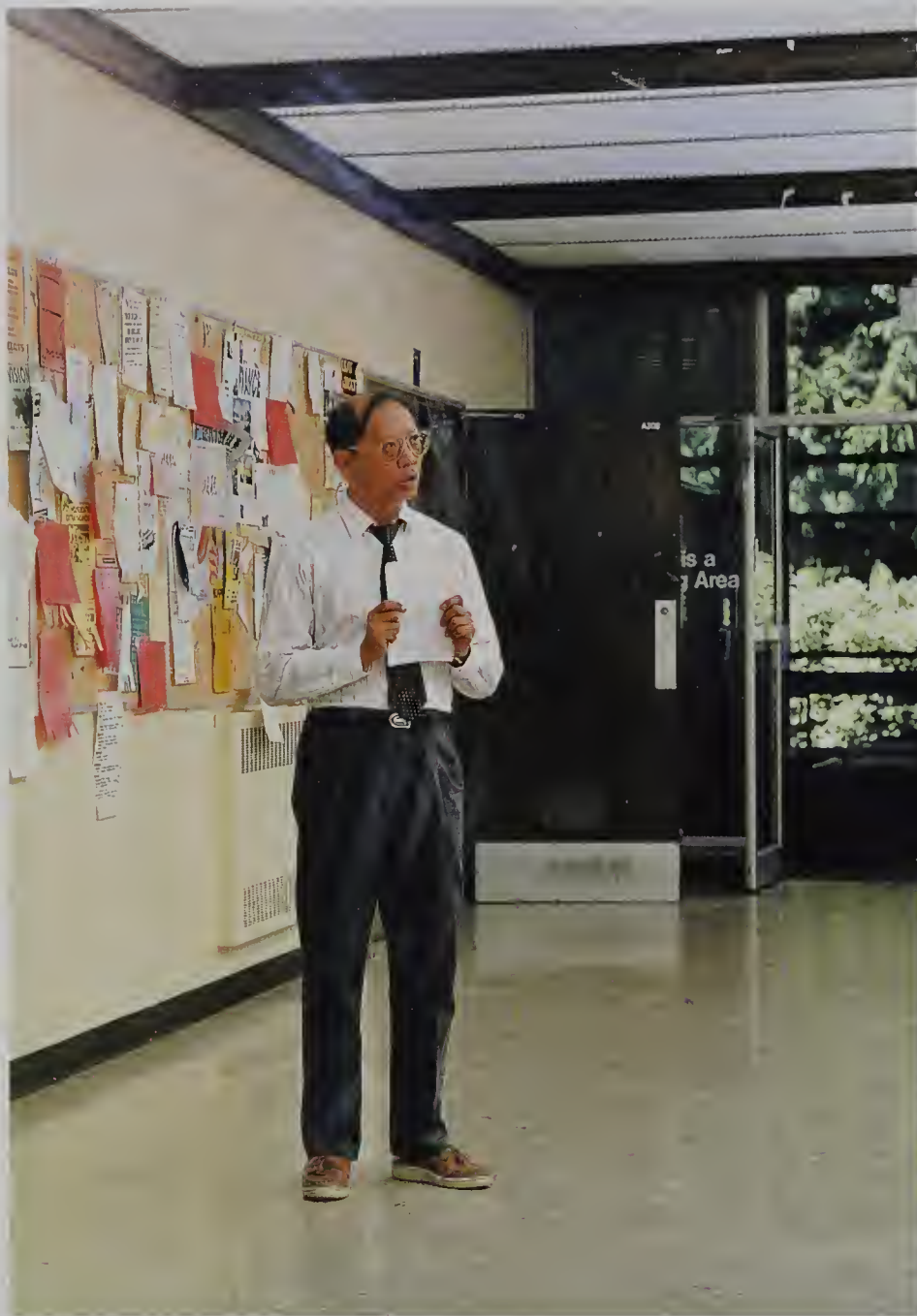
*Left panel:* 'OK, one more time, look down the widest street – you got that ... right – count 1-2-3-4 rooftops – then look across to your right, past the big railing of connected balconies, and look for the tangle of antennas, across from the triangular roof – do you see that?' 'No.' 'OK, do you see the triangular roof?' 'No ... oh, yeah, now I do. It's got a little rooftop apartment on it?'

*Right panel:* 'No, it's the one to the left of that.' 'Oh yeah, I see the one you mean.' 'That's it, now go from the triangular roof over to the right.' 'Uh huh ...' 'Well, now do you see them?' 'No, I don't see what you're talking about.' 'Well, they are right there.' 'to the left or to the right of that building?' 'Well, it's to the right – kinda' on a diagonal ... now do you see what I'm talking about?' 'No, I don't.' 'Well, you are looking in the right direction ... wait, they just got up and went inside – you missed it.'



Left panel text: 'OK, one more time, look down the widest street – you got that ... right – count 1-2-3-4 rooftops – then look across to your right, past the big railing of connected balconies, and look for the tangle of antennas, across from the triangular roof – do you see that?' 'No.' 'OK, do you see the triangular roof?' 'No ... oh, yeah, now I do. It's got a little rooftop apartment on it?'

Right panel text: 'No, it's the one to the left of that.' 'Oh yeah, I see the one you mean.' 'That's it, now go from the triangular roof over to the right.' 'Uh huh ...' 'Well, now do you see them?' 'No, I don't see what you're talking about.' 'Well, they are right there.' 'to the left or to the right of that building?' 'Well, it's to the right – kinda' on a diagonal ... now do you see what I'm talking about?' 'No, I don't.' 'Well, you are looking in the right direction ... wait, they just got up and went inside – you missed it.'



Hello  
How are you?  
I am fine  
My name is Fung  
Hello  
How are you?  
I am fine  
My name is Fung

Ken LUM

Hello. How Are You?

1994

Laminated C-type print on sintra, lacquer, enamel and aluminium

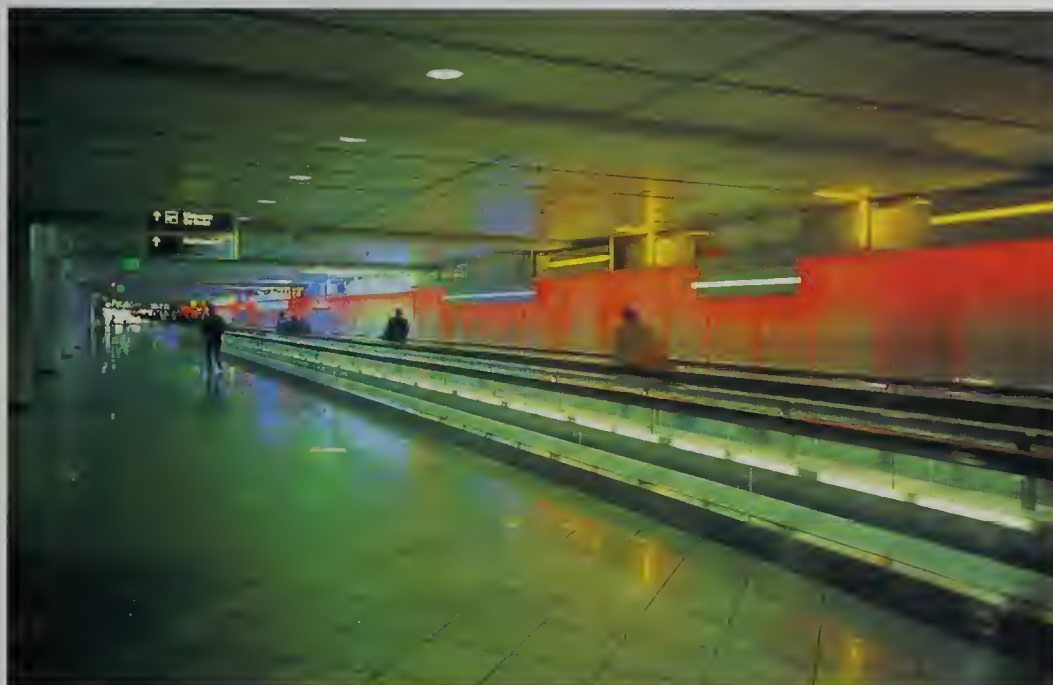
183 × 244 × 5 cm [72 × 96 × 2 in]

This is one of a series of photo-texts in which Lum dramatises commonplace incidents in contemporary life.

'Mr Fung is studying English, perhaps preparing for an examination of some kind, or some meeting with someone and he thought he should make an impression with a proper modicum of an introduction. What I was interested in was not so much the attendant stress Mr Fung was experiencing in practising a non-native language but the idea that Mr Fung was learning to assume a new identity – that of Mr F-u-n-g, not the Fung of Chinese speech and written character but the roman alphabet Fung, the English language version of who he is supposed to be.'

– Ken Lum, statement, 2002





Martha ROSLER

*In the Place of the Public*

1980–

C-type prints

67.5 × 101.5 cm [26.5 × 40 in]

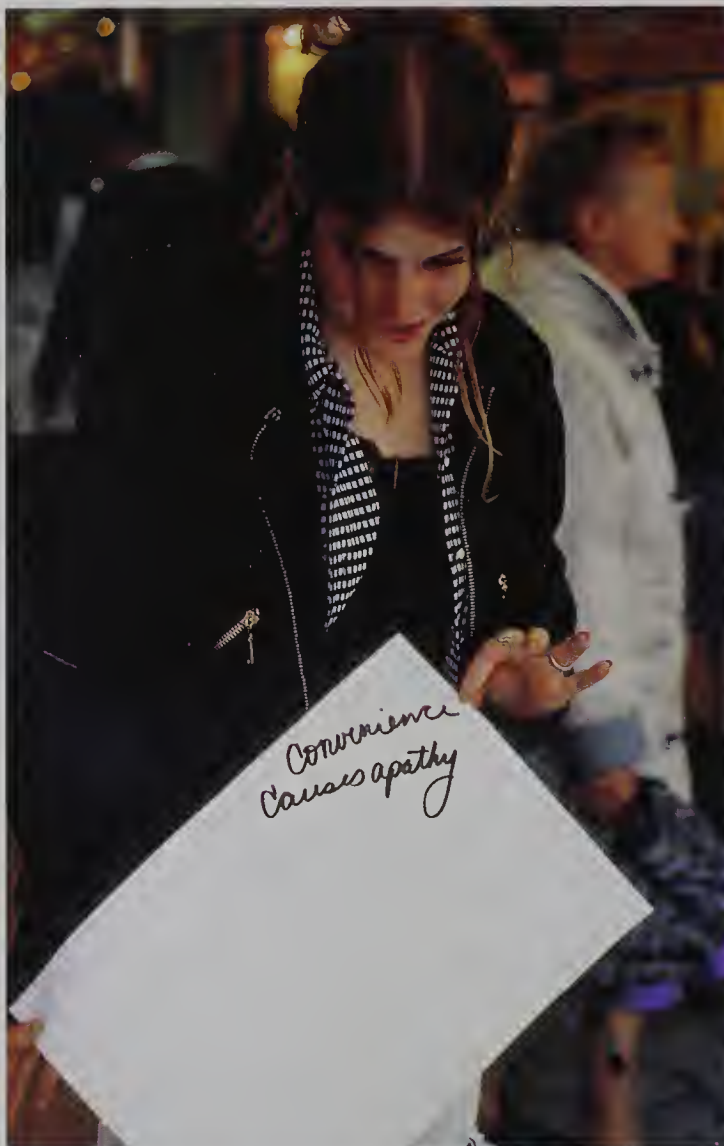
each

*from top*, Munich, 1999; Seattle, 1996; To France, 1999

From the early 1980s Rosler has taken photographs while passing through airport terminals, spaces architecturally designed to accelerate both the circulation of people and money and the deferral of desire. Increasing amounts of time are spent in these transitory spaces. In Rosler's images they are revealed as a seamless arena of corporate capital into which passengers are absorbed. The work has taken a number of forms, including image/text panels, a time-based installation and a book with an extended essay by Rosler that situates it in relation to critical writings on the transformation of social space.







## Gillian WEARING

Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say  
1992-93

C-type prints mounted on aluminium

4 from approx. 600 prints,  
40.5 x 30.5 cm [16 x 12 in] each

Wearing combines street photography with the conventions of documentary interviews. Her subjects are collaborating participants. There is no pretence that scientific objectivity is being adhered to, yet through the amassing of raw data Wearing's project presents viewers with a fragmentary form of sociology. 'The bizarre request to be "captured" on film by a complete stranger is compounded by a non-specific space; the blank piece of paper, which almost replicates an unexposed film ... This image interrupts the logic of photodocumentary and snapshot photography through the subjects' clear collusion in and engineering of their own representation.'

— Gillian Wearing, statement, 1997





Jason EVANS

*Strictly*

1992

1 from the series of 8 C-type prints

Dimensions variable

*Strictly* first appeared in the British style magazine *i-D* in 1991. In the 1980s *i-D* had pioneered the expansion of fashion photography into social documentary through its 'straight up' portraits of young people encountered on the streets. With stylist Simon Foxton, Evans produced these images where the subjects and their poses subvert stereotypical associations, in a variety of carefully chosen suburban settings.

Taking an experimental approach that blended portraiture, documentary and fashion photography, this work marked a shift away from the depiction of a hermetic 'world of fashion' to images that viewers were asked to decode more consciously. One of the influences in the making of this series was Ingrid Pollard's *Pastoral Interlude* (1987), reproduced on page 196.





Philip-Lorca DI CORCIA

Head No. 5

2001

Photograph printed on Fuji Crystal Archive Type C paper

1 from the series of prints, 122 x 152.5 cm [48 x 60 in] each

diCorcia has developed a range of photographic approaches that blur the line between documentary and the constructed image. For the *Heads* series, he devised a set-up where pedestrians stepped unwittingly into a pre-planned theatre of flashlights.

Caught in moments of inner thought these citizens are displayed for the camera

through an image somewhere between cinematic spectacle and celebrity portraiture.

The extravagant method by which they are pictured only serves to intensify the sense of the subjects' introspection.





Beat STREULI

Oxford Street

1997

C-type prints

2 from the series of prints, 179  
× 241 cm [70.5 × 95 in] each

Also shown as multi-screen  
installation

Streuli's subjects are almost invariably young and self-absorbed consumers. Faces, postures, gestures, clothes and accessories are dispersed across the telephoto frame with a backdrop of crowds, shop facades and vehicles. When different cities are photographed it is the small differences that become apparent. The images are presented in various formats, including groups of large scale photographs, public murals and multi-screen projection sequences.





Boris MIKHAILOV

*Case History* [detail]

1998

Colour photograph

1 from a sequence of prints,

185 × 125 cm [73 × 49 in] each

*Case History* is an extended project on everyday life in Mikhailov's hometown of Kharkov in the Ukraine. The photographs focus on the *bomzhes*, homeless people outside of social support. Along with the rich they are a new class in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Mikhailov pictures the emerging economic conditions as they take effect not just socially but psychologically and at the level of the body. Just as these citizens are forced into rapid marginalisation, the photographs draw on past traditions of documentary while recognising their shortcomings. As a result the project is committed to description but avoids any simple relation to the images and by extension to the social situation. *Case History* has been widely exhibited and was published in its entirety as a book in 1999.

Jitka HANZLOVÁ

Untitled, from *bewohner*

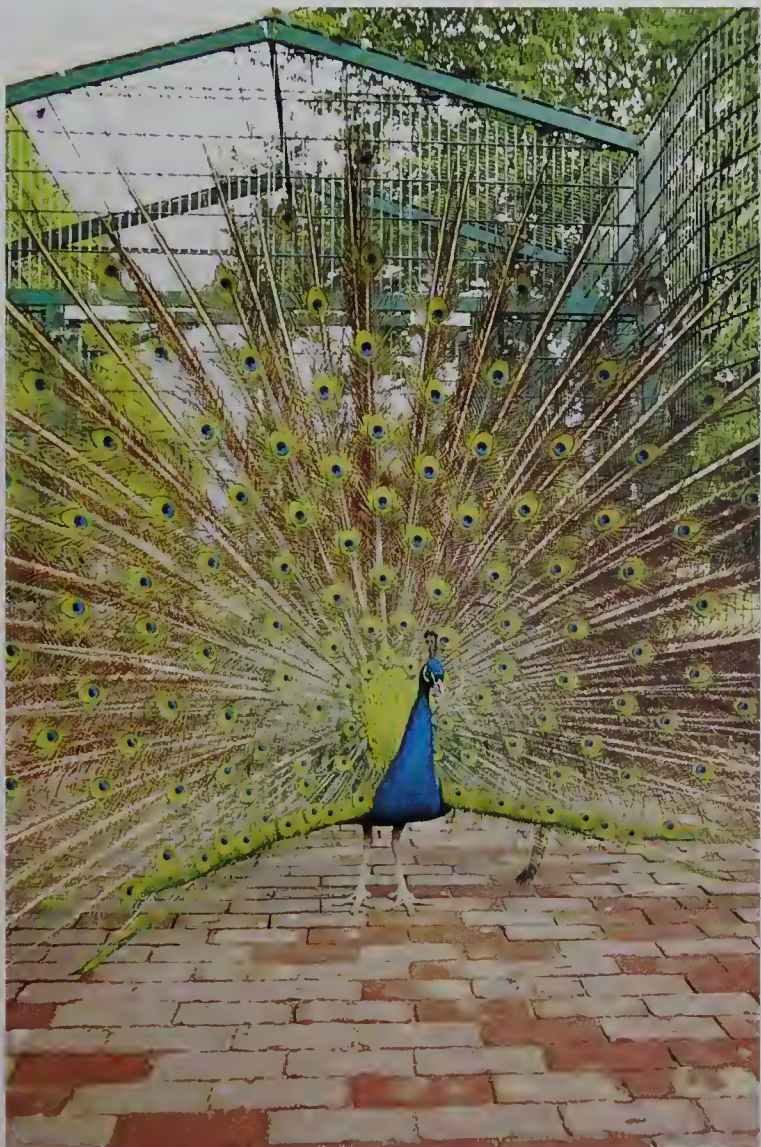
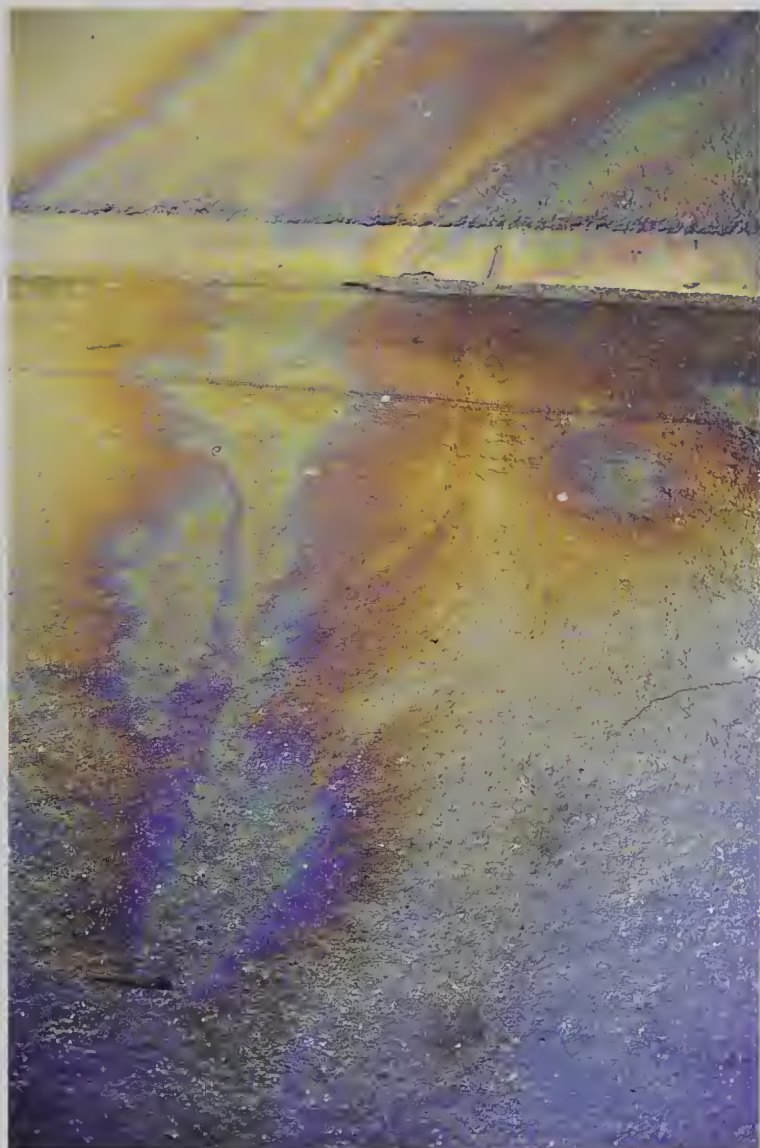
1994-96

C-type prints

1 to 4 from the sequence of 25 prints, 30 × 24 cm [12 × 9.5 in] each

*bewohner* (inhabitants) is a cycle of twenty-five images made in European cities. Hanzlová, who came to Germany from the former Czech Socialist Republic in 1983, produces bodies of documentary work that are poetic and political in equal measure. Her work is marked by a highly nuanced interest in portraiture, and a lightness of touch in the depiction of objects and social spaces. After chance meetings with people, primarily women, their portraits are made. These are interspersed with photographic observations of the surroundings. Although what holds her series together is a consistent level of social symbolism, it remains quite open, allowing the viewer to read each image on its own merits and then connect them together.







# THE STUDIO IMAGE

The terms 'art' and 'photography' each

conjure up quite different ideas about the studio. In reality there is much overlap between them. The studio is a space to explore the interrelationship of control and experimentation. It stands apart from the social world but is indirectly connected to it. Some works in this section take up the luxury of isolation to explore ideas of identity, self and the construction of meaning. Other works remake or allegorize the outside world. Some use it as a space for improvisation, while others use it to carry out elaborate plans. The studio is now much more than a space for making things. Art since the 1960s has taken it up as a space for acting out, either at the level of the body or indirectly through the manipulation of objects. The studio has become a mixture of stage and confessional, a protected arena in which repressed desires and fantasies are worked through.



Pierre MOLINIER

Shaman [Le Chaman]

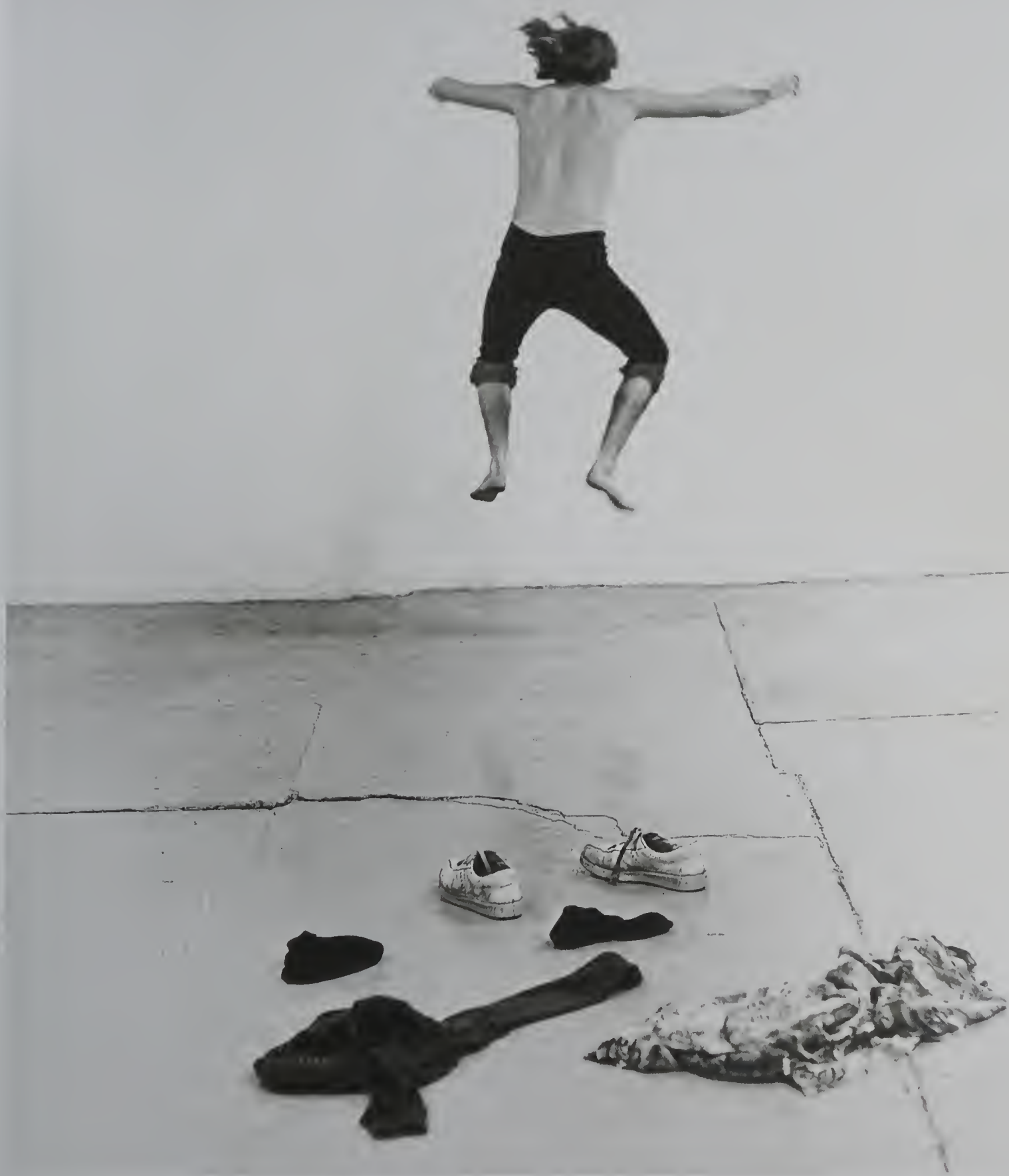
1968

Gelatin silver print

17 × 12.5 cm [7 × 5 in]

Born in 1900 and associated with the Surrealists, Molinier only began in his sixties to make the photographs and montages for which he is best known. These form a bridge between earlier Surrealism and the post-war sexual revolutions. His spaces are claustrophobic arenas in which transgressive fantasies are staged. Anathema to the predominant art practices of the 1960s, his work became a touchstone for the later emergence of 'queer' art due to the way it explored self-performance, while disconnecting biological notions of gender from sexual identity.





William WEGMAN

For a Moment He Forgot Where He Was and Jumped into the Ocean  
1972

Gelatin silver print

35.5 × 28 cm [14 × 11 in]

By the early 1970s a number of artists had brought the camera into the studio to make anti-illusionistic documentation of performances, actions and objects. Wegman's sense of play often exploited the oddness of the bare space. The empty studio might be a simple degree-zero interior but that in itself is a form of estrangement. This image suggests a theatre of the absurd in which the paucity of means is turned to comic advantage. An improvised action relieves the tension of the studio's austerity.



Francesca **WOODMAN**

Then at one point I did not need  
to translate the notes; they went  
directly to my hands

Providence, Rhode Island

c. 1976

Gelatin silver print

8 × 8 cm [3 × 3 in]

Woodman developed a sophisticated approach to self-staging at an early age. She usually photographed herself in shallow, contained spaces away from contemporary life and its simplistic definitions of the body and the feminine. In these arenas, a theatre of the self is enacted that brings the viewer close to the scene but not does not grant any certainties. The title of this image, and the artist's caress of the wall with her hands, like a keyboard, make explicit a musical model that Woodman explored at this time, when she was studying at Rhode Island School of Design. Drawing an analogy with the musical themes on variations, particularly those of Scarlatti, that she spent long hours playing on the piano, she began to conceive her photographic experiments in terms of studies, exercises and set pieces.



Self-portrait

1975

Gelatin silver print

25.5 × 25.5 cm [10 × 10 in]

In much of Mapplethorpe's work the studio is a theatrical space of control and experimentation, at the level of the body, sexuality, desire and photography. The exhibitionism many of his images convey suggests an intense curiosity about bodies and what it means to display them. Even when his work developed into a more sexually and psychologically charged exploration he remained a classicist in his use of the studio and its pictorial conventions. In photographs such as this self-portrait traditional iconographic poses and gestures are reworked in new, enigmatic ways.





Lucas SAMARAS  
Photo Transformations  
1975  
SX 70 Polaroids  
7.5 × 7.5 cm [3 × 3 in] each  
Samaras' Polaroid self-portraits of the 1970s are informed by his established practices in sculpture, painting and performance. The Photo Transformation series (1974–76) sets up carnivalesque scenarios in which the straight image of the artist in his home is subverted at every turn through lighting, props, projection, gesture and print manipulation. Samaras used a Polaroid SX-70 camera with film that allowed the dyes to be manipulated by hand before they set.

*opposite*  
Anna and Bernhardt BLUME  
Kitchen Frenzy [detail]  
1985-86  
5 gelatin silver prints  
170 × 108 cm [67 × 42.5 in] each  
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
The Blumes have been making work collaboratively since 1980. Many of their photographic series are meditations, not without humour, upon the conditions of German bourgeois life. 'The body as a whole is incorporated into the system of symbolic rituals which determine social roles and mark acceptance into the community. But to our isolated consciousness, in its fixation on words and images, society appears as an abstract entity, in contrast to our apparent freedom. But our role in society is just as completely determined. It is equally ritualised and even more strongly internalised, but is characterised by a neurotic neglect of the body. Yet in the photos at least we seem to be present. And the photos prove it.'  
– Bernhard Blume, statement, in *Behind the Eyes: Eight German Artists*. 1986





Urs LÜTHI

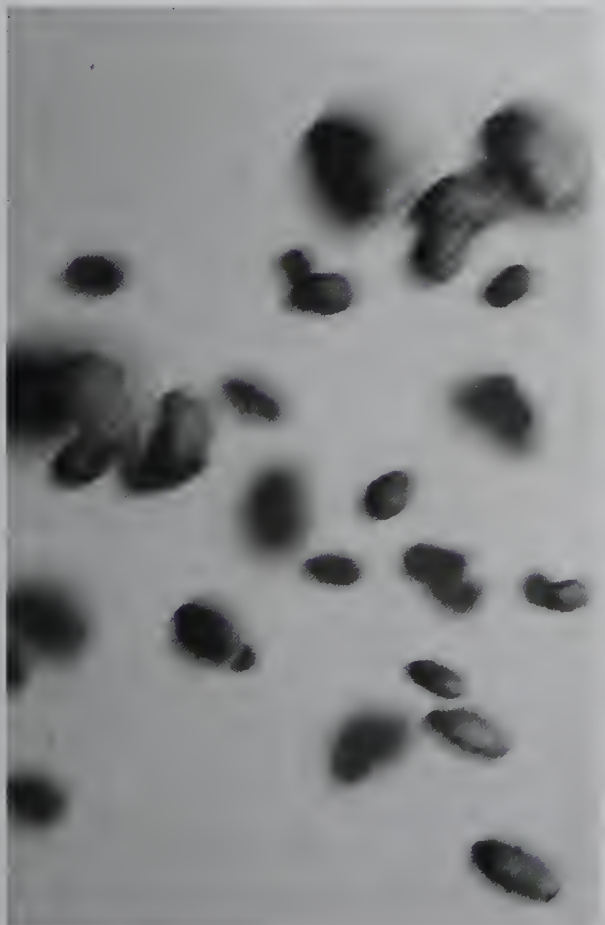
Self-portrait in a Chair

1975

3 black and white photographs on canvas

185 × 120 cm [73 × 47 in] each

Lüthi was an early proponent of a form of photography in which the studio portrait is linked with performance documentation to produce speculative instances of being. His self portraits of this period are most often presented in series or permutations so that any fixed form of identification is confounded. At stake was not so much the assertion of a new 'self' but the capacity to shift and remain elusive.



Boyd WEBB

Abyssogramme

1983

Cibachrome print

156.5 × 131.5 cm [61.5 × 52 in]

'I started as a sculptor making life casts of people in fibreglass and arranging them in tableaux, but it was an expensive and cumbersome practice. The need to record them led me to photography ... I had complete control. The format and the physical laws of photography provide a discipline I find inspiring.'

– Boyd Webb, statement, 1990

Webb works on both sides of the camera – as sculptor, lighting technician, scenarist and photographer. Many of his images are made in a soft light which gives the effect more of a traditional artist's than a photographer's studio, where the scenes have a repose which belies their theatrical creation.



David HAXTON

Torn Orange Front and Rear

1979

Ektachrome print

60 × 70 cm [23.5 × 27.5 in]

Prior to this work Haxton's photographs were in a diptych format, used to describe two different lighting situations in the same scene. *Torn Orange* incorporated both situations in one photographic image.

'The photographic works are an outgrowth of films that I produced in the late 1960s and 1970s. The objects used in these photographs were leftover set materials from the films. One such material was photographic paper. The paper became a vehicle for describing space through light. The slash marks on the paper were a record of human activities, possibly akin to the drips on a Pollock canvas.'

– David Haxton, statement, 2002







Hannah COLLINS

Family

1989-96

Gelatin silver print mounted on cotton

240 x 365 cm [94.5 x 144 in]

Collins' photographs are highly specific actualities but they are left enigmatic in their associations. The subject is photographed and dramatically enlarged to lifesize dimensions, then mounted onto a cotton fabric. The print hangs on the wall with tactile unevenness so that we see it both as an image and an object. The relation of bodies to spaces is a theme in much of Collins' work, explored both in photographs and films.





John COPLANS

Self-portrait [Back with Arms Above]

1984

Gelatin silver print

107 × 81.5 cm [42 × 32 in]

Coplans began making photographs of his own body in late middle age. These developed into a grand project that charts his body as a constantly changing entity, an idea at odds with dominant notions of beauty based on youth and permanence. The works draw attention to photography as a medium both of particularity and generality; while the images are specific to his own condition they take on broader resonances. The head is always excluded, so that the images are not encumbered by the associations of portraiture. Instead, personality surfaces in other ways.



Janine ANTONI

Mom and Dad

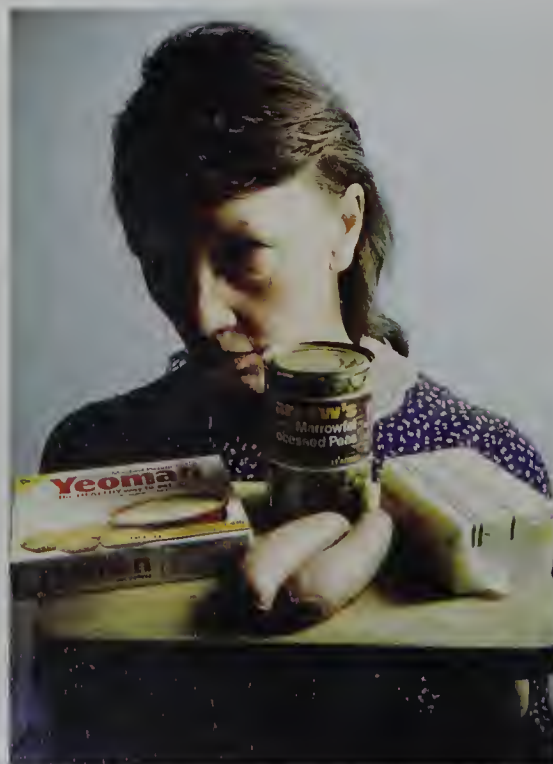
1993

Mother, father, make-up

Triptych, 61 x 51 cm [24 x 20 in] each

Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Antoni's works in which photography is used often involve a subtle diversion of viewers' expectations. This triptych of cross-dressing subverts the conventions of the professional portrait studio – the place where we are expected to conform, where the social and familial expectation to 'fit in' is felt most acutely. Using prosthetic make-up, Antoni 'sculpted' her mother's appearance onto her father's face, and vice-versa. Every permutation is present here apart from the 'norm' – Mom as Mom with Dad as Dad. Traditionally the triptych is used in art as a unitary, stabilising device, but here Antoni playfully undermines that formality.



Jo SPENCE in collaboration with Rosy MARTIN

Daddy's Good Little Girl, c. 1943

1986

Colour photographs

15 x 10 cm [6 x 4 in] each

Spence pioneered, with the photographer Rosy Martin, a practice of phototherapy whereby wishes, anxieties and memories would be acted out for the camera in a semi-improvised manner. The technicalities are kept as simple as possible so as not to slow up the process. Spence had worked as a high street photographer and in her own work made a political commitment to a democratic technique that others could easily follow. Here a simple studio setting is constructed. Spence thought through, at the level of the image, the interrelation of her childhood sexuality and her working class consciousness, highlighted here by the food in the foreground of the second image. She revisited memories before the camera, which functions here as both a mirror and the judgement of society.





James COLEMAN

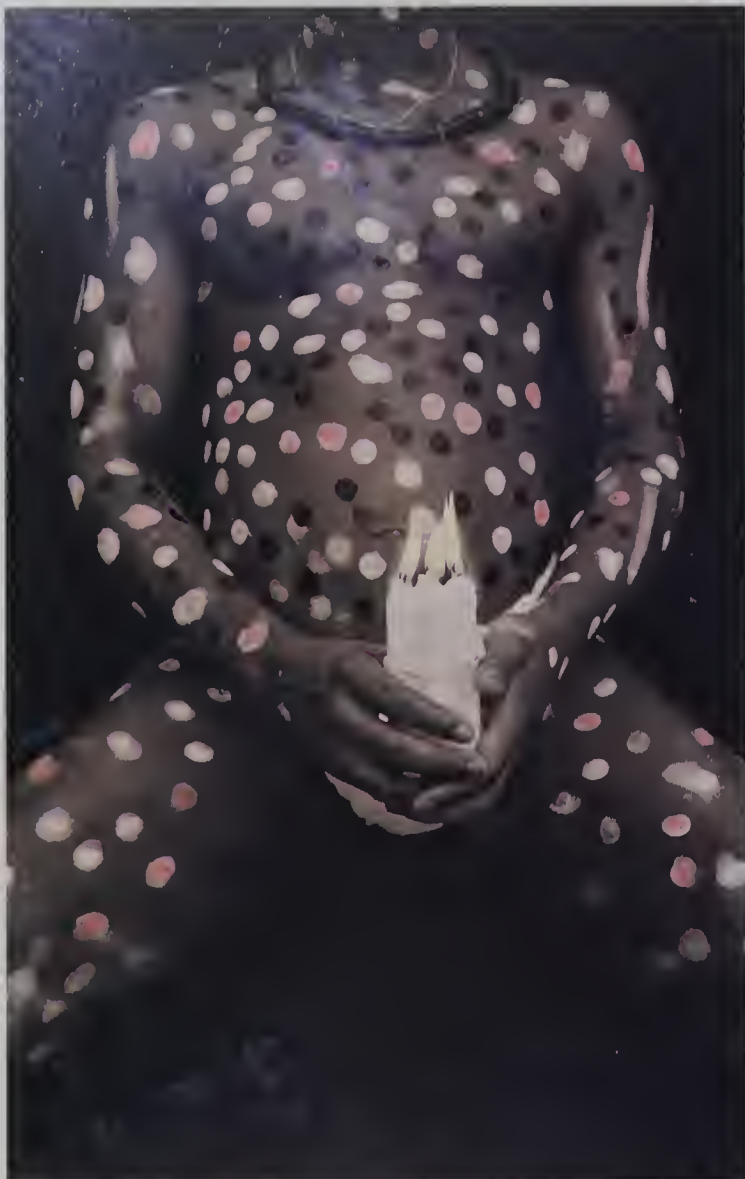
Charon

1989

1 of a series of projected images with synchronised audio narration

Dimensions variable

Coleman's presentation of sequenced slides with a synchronised soundtrack carries connotations of corporate presentation and the family slide show. This work is named after the mythical boatman who carried passengers across the river Styx. It depicts fourteen diverse situations in the life of a studio photographer. The narratives engage the audience in situations in which he makes various kinds of image. A measured, almost hypnotic voice-over slowly begins to open up the gap between what is seen and what can be known. The subtle control of the images and the benign voice-over are seductive, making pleasurable the process of constantly revising one's understanding as the work progresses.



Rotimi FANI-KAYODE

Sonponmo

1987

Cibachrome print

53.5 × 30.5 cm [21 × 12 in]

For Fani-Kayode the studio was a place to explore and make manifest the subjective and cultural overlaps between sexuality, spirituality and ancestry.

'The black male body becomes the locus for a number of intersecting planes of meaning. The hieratic, carefully ritualised posture of the figures, their central framing, the deliberate use of costume, body decoration, and above all, masks, reference Fani-Kayode's exploration of his Yoruba background. Yet this "African" plane of reference is, almost immediately, subverted by other meanings and languages. The symbolism hovers between a public or collective, and a more private and personal set of codes.'

– Stuart Hall, *Rotimi Fani-Kayode, 1955–1989*, 1990



AJAMU

Silver Heels

1993

Gelatin silver print

18 × 13 cm [7 × 5 in]

'My photographic practice is an attempt to investigate the role of the image in the *mise-en-scène* of sexuality, desire and fantasy, from the diasporic perspective of a black queer subject.'

– Ajamu, statement, 2000

*Silver Heels* is one of a series of self portraits that explore Ajamu's lived experience. He is motivated to make the kinds of images he hasn't seen before, which affirm his own existence in a world that sets so much store by visibility. Contemporary culture may be saturated with images but many forms of subjectivity and sexuality do not register significantly within the field of the visual. Ajamu's photographs are transgressive intrusions into the 'norms' of mainstream culture, yet he deliberately adopts the rhetoric of the beautiful studio print in order to take it in new directions.





Faisal ABDU'ALLAH  
Aquil, from I Wanna Kill Sam Coz He Ain't My Motherfuckin Uncle  
1993  
Photo-screen print on mild steel  
200 × 100 cm [79 × 39.5 in]  
With a background in fine art printmaking Abdu'Allah turned to photography to look at aspects of black British consciousness and identity in contemporary Britain. This image is from an early series of near life-size photographs in which the subject of institutional violence and gun culture was considered. Photographically Abdu'Allah approaches the subject critically while recognising the seductive glamour associated with it. These giant portraits reveal how scale and the studio's isolation from the outside world can introduce the critical distance necessary for reflection on the role played by images in the formation of attitudes.



James CASEBERE  
Asylum  
1994  
Dye destruction print  
122 × 152 cm [48 × 60 in]  
Casebere makes and photographs models of architectural spaces. Some are based on real places but most derive from a condensation of memories. Casebere's 'spatial stereotypes' evoke familiar images, particularly from film and other media, but their presentation is removed from the real through ambiguity of scale and the almost monochromatic photography. Although the models are white they are shot in colour, appearing both austere and seductive. The model is destroyed soon after the image has been made.



Georges ROUSSE  
Sélestat, Arsenal  
1999  
Cibachrome mounted on aluminium  
152 × 174 cm [60 × 68.5 in]  
Rousse had a formal training in architecture and advertising and began to work with installation art and photography in the 1970s. He uses buildings that are derelict or due for renovation, re-articulating these spaces through precise painting, drawing and sometimes cutting into the built construction. The alterations cohere only from the point of view of the camera. In this work what appears to be a grid of coloured squares laid over the photograph is actually a set of shapes painted onto the three-dimensional surface of the interior.





Vik MUNIZ

Action Photo No. 1 [After Hans Namuth]

1997

Cibachrome print

152.5 × 122 cm [60 × 48 in]

Chocolate sauce was used here to recreate one of Hans Namuth's iconic photographs of the Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock making an 'action painting' on his studio floor. Muniz's photographic work can be considered a form of *trompe l'oeil* in the sense that it confuses images and objects. His work often involves making pictures out of sculpted material which is then photographed before it disintegrates or is discarded. Muniz originally worked in advertising, where craft and image manipulation are paramount and the purity of a medium is never an issue.



Gregory CREWDSON

Untitled, from *Natural Wonder*

1994

C type print

76 × 101.5 cm [30 × 40 in]

Crewdson worked for up to a month on each shot in the series *Natural Wonder*. The images are made from elaborate indoor sets lit for the camera. Each is a vignette of luxuriant but foetid nature which unfolds in the backyards of American suburbs. The photographs combine naturalism with artifice, blending the beautiful and the grotesque. The result is a kind of visionary tableau narrated at close quarters like a bedtime story or a claustrophobic nightmare. Crewdson sees the natural world and its processes as potential metaphors for psychological states. His studio images recall the Surrealists' construction of scenes which attempted to convey complex states of consciousness.

# THE ARTS OF REPRODUCTION

Photography has been the most obvious medium through which high art has entered into dialogues with mass culture. This first occurred in the montage and collage practices of the inter-war avant-gardes. In the post-war period, as life became increasingly media dominated, artists approached the image world in other ways. Pop art signalled an appropriation of everyday life into art. Seriality and repetition in art of the 1960s and 1970s stretched notions of originality and tested the function of the aura traditionally associated with the work of art. Since then the printed media, the moving image and art itself have been addressed by artists as key components of the ‘society of the spectacle’.

Chuck CLOSE

Phil

1969

Acrylic on canvas

274.5 × 213.5 cm [108 × 84 in]

Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Close's photorealism is both an expansion and a collapse of painting. The artist's hand is subordinated to a laborious system for translating visual data, which echoes the mechanisms of the photographic source. Close initially grids his canvas and works from an inverted image. He can then relate to it with indifference. In some respects this corresponds to the mechanical indifference of the optical camera lens which inverts the image it casts. Here the avant-garde composer Philip Glass – himself an advocate of systems in composition – is rendered in acrylic paint with the addition of airbrushing, lending the image an immaculate ‘photographic’ finish. This is one of a suite of images of Glass made using various photorealist techniques.









Ilene SEGALOVE

Today's Program: Jackson Pollock, 'Lavender Mist', 1950

1974

Gelatin silver print and collage

35.5 × 43 cm [14 × 17 in]

Segalove has worked in several media including video and radio. She has also made photographic works which are playful critiques of high art and its dissemination as official culture. Here a painting by Jackson Pollock, perhaps the most promoted and reproduced artist of the post-war years, is demoted to the function of soothing airline passengers. Montage often derives its force from the audience's familiarity with the separate elements and by the early 1970s Pollock's art had already entered into popular knowledge and visual currency. It had much in common with the graphic design and printed fabrics of the 1950s 'New Look'.



Martha ROSLER

Red Stripe Kitchen, from Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful

1966-72

Photomontage printed as colour photograph

61 × 51 cm [24 × 20 in]

This series was published by a Californian alternative press in the early 1970s.

Rosler's montages brought reportage and consumer imagery, which often co-existed in magazines, into the same frame and thus into the same symbolic space.

'These anti-Vietnam war works weren't made for an art context. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, to put anti-war or feminist agitational works in such a setting would have verged on the obscene. They belonged more properly in the street or in the underground press, and that is where they appeared. In the late 1980s an art dealer whose projects were agitational and political suggested producing a portfolio of the images ... I agreed to the portfolio because I wanted the work to enter art discourse ... The works joined the art world – became art, you might say – around 1988, so they may continue to suggest a way of working that can serve in non art settings.'

– Martha Rosler, in Diane Neumaier (ed.), *Reframings: New Feminist Photographies*, 1995



Valie EXPORT

Erwartung [Expectation]

1976

Wall-mounted photomontage

60 × 50 cm [23.5 × 20 in]

This photomontage of the artist's self-portrait over a reproduction of Botticelli's *Madonna with the Pomegranate* (c. 1482) is part of a series examining the way traditions of depiction have perpetuated a repertoire of human gestures. Here the pose of the Madonna is ironically recreated in a different contemporary situation.

'Paintings from the past provide an often unnoticed archive of various postures ... these frozen movements form a canon, a doctrine. By researching these traditions of bodily posture I try to extract the expression and give it independence ... I deal mainly with female postures, from a feminist perspective, using the material to single out some standard guidelines for the way the female body expresses itself in movement, and for the related functions the female body has in our culture.'

– Valie Export, statement, *Photography as Art. Art as Photography*, 1977



Robert HEINECKEN

Periodical No. 5 [detail]

1971

Altered magazine

28 × 21.5 cm [11 × 8.5 in]

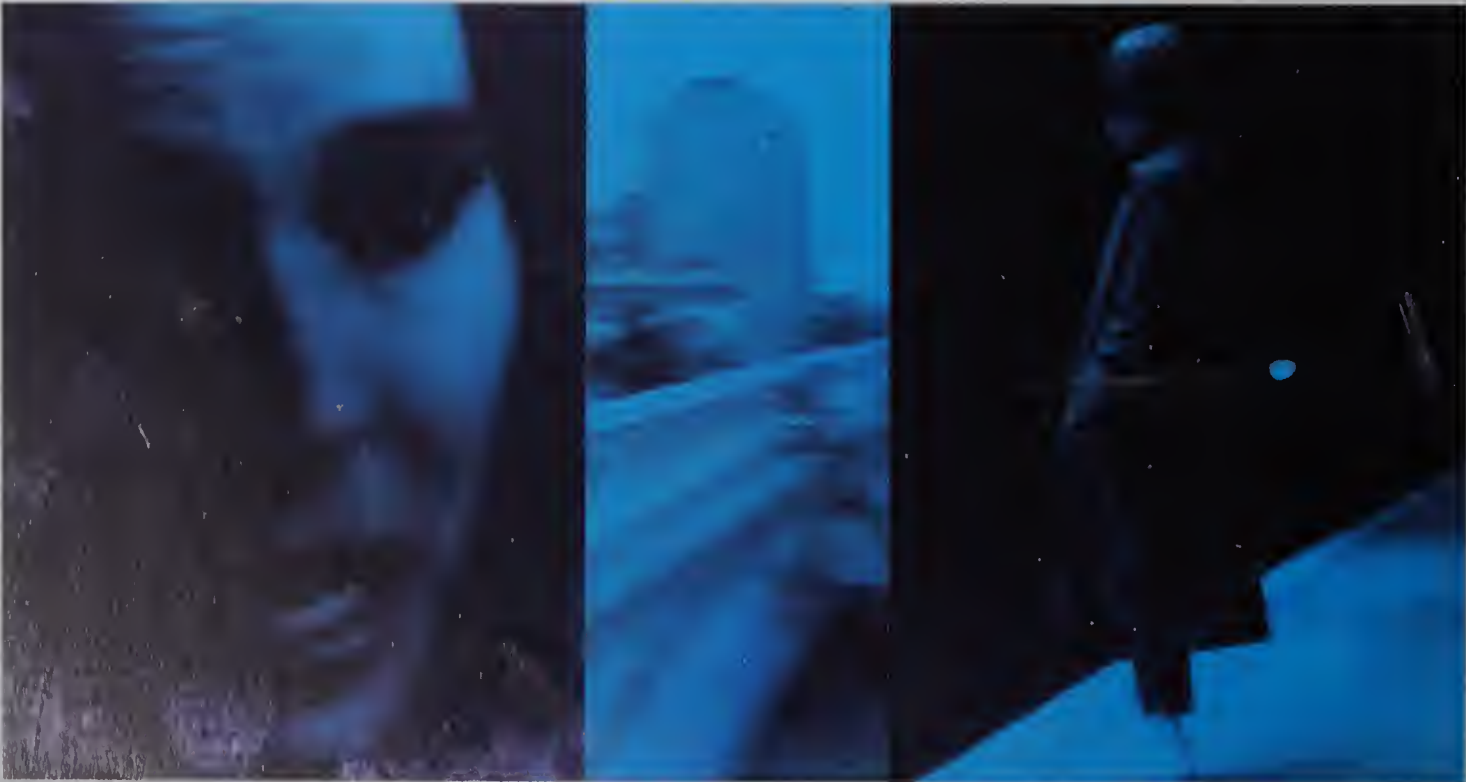
Onto the pages of American fashion and lifestyle magazines such as *Glamour* and *Living Now* Heinecken superimposed an offset reproduction of a young Vietnamese soldier holding two severed heads. The magazines were distributed to news stands, dentists' waiting rooms, etc., with no indication of their altered contents. The horrific image was chosen not only to confront a public which was trying to escape from the Vietnam war, but because the protagonist was hard to place. Was he a South Vietnamese ally or Vietcong? This ambiguity served Heinecken's wider purpose of questioning how the United States had reached this point. *Periodical No. 5* was part of a larger, influential series of magazine works Heinecken produced in this period.





Sherrie LEVINE  
After Edward Weston, No. 3  
1980  
Gelatin silver print  
25,5 x 20,5 cm [10 x 8 in]

In this series Levine focused on the reproduction of artworks – usually considered as photography’s least creative function. She rephotographed the works of canonised photographers such as Edward Weston and Walker Evans. The images were not exhibited as her own and so avoided plagiarism, yet a deliberate sense of impropriety remains. The gesture is laid bare in the titling. Levine subverts the term ‘after’ which traditionally indicates homage, or something ‘in the style of’ (just as Weston’s nudes themselves rework Greek classicism), but this is neither. The intervention is both technological and art historical: a meditation on reproduction and a critique of the unspoken assumptions in modernist photography that underlie ‘purely visual’ images, made almost exclusively by men, which depict various orders of ‘otherness’, such as nature, the poor, women and children.



Yve LOMAX  
Open Rings and Partial Lines  
1983-84  
Photomontage printed as tinted  
black and white photograph  
58,5 x 81,5 cm [23 x 32 in]  
1 panel from a series of 15 black  
and white and colour photographs  
This influential series combined  
interconnected images to explore the  
roles of representation in constructing  
sexual difference. The triptych format  
brings into question dualistic notions of  
gender and identity, opening up a space  
of fragments which resist being pieced  
together in expected ways.





Richard PRINCE  
Untitled [Make-up]

1982-84

Ektacolor print

51 × 61 cm [20 × 24 in]

From the late 1970s Prince rephotographed images from mass culture magazines, presenting them as high gloss prints that make plain the half-tone dots of the original. The advertising copy is cropped out and the images are arranged together as typologies of commercial clichés. Extracting these shots and grouping them together shifts the emphasis from the sign to the process of signification itself.



Richard PRINCE  
Untitled [Eyelashes]

1982-84

Ektacolor print

51 × 61 cm [20 × 24 in]



Andres SERRANO  
Piss Christ  
1987  
Cibachrome, silicone, Plexiglas  
152 × 102 cm [60 × 40 in]  
Serrano's sumptuous photograph follows the painterly tradition of bathing the figure of Christ in Holy light. On that level it is a conventional piece of religious imagery. The crucifix used in the work was a plastic, mass-produced religious souvenir which Serrano, a Catholic, transformed into a visual image which transcends its cheapened, devalued origin. The relation of the image to its title, however, shifts our reading of its golden quality to bodily fluid, an association which is open to various layers of ironic reflection and interpretation. This work was at the centre of the 'culture wars' in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s which began as lobbies led by neoconservatives against state funding of artists with approaches and subject matter deemed inappropriate. When Senator Alphonse D'Amato ripped up a copy of the photograph in the US Senate chambers on 18 May 1989, he first had to complete the innocuous image for his audience by speaking its title, thus participating in the work.

James WELLING  
The Waterfall  
1981  
Gelatin silver print  
24 × 20.5 cm [9.5 × 8 in]  
This is one of a series of images made using pastry flakes on velvet. It seems to allude to classicism or an established visual system of display but any specific meaning remains elusive. The flakes might be the subject or a remnant, equally the velvet might be the subject or a backdrop. The image might be about what it depicts, or it might depict merely the setting for something else which is not included in the picture. Welling plays off the seduction of the image against its ambiguous meaning.







Luigi GHIRRI

Morandi's Atelier

1987

C type print

60 x 80 cm [23.5 x 31.5 in]

Ghirri's influential work was marked by an understanding of the relationship of photography to the everyday, to painting and the literary. There is a recognition that photography comes after painting, not just technically but in the sense that his subject matter – usually Italian landscapes and towns – has been a constant in art history. Thus there is a need to find a way of photographing that has a dialogue with painting but without resorting to imitation. This is addressed directly by Ghirri in a number of photographs made of painters' studios. The pitfalls of photographic homage and imitation are avoided by working within a tradition of still life that belongs equally to photography. This image is one of a series depicting the studio of the Italian still life painter Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964).



Thomas STRUTH  
Musée d'Orsay I, Paris  
1989  
Chromogenic process print  
147 × 182 cm [58 × 72 in]

Struth made a series of museum photographs between 1989 and 1992 which explore not just a simple dialogue between photography and painting but a reflection on the function of contemporary depiction and the current role of art in society. All the paintings being observed by the human figures in Struth's photographs are themselves figurative, so that a connection is made between painting's historical modes of representation and photography's characteristics as a modern mass medium. In book form the photographs are distanced from the museum but when hung as large prints they take on a reflexive relation to the exhibition space.









Jeff WALL

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A Sudden Gust of Wind

[After Hokusai]

1993

Transparency in lightbox

229 × 377 cm [90 × 148.5 in]

Collection, Tate Gallery, London

This is one of a number of works in which Wall refers to a specific image from the past. Here the composition and figures of the coloured woodcut *A High Wind in Yeijiri*, by the Japanese artist Hokusai (1760–1849) are recreated on the outskirts of Vancouver, where Wall's studio is based. The hinterland at the edge of the city often appears in Wall's work as a site of half-enforced law or transgressive social behaviour. Here this contemporary social setting replaces the rural vantage point of Hokusai's print, which belongs to his series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* (c. 1831–33).

Although Wall's image appears to be a single photograph, it is the result of theatrical staging and the digital manipulation of elements photographed over five months. In its use of actors and effects, a narrative approach to the acting-out of the scene, and sophisticated montage for its digital process, the work takes on a cinematic quality, closer to a frozen piece of film than a photographic 'decisive moment'.



Olivier RICHON  
A Devouring Eye [with Canvas and Watermelon]  
1989  
2 framed colour prints  
96 × 82 cm; 82 × 96 cm [38 × 32.5 in; 32.5 × 38 in]  
This is one of four diptychs that constitute *The Devouring Eye*. The first image reworks Cornelius Norbert Gijsbrechts' *trompe l'oeil* painting of the back of a stretched canvas (1670). Richon replaces the catalogue sale number on the painting with an infinity sign, alluding to the fact that photography is differently disposed towards reproduction, realism and objecthood (painterly *trompe l'oeil* works by imitating the plasticity of objects whereas photographs are 'of' objects).  
The second image reworks Juan Sanchez-Cotan's painting *Quince, Melon and Cucumber* (c.1602). A book is introduced, hanging on a string alongside the quince, hinting perhaps that realism is not merely optical but discursive and rhetorical: however 'natural' realism may seem, it has cultural conventions and expectations.



Hiroshi SUGIMOTO  
Vermeer's Music Lesson  
1999  
Gelatin silver print  
149 × 119.5 cm [40 × 30 in]  
This work is part of a series of black and white photographs of waxworks from around the world. In Madame Tussaud's Museum, Amsterdam, there is a three-dimensional tableau recreating Vermeer's painting *The Music Lesson* (1662–65). Sugimoto photographed the scene from its ideal, monocular viewing position, returning it to the flatness of the painting. The interplay of different elements and media – painting, tableau and photography – echoes Vermeer's own use of optical devices to assist his composition. The painter included mirrors in five of his paintings but only in *The Music Lesson* is the reflection decipherable. It shows part of the stand of his own easel, making the image a meditation on the act of painting as well as the learning of music. The tableau in the museum contains a real mirror and so Sugimoto substitutes for the easel the reflected base of his camera tripod.







Gerhard RICHTER

Confrontation 1 [Gegenüberstellung 1]

1988

Oil on canvas

44 × 40.5 cm [17.5 × 16 in]

From the cycle of 15 paintings, *18. Oktober, 1977*

Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

This series depicts the capture, custody, death and funeral of members of the armed revolutionary group, the Red Army Faction, which operated in the former West Germany in the early 1970s. The government issued a statement on 18 October 1977 that the group's leaders, Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe and Gudrun Ennslin had committed suicide in the high security jail at Stammheim. Photographs were issued to support the claim, although many suspected a state execution. The morbid images said little about the actual cause of death. They proved nothing but the death itself and thus became a focus for speculation. Richter's paintings 'blur' the photographs they are based on, taking emphasis away from particular details while leaving the subject matter recognisable. They take no political stance, assuming the same ambiguities as the photographs themselves. His equivocal use of 'painting to make photographs' echoes the uncertain social authority of both media.



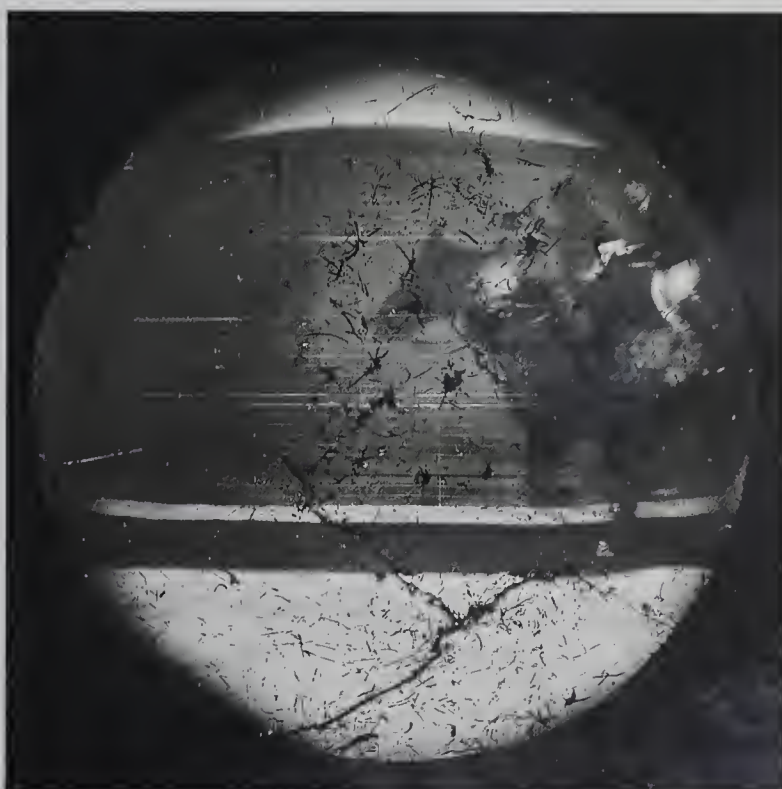
## Laundromat Locomotion [Horse] [details]

1997

12 black and white contact prints made from original paper negatives

81.5 × 81.5 cm [32 × 32 in] each

Pippin transformed twelve washing machines into cameras. Simple apertures and shutters were tooled to fit into the doors and the wash cycle was adapted to take photographic chemicals. The arrangement of machines in a row recalls the battery of 24 cameras used by the photographer Eadweard Muybridge in the 1870s to make his 'chronophotographic' studies of human and animal locomotion. Several images from these series were restaged, including horse locomotion. The work affectionately parodies positivist scientific method, with its faith in visual evidence.





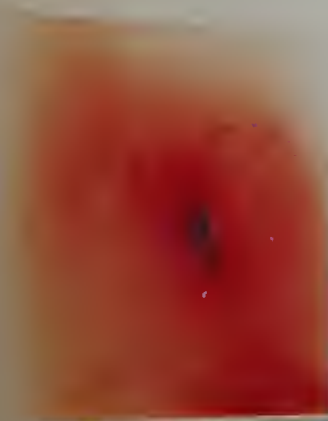
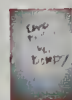
Andrew GRASSIE  
Camerawork, London  
1999  
Tempera on paper  
12.5 × 17.5 cm [5 × 7 in]  
Grassie's paintings set up a dialogue with other modes of representation and with the paradoxes of mechanical reproduction. In 1998 he participated in a British touring exhibition of photorealist painters, *Postcards on Photography*. At each venue Grassie photographed the installation of the works, painted from the photograph and hung his painting in the show in time for the opening. The process was repeated at each of the four venues of the tour.



Louise LAWLER  
Pictures That May or May Not Go Together  
1997-98  
C-type print  
61 × 76 cm [24 × 30 in]  
Lawler's photographic investigations of gallery spaces, auction houses, private homes of collectors and store rooms draw attention to the social and political mechanisms which underlie the display, promotion and critical framing of contemporary art. They reveal artworks to be highly dependent on an institutional framework that usually remains silent.

Wolfgang TILLMANS  
Installation views, 'View from Above', Louisiana Museum, Denmark, 2003  
*opposite, top*, 'Ostgut/December Edit', 2002  
*opposite, l. to r.*, Aufsicht [February], 2002; Blushes No. 82, 2002; Peaches No. 6, 2001; Zero Gravity No. 3, 2001; Richard James, 2001  
Tillman's hybrid practice originated in his earlier fashion and editorial work. He approaches the page and the gallery wall as equally significant sites for the arrangement of images. He often combines classically framed photographs with laboratory enprints, laser copies and printer's galleys. The images themselves are equally diverse, including portraits, cityscapes, still life studies and landscapes.





# 'JUST' LOOKING

Connections between the camera and the eye

have played a central part in photography and film since the 1920s. The acts of seeing and photographing have often been made to seem fused into one. In the inter-war years 'Man and Machine' became inseparable, in an often male-centred embrace of the camera as an extension of the self. In the 1970s and 1980s the process of looking was scrutinised and remade by artists, many of whom were informed by psychoanalytic thinking about representation as well as a growing awareness of the way the male gaze has traditionally structured both art history and mass culture. Looking was stripped of its supposed simplicity and revealed as a process organised by social power and unconscious desire. The works in this section examine the four looks of photography: the viewer's look at the image; the camera's look at the subject; the subject's look at the camera; and the looks between subjects.

Michael SNOW

Authorization

1969

5 black and white Polaroid prints and cloth tape on mirror  
in metal frame

54.5 × 44.5 cm [21.5 × 17.5 in]

Collection, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

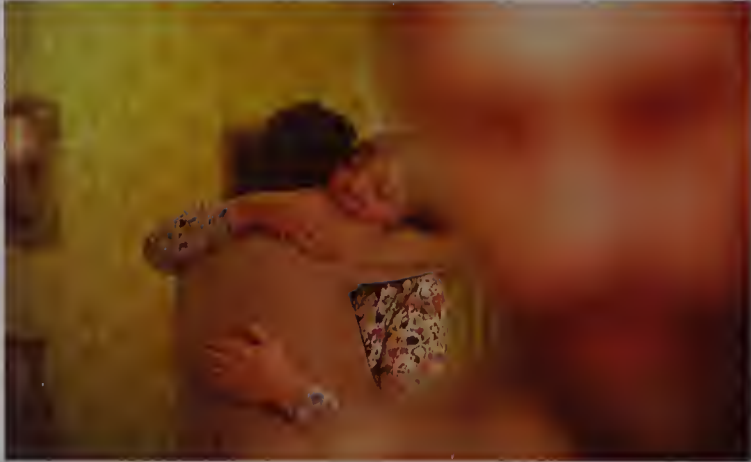
Snow exploited the immediacy of Polaroid film to build up a cumulative self-portrait. He first photographed his reflection in a mirror. The instant picture was then placed on the mirror and a second image was taken. Again this was placed on the mirror and the procedure repeated twice more to form a square of images in the centre. The artist obliterates his own reflection but reappears in the form of photographs. A fifth image containing the previous four was then taken and placed in the top left hand corner. The final exhibited work is the mirror itself with the photographs attached. In the gallery, viewers can only see themselves reflected by standing to the side, since the optimal viewing position, directly in front of the work, has been monopolised by the portrait.







For more on the man who is the most powerful in the world, see page 171.



When the woman is seen in the most powerful position, she is in the man's arms. And, as a result, she is the most powerful woman in the world.



Dieter APPELT

Fleck Auf dem Spiegel [Speck on the Mirror]

1978

Bromide silver print

20.5 × 25.5 cm [8 × 10.5 in]

Appelt's photographs document his performance work which derives from actionism. The photograph becomes an integral part of a ritualistic process which examines the surface of both the image and his own body, to seek a deeper level of significance.

'When Dieter Appelt exhaled upon a mirror, the softness of the optical change is communicated as an effect of which we do not see the cause ... It's impossible not to recall that traditional moment when a mirror was placed near the lips of a person thought to have died. That which condenses – produces vapour, has some kind of pneumatic energy, subtle in its bloom – would signify the life within.'

– Max Kozloff, 'The Etherealized Figure and the Dream of Wisdom', in Adam

D. Weinberg (ed.), *Vanishing Presence*, 1989



John STEZAKER

The Voyeur

1979

Collage

55.5 × 78 cm [22 × 31 in]

This is one of a series of collages in which Stezaker looked at aspects of the voyeurism intrinsic to the experience of cinema. Here he uses the way in which a silhouette oscillates between presence and absence to figure the psychological movement between watching and participating. Is the silhouette an obstacle for us or a point of identification? Are we behind this figure as if behind a member of the cinema audience or is the figure in the frame? Does it represent us? Stezaker here pares down collage to a minimal image, yet sets in motion a series of complex questions about gender, spectatorship and identification.



aggression (distorted form)

While a few brief steps he moved to place himself  
on foot of the mirror photograph, who has  
already opened taking picture of the camera, the  
viewer then is asked at the same time to discover

John HILLIARD

Depression/Jealousy/Aggression

1975

C-type prints with Letraset text on card

3 panels, 51 × 74 cm [20 × 29 in] each

In one fixed scene, three different narrative motivations are suggested through three different points of focus: optics alone shift the reading of the images. Hilliard here mixed the conventions of the cinema publicity still and the popular photo-novel. This work also has much in common with structuralist filmmaking of the late 1960s and 1970s which aimed to foreground the usually neutral camera in the formation of the work, drawing attention to the viewer's perceptual experience of the image as the product of a technical apparatus.



The plan is circular; at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower pierced with many windows. The building consists of cells; each has two windows: one in the outer wall of the cell allows daylight to pass into it; another in the inner wall looks onto the tower, or rather is looked upon by the tower, for the windows of the tower are dark, and the occupants of the cell cannot know who watches, or if anyone watches.





VICTOR BURGIN

Untitled, from Zoo

1978

Black and white photograph, text

Diptych, each panel 102 x 152 cm (40 x 60 in) each

As the 1970s progressed, Burgin's psychoanalytically informed practice led to an exploration of two major themes: seeing structured through sexual difference and the experience of the contemporary city. Zoo, comprising eight diptychs, brought the two themes together. The text in this diptych alludes to the panopticon, a nineteenth-century innovation in prison design which enabled a single prison officer to watch over a number of inmates without himself being seen. The theorist Michel Foucault suggested 'panopticism' as a metaphor for modern social life, particularly in cities. Burgin looked at the set-up of a Berlin strip show and saw a reversal of panoptic vision – voyeurs are secure in darkness, encircling the lone woman displayed to their gaze on a rotating table. The image is paired with an image of a public monument, Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, hanging in a private home



Cindy SHERMAN

Untitled Film Still No. 4

1977

Gelatin silver print

19 × 24 cm [7.5 × 9.5 in]

Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

In the 69 images which comprise the *Untitled Film Still* series (1977–80)

Sherman masquerades as a range of stereotypical female characters from popular cinema. Portraits alternate with scenes suggesting a film frame, in which a gaze or look has been caught rather than posed. Sherman's personae invariably appear alone, yet the social world permeates the construction of the half-familiar images. The camera appears to watch rather than being offered the performance, a convention far closer to the voyeuristic position of a cinema audience. Sherman rarely addresses the camera directly, instead separating herself, while at the same time performing for its gaze.

Cindy SHERMAN

Untitled No. 74

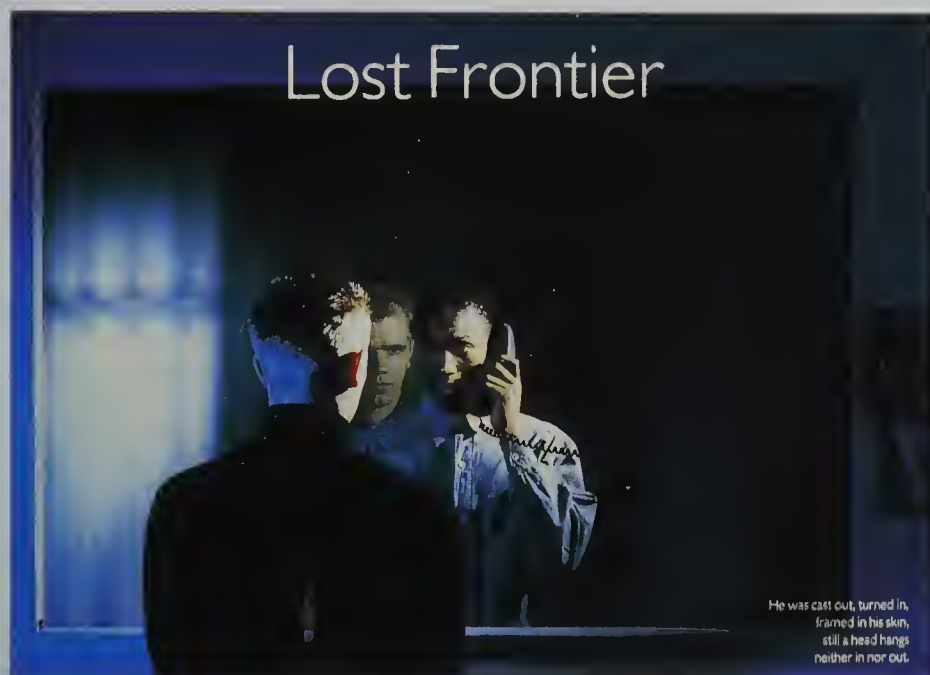
1980

C-type print

61 × 91.5 cm [24 × 36 in]

This image is from a series made using rear screen projection, a pre-digital technique often used to save the expense of shooting on location. Occasionally directors such as Alfred Hitchcock would use it to create an estrangement from reality, emphasising the mental state of the protagonists. Sherman's film-related portraits rework cinema's generic types of femininity rather than specific roles, however this image also resembles the character Sarah Sherman, played by Julie Andrews in Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* (1966).





Mitra TABRIZIAN and Andy GOLDING

Lost Frontier, from *The Blues*

1986–87

Colour photograph, text

1 panel from series of 3 triptychs, 130 × 180 cm [51 × 71 in] each

*The Blues* are three triptychs which examine themes of race, gender and identity.

'The title *The Blues* is used here as a metaphor signifying the black voice – as a voice of resistance. The work uses the codes of movie posters as a popular form, to construct in each 'untold story' a critical moment in the confrontation between black and white. What the black man is confronting is the state of whiteness. The blue colour is also an integral part of the *mise-en-scène* of crime movies. No matter what position he is put in; under police interrogation, in prison, in a low paid job, being an 'invader'; the black man questions the white man's identity.'

– Mitra Tabrizian, *Correct Distance*, 1990



Jeff WALL

Picture for Women


1979

Transparency in lightbox

163 × 229 cm [64 × 90 in]

Collection, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

This image alludes to Manet's painting *Bar at the Folies-Bergères* (1881–82) in which a woman stands behind a bar facing 'us', the viewers. The scene is depicted from the viewpoint of a man whom we see reflected in an oblique mirror behind her. This kind of picture construction is not possible with a camera. Instead Wall positions its automatic eye centre frame, forcing the viewer into an impossible identification with a disembodied machine. Various devices suggest that the photograph is taken in a mirror. The artist, at right, is firing the cable release of the camera, which seems to be gazed at via a mirror by the woman. Before them is a low wooden surface and behind are metal stands that echo the spaces between mirror panels. Wall alludes to the history of photographers taking their own reflected portrait, making use of mirrors as a modernist gesture that invokes the picture plane. Yet there is nothing here to betray the presence of a mirror. The picture could equally have been taken 'straight' by a second camera. What we see might also be a reversing of the negative/transparency to create a false mirror-image. Whatever our speculations, the enigma of this image provokes meditation upon both gender relations and the optics of photography



**Your**

**gaze**

**hits**

**the**

**side**

**of my**

**face**



Barbara KRUGER

Untitled [Your gaze hits the side of my face]

1981

Photomontage printed as black and white photograph

140 × 104 cm [55 × 41 in]

Kruger uses language to destabilise our positions as spectators. We gaze at the image but the words address us and our relation to looking. In this work, for example, we may begin to ask who the 'your' and 'my' refer to, depending on our own perspective. Kruger's work examines how vision and desire are socially regulated in a culture dominated by male privilege. Found images are combined with texts in such a way that the silent assumptions underlying them are unravelled.



Katharina SIEVERDING

Nachtmensch [Night People]

1982

Colour photographs

2 from a series of panels, 86 × 61 cm [34 × 24 in] each

This image is part of a series of large scale works in varying formats in which Sieverding's photographic self-portrait is used to explore the often fetishistic nature of mass media imagery of women's faces. Through an endless variety of cosmetics combined with manipulations of lighting, print tone and colour the works emphasise the ways in which the face is transformed into an iconographic surface. This is most intense in the cinematic close-up, to which the grand scale of these works alludes. Instead of offering a fixed, consumable image for the viewer Sieverding presents multiple permutations, where it becomes almost impossible to distinguish a fixed relation between face and mask, flesh and image.



Thomas RUFF

Portraits

1986-90

C-type prints

210 × 165 cm [82.5 × 65 in] each

Installation, Saatchi Gallery, London, 1997

Ruff began making portraits of friends and acquaintances in 1980. Initially these were small 24 × 18 cm prints, with plain backgrounds of a single colour chosen in relation to the individual subject. Uniformly taking in just the head and shoulders, most were frontal with some in profile. In 1986 he began printing on the largest photographic paper available. He then neutralised the backgrounds to an off-white and standardised a frontal pose with eyes directed straight at the camera. The images seem reminiscent of passport photos but here they register anonymity as much as identity. Since the work is so standardised, if we make any subjective preference for one image over another it can only be a response to the depicted faces themselves and not the photography. The portraits shown above were made between 1986 and 1990, but the series continues as an ongoing project.







Nan GOLDIN

Self-portrait with Brian, New  
York City, 1983, from *The Ballad  
of Sexual Dependency*  
1983

Cibachrome print

40.5 × 51 cm [16 × 20 in]

*The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* originated as a continuously evolving presentation of slides with popular music in which Goldin makes a visual diary of her life with friends and lovers. It was first shown in a New York club in 1979 and has since been seen in arts venues worldwide. In 1986 a selection of images from the series was published as a book which was widely influential. *The Ballad* is marked by uncertain gazes between people and between the camera and Goldin's subjects, which include herself. Here eyes do not simply see, they are themselves complex visual signs that hint at the character of contemporary human relationships.



Della GRACE  
Three Graces  
1992  
Gelatin silver print  
152.5 x 122 cm [60 x 48 in]  
The Greek classical tradition of the three Graces, female figures who embodied ideals of charm and beauty in nature and humanity, has been reinterpreted in European sculpture and painting from the Renaissance onwards. Della Grace's radical version of this theme creates a scenario where female subjects, liberated from the dominant norms of sexual and gender conformity, are able to enjoy and objectify their own bodies on their own terms. The work's composition both questions and ignores the viewer through the interplay of gazes within the picture and with the camera.



Richard SAWDON SMITH  
Simon 1968-97  
1997  
Platinum print  
19 x 15 cm [7.5 x 6 in]  
This image comes from the series *A Photographic Collaboration: Richard Sawdon Smith & Simon Kennett*, which explored the ways that a person living with HIV can be represented. Rather than formulating an ideal visual style the work moves between different approaches. Photographs that challenge expectations of what is 'normal' or 'acceptable' are often viewed as windows directly onto the subject matter, but this misses the fact that we understand bodies through their representations. If the image of Simon troubles it is as much a result of how he is photographed: the image combines the objectifying medical gaze at the 'abnormal' body with classical photography of the fine art nude.





Joel Peter WITKIN

Las Meninas, New Mexico

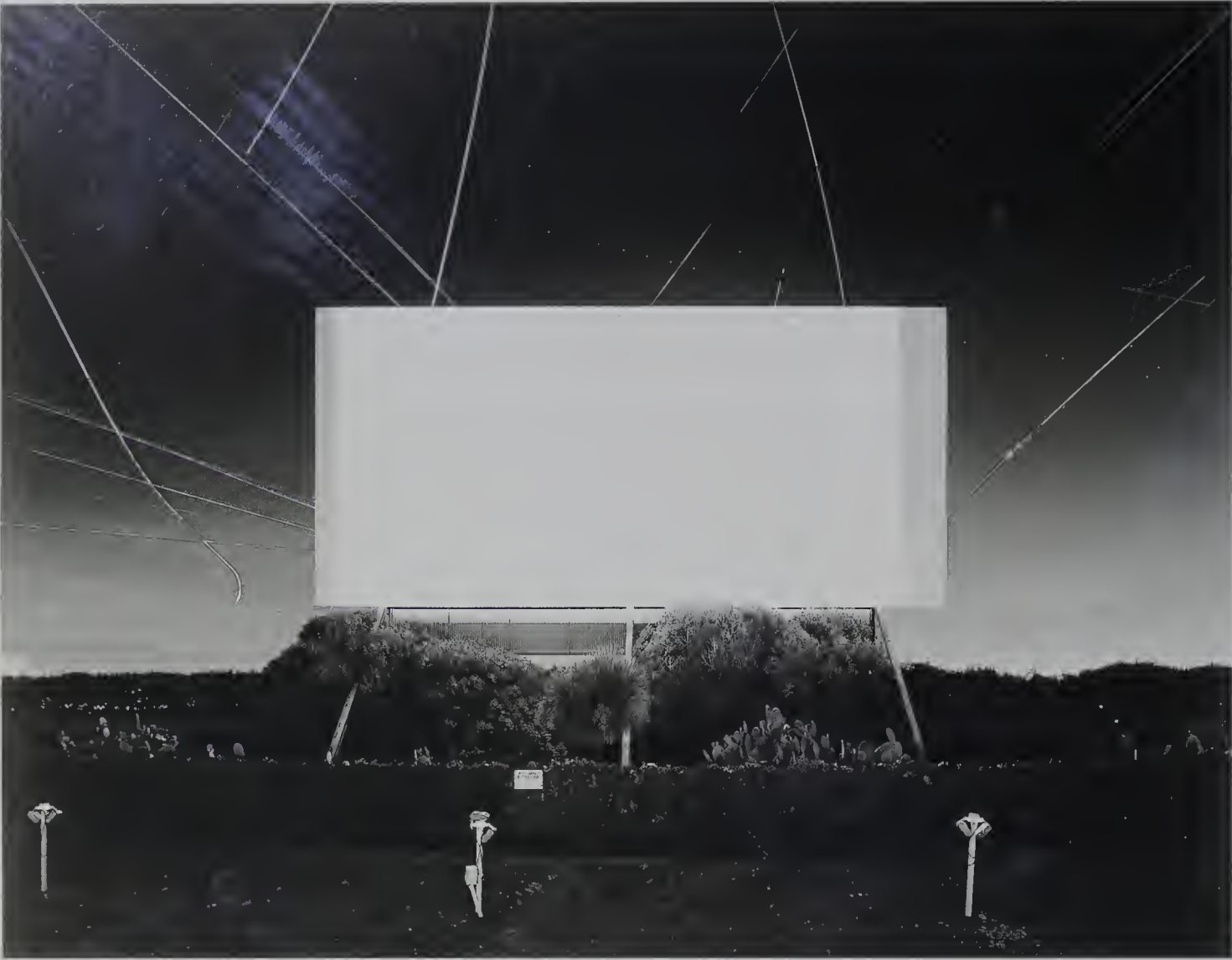
1987

Gelatin silver print

10 × 40 cm (20 × 16 in)

This staged photograph alludes to Velázquez' allegorical painting *Las Meninas* (1656–57), which depicts the family of King Philip IV of Spain. Velázquez' complex spatial scheme is retained but Witkin replaces each element with transgressive echoes of the original. Picasso's homage to the painting is also quoted, and Witkin appears in Velázquez's place, his eyes scratched out. While the original painting asserted the artist's privileged relationship with courtly patronage, Witkin's claim to artistic status depends not on patronage but on the impact of his subject matter.





Hiroshi SUGIMOTO  
Union City Drive-in, Union City  
1993  
Gelatin silver print  
51 × 61 cm [20 × 24 in]  
Sugimoto has been photographing movie theatres and drive-ins for over two decades. In these works the relation of the still image to cinema is reversed. Photography is not a snapshot here, rather it contains an entire film. The camera makes an exposure that lasts the length of a movie screening. The cinematic images cancel each other out to leave a blank minimalist rectangle residing over an absent audience. The bounced light illuminates the darkened space in front while trace lights give the sky a sense of duration. As with all of his work Sugimoto exploits the slowness of the photographic gaze to reflect upon the speed of modern looking.

Uta BARTH  
Ground No. 30  
1994  
Colour photograph on panel  
56 × 46 × 5 cm [22 × 18 × 2 in]  
Barth's images explore connections between the physiology of seeing, the photographic image and our visual habits of looking. Here the camera is focused at a close distance, leaving us with a generalised 'background' of non-specific space. For Barth, seeing is inseparable from the processes of memory through which we look for meaning. Our mental storehouse of images is particular to each of us, but much of it is culturally shared, as is the nature of the spaces in which we exist. It is this knowledge that allows Barth's photographs to resonate even while they appear to deprive the viewer of visual information. Having taken this photograph Barth realised she had unconsciously been influenced by Vermeer's painting (1658–60) of a woman pouring milk from a jug, an image she had known since childhood. It has the same proportions, layout and lighting.









Shirin NESHAT

Untitled, from *Fervor*

2000

Gelatin silver print

148.5 × 121 cm [59 × 47.5 in]

Neshat's photographs, film and video works subtly examine issues which affect the relationships between women and men in traditional Muslim societies. This is a still photograph from *Fervor*, a double screen video installation. It focuses on the way a prohibition on direct eye contact can intensify individual emotions and longings. In this scene a curtain divides men from women at a prayer meeting. The woman turns her head when she senses her lover is leaving, and then joins him outside, beyond the eyes of society. The female gaze and the seductiveness of the work allow for the possibility of new perspectives to emerge within a traditional framework.



Elinor CARUCCI

My Mother and I

2000

C type print

76 × 101.5 cm [30 × 40 in]

*Closer*, in which this image is included, comprises intimate images of Carucci's family. Set primarily in the home it records everyday existence and brief exchanges, exploring relationships between people and between their bodies and their immediate environment. These two kinds of intimacy are held together stylistically through a cinematic type of narrative and interspersed with close-ups, all shot with a careful palette of colours – predominantly skin tones, aquamarine, deep red or blue. Carucci's approach to her subjects becomes most apparent in book form, where the slow accumulation of details and motifs builds up a subtle picture of a private world





Starkey has developed an understated and poetic approach to everyday situations. Placing the camera at the edge of the subject's personal space she depicts moments of absorption and reverie, states in which looking becomes curious and open ended. This is clearest in her images of young women whose actions seem to be both self-conscious and unconscious. Starkey's photography is a staged naturalism that seems to echo this frame of mind.



In McMurdo's digitally composite image a girl magically encounters her double. Her reaction seems to be a combination of recognition and scepticism. One of a series of related works, this image was made when artists were first experimenting with seamless digital montages of impossible scenarios. In some respects the girl's reaction is also shared by the viewer. We look at the photograph the way she looks at herself and ask if what we see is real, while also being aware of the setting, 'behind the scenes' at a theatre, with its allusion to artifice. Exploring these scenarios of truth versus fiction with children has a particular resonance. They are in the process of forming their identity within a new world where they are surrounded by digitally manipulated imagery.

1. to r., from top left, Strip No. 1, Writer [shot 1 of 9], 1999;  
Strip No. 3, Critic [shot 2 of 8], 1999; Strip No. 7, Writer [shot 3  
of 11]; Strip No. 5, Dealer [shot 2 of 6], 1999; Strip No. 6, Critic  
[shot 9 of 10], 2000; Strip No. 4, Curator [shot 12 of 12]

Much of Stehli's work has explored the contemporary status of the female nude as self portrait. In this photo-shoot she placed herself between the camera and the gaze of various male artists and art critics. Control of the situation, and by extension the subject matter of the image, is split between Stehli herself as instigator of the scenario and her sitters, who shoot the photographs using a cable release.







Larry SULTAN

Film Set

1999

Chromogenic print

1 from a series of prints, 16 x 101.5 cm (6.3 x 40 in); each

This photograph is from a series begun as a magazine editorial commission on the theme of 'work'. Despite the subject matter, a porn movie shoot, Sultan coolly documents the environment where people earn their living. The American sex industry is a highly organised system of image manufacture based on repetition and formula with little need for originality. Sultan's camera finds the decor as visually interesting as the sex. He places it on a threshold between interest and indifference, a space from which to look that is privileged but frustrating. Sultan here extends a type of photography that he developed in projects such as *Pictures from Home* (1992) which zoomed in on closely observed details of suburban life



# THE CULTURES OF NATURE Photography

is an industrial technology, yet it finds natural forms profoundly photogenic.

There is always a tension in the camera's relationship to its natural 'other'.

In the work of Modernists such as Edward Weston and Ansel Adams this tension is masked through the textures and volumes of their subjects, rendered almost surreal in acts of pictorial reverence towards natural objects and the landscape.

This tradition lives on but by the 1960s it became difficult to retain such an unproblematic understanding of nature. The advance of technology, the rise of ecological consciousness, the commodification of land and the further detachment of urban life from nature were all factors that forced photographers and artists to rethink, often with a political urgency, nature's meanings. Some of the works in this section explore boundaries between the natural and the cultural, searching out liminal spaces and forms that are both or neither. Others take the view that we can never access the natural world on its own terms; rather, it is the very act of picturing that gives it meaning and significance.

Robert SMITHSON

*Incidents of Mirror Travel in the Yucatan*

1969

35 mm slides printed as colour photographs

9 parts, 27 × 27 cm each

Smithson was drawn to places and situations where human artefacts and nature coalesce in unplanned ways. This work belongs to a large series of photographs from 35 mm slides which document the *Mirror Displacements*, made in locations in the USA, Mexico and England. Smithson placed mirrors in different types of natural locations, photographed and then removed them. The mirror view places the objectivity of the photograph in doubt, always pointing beyond the frame.

Thus the photographs encompass both a physical site and, to use Smithson's term, a 'non-site', accessed only through recollection. These images were first published as a magazine spread, accompanied by Smithson's texts on each of the nine mirror displacements, in *Artforum*, September 1969.









Joel STERNFELD  
Exhausted Renegade Elephant,  
Woodland, Washington, June 1979  
1979  
Ektacolor print mounted on board  
56 × 74 cm [22 × 29 in]  
This image comes from Sternfeld's book *American Prospects*, first published in 1984. Many of the photographs depict ironic or almost surreal moments in contemporary encounters with nature. Their pictorial harmony makes use of elements that are unexpected yet prevent the images falling into cliché. Here that element is an elephant, out of place on this country road but in place in terms of conventional composition. The photograph situates the event in a pictorial vista from an elevated viewpoint, familiar from landscape painting. Sternfeld's discreet distance places the viewer at the cusp of involvement. As a strategy this had much in common with American 'social landscape' photography as it developed from the late 1960s through the 1970s. It allowed photographers to consider shifting attitudes towards nature while retaining some of the more traditional aspects of landscape picture making.

Stephen SHORE  
Merced River, Yosemite National Park, California, August 13th, 1979  
1979  
C-type print mounted on aluminium  
91.5 × 114.5 cm [36 × 45 in]  
Since the early 1970s when he embarked on a series of car journeys across the United States, Shore, in common with contemporaries such as Joel Sternfeld, William Eggleston and Mitch Epstein, has focused on everyday subject matter. For Shore landscape is primarily a social space. He avoids idealising nature, although it looks traditionally beautiful in his photographs, such as this one. Unlike Ansel Adams, with whose images Yosemite National Park is synonymous, Shore photographs the same subject very much as a national park. Although this landscape still evokes the romantic associations of the past the holidaymakers in the foreground highlight its current function as a modern leisure amenity.









Richard PRINCE  
 Untitled [Cowboy]

1980-84

Ektacolor print

61 × 51 cm [24 × 20 in]

Prince came to prominence in the late 1970s with his deft appropriations of mass cultural images. In 1980 he began to rephotograph Marlboro cigarette advertisements, making an ongoing series that parallels the longevity of the advertising campaign. Removing the text and re-presenting this familiar imagery in an exhibition context, Prince provokes broader reflection on its iconography. The work slows down and reroutes the reading of what has become a shorthand, mythical representation of 'the American West'.





Paul GRAHAM

Army Stop and Search, Warrenpoint, from *Troubled Land*  
1986

Colour photograph

68 × 87.5 cm [27 × 34.5 in]

Collections, Winnipeg Art Museum, Canada; Wolverhampton Museum  
and Art Gallery, England

*Troubled Land* attempted to bridge the gap between the two photographic subjects associated with portrayals of northern Ireland: idyllic landscapes on the one hand and images of war on the other. Graham exploited a large final image size to make his significant details small, in this case an army checkpoint for civilian vehicles. The viewer moves from taking in the whole image as a landscape to viewing the detail as reportage. Graham's work often mixes visual approaches, making imagery that subverts the usual photographs we see. This friction opens up a critical distance from which to examine how our knowledge of the world is often structured by the repetition of certain kinds of images.





'pastoral interlude'

... it's as if the black experience is only lived within an urban environment. I thought I liked the Lake District; where I wandered lonely as a Black face in a sea of white. A visit to the countryside is always accompanied by a feeling of unease; dread ...



... feeling I don't belong. Walks through leafy glades with a baseball bat by my side ...



... a lot of what *made England great* is founded on the blood of slavery, the sweat of working people ... an industrial *revolution* without the Atlantic Triangle ...



searching for sea shells; waves lap my wellington boots, carrying lost souls of brothers and sisters released over the ship side ...



... death is the bottom line. The owners of these fields, these trees and sheep, want me off their *green and pleasant land*. No Trespass, they want me *dead*. A slow death through eyes that slide away from me ...



Ingrid POLLARD

Pastoral Interlude

1987

5 hand-tinted gelatin silver prints, text

4 panels 51 × 61 cm [20 × 24 in] each, 1 panel 61 × 51 cm

[24 × 20 in]

Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

*Pastoral Interlude* was commissioned for the group exhibition of black British photographers, 'D-Max', which toured Britain in 1987. Widely exhibited since, it comments on the implications of prevailing forms of representation: 'It is really a metaphor, a skeleton on which I explored ideas about place, space, and where we all fit into the world scheme ... I see myself as a representative of a world majority culture. I may have a fixed idea of my place and identity but this changes depending on the context I am placed in by others. That flux is fascinating and a major concern in my work ...'

– Ingrid Pollard, statement, 2002



Peter KENNARD

The Haywain, Constable [1821], Cruise Missiles, USA [1983]

1983

Photomontage

Dimensions variable

Kennard's photomontages have appeared in books, exhibitions and newspapers and on posters and postcards. This image made literal the presence of US nuclear cruise missiles at military bases in the English countryside. It 'became widely reproduced with the addition of different text in different languages by peace movements around the world. My favourite use of it is simply as a postcard with no text. Tens of thousands of these were printed over the years. This version infiltrated into the social fabric in unexpected ways. I was told by a number of shop owners that they had been bought by unsuspecting American tourists who hadn't noticed the missiles. The idea of these cards winging their way into middle-American households is deeply pleasurable.'

– Peter Kennard, *Dispatches from an Unofficial War Artist*, 2000



Sally MANN

The Alligator's Approach, from *Immediate Family*

1988

gelatin silver print

51 x 61 cm [20 x 24 in.]

A number of Mann's images evoke simultaneously the family album and the classic traditions of nature photography. While alluding to the serene styles of past epochs she introduces contemporary objects – in this case the toy alligator seen in the distance from the decking where her daughter is sleeping. In the book *Immediate Family* interspersed texts by Mann and Reynolds Price give the reader space to interpret the cultural context of the images and their relationship to traditions of family photography. In her more recent landscape photographs, such as the *Mother Land* series (1996), Mann focuses on the local terrains that form the background of her family portraits, exploring their historical associations with the sense of place.





Joan FONTCUBERTA and Pere FORMIGUERA

*Fauna*

*Centaurus Neardentalensis*

1986

Toned and tinted gelatin silver print

51 × 40.5 cm [20 × 16 in]

Fontcuberta's photographs gently subvert the tenuous relationship of photography to scientific knowledge. *Fauna* (1986–88) is a collaboration with another photographer and writer, Pere Formiguera, comprising fieldnotes, sketches and photographs taken by the fictitious Dr Amiesenhafen, a natural scientist who discovers hybrid animals whose existence undermines the understanding of evolution. Deliberately made to look old, the images mimic nineteenth-century presentations of natural science. *Fauna* was published as a book in the style of a working diary and has also been exhibited in museums of natural history. Presented as a collection of data, objects and images the installation creates a dialogue with the surrounding exhibits.





Allan SEKULA

Ghost Ship [Conclusion of search for the disabled and drifting sailboat, happy ending], from Fish Story

1989-95

105 framed colour photographs in 7 consecutive groups, 26 text and graphic panels, 2 slide projections, each of 80 colour transparencies, with text booklets and reading cubicles  
Photographs, 63 × 146 cm [25 × 57.5 in] each

Taking the forms both of a book and an installation, *Fish Story* is an ambitious project in which Sekula examines the social and economic complexities of high capitalism through texts and photographs which document the international movement of goods by sea.

'The maritime world is fundamental to late modernity, because it is the cargo container, an American innovation of the 1950s, that makes the global system of manufacture possible ... it's a world of gargantuan automation but also of persistent work, of isolated, anonymous hidden work, of great loneliness, displacement and separation from the domestic sphere. For that reason it is interesting to find the social in the sea, as Herman Melville did.'

— Allan Sekula, statement, 1998





Hiroshi SUGIMOTO  
Celtic Sea, St. Agnes  
1994  
Gelatin silver print  
51 × 61 cm [20 × 24 in.]

This image is part of an ongoing series of seascapes begun by Sugimoto in 1980. The images border on abstraction, representing a minimalist limit of composition in the photography of nature. The photographs are taken from raised land, with a horizon bisecting the frame. Some are made by moonlight, while the daytime exposures are generally made under cloudless skies. They are taken on a 10 x 8 inch plate camera. The prints are only twice that size, preserving a density of detail beyond the limits of the eye. Technically they could have been made at almost any point in the history of the medium; they depict scenes which could come from any period in the planet's history.





opposite

Carrie Mae WEEMS

The Shape of Things, from Africa

1993

Gelatin silver prints, framed

Triptych, 63.5 × 152.5 cm [25 × 60 in] overall

Since the mid 1970s Weems has worked as a photographer and folklorist, exploring the oral histories of African-American culture and points of contiguity between the political, poetic and sensual. The *Africa* series, which documents a search for ancestry, marks a strong awareness of the mythological and spiritual status of the continent for African Americans. Weems travelled along what had been the slave coasts of Senegal, Ghana and the Ivory Coast to make this series. In her photographs of these non-industrialised landscapes, with their local and ancient traditions of architecture, the complexities of the past and the present diaspora coexist.

below

Roni HORN

You Are the Weather

1994–95

100 colour photographs and gelatin silver prints installed on 4 walls, 25.5 × 20.5 cm [10 × 8 in] each

Collections, De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands; Kunstmuseum Nürnberg, Germany

61 photographs published in book form in *To Place – Book VI: Haraldsdóttir*, 1996

This is the sixth of a series of works made in and about Iceland over twenty years. Horn photographed a friend, Margrét Haraldsdóttir Blöndal, bathing in pools in Iceland over two months. The portraits comprise small sets of each encounter, mediated by the camera. The referent of ‘you’ is left ambiguous. The images all have a similar compositional format, allowing the subtlest shifts in emotion and environment to surface. They are the same size in exhibition as they are in the book of the work, but the effects are very different. In the gallery the project can be taken in as a whole and the images seem quite small. On the page they seem much larger and more intimate, and the sequential arrangement is emphasised.





Gregory CREWDSON

Untitled, from Hover

1996/97

Gelatin silver print

61 x 61 cm (20 x 24 in)

Crewdson is best known for his highly coloured still life tableaux which convey a claustrophobic sense of malaise. Here, however, he pulled the camera back and shot in monochrome, yet the effect is no less estranging. While neighbours and a police officer look on, a man lays a turf lawn over the road. Turf is a commodified packaging of nature, making his activity less a visionary embrace of the wild than an impulsive act of modern frustration. In this setting Crewdson mocks the heroics of Land art. Whereas Land artists generally deployed the camera as a recording device for site-specific work Crewdson involves it in the creation of the image. His meticulous scene-setting borrows as much from cinema as from documentary photography.



Jeff WALL

The Flooded Grave

1998-2000

Transparency in lightbox

229 × 282 cm (90 × 111 in)

*The Flooded Grave* was made over two years. Wall photographed the cemetery, then he dug a hole in a second location. A cast was made of this hole which was taken back to his studio. Within it Wall established a living marine ecosystem. Photographs of this were taken and the elements were combined using digital imaging techniques. Wall's digital work often follows the rules of spatial coherence we associate with the single photograph. This leads to expectations of the image which are diverted and returned to the viewer, to decipher and contemplate. The naturalistic handling of an uncanny occurrence lends the work a dreamlike quality. In the place of death we glimpse the teeming life of the ocean.





# DOCUMENTS

VITO ACCONCI  
CARL ANDRE  
KEITH ARNATT  
JOHN BALDESSARI  
LEWIS BALTZ  
ROLAND BARTHES  
DAVID BATE  
JEAN BAUDRILLARD  
BERND & HILLA BECHER  
WALTER BENJAMIN  
NORMAN BRYSON  
BENJAMIN H.D. BUCHLOH  
CHRIS BURDEN  
VICTOR BURGIN  
JAMES CASEBÈRE  
STANLEY CAVELL  
LYNNE COHEN  
JOHN COPLANS  
GREGORY CREWDSON  
DOUGLAS CRIMP  
ARTHUR C. DANTO  
JACQUES DERRIDA  
EDOUARD DUBOIS  
THE K&N FAIRBROTHER  
RUTH GELBERG  
JOHN GUTENBERG  
JACK HARRIS  
THE L.A. MOBILE  
JAMES HENNING  
LEONARD HESTERSON  
JACQUES HENRIOT

JOHN HILLIARD  
DOUGLAS HUEBLER  
JOSEPH KOSUTH  
BARBARA KRUGER  
YVE LOMAX  
KEN LUM  
RUT BLEES LUXEBURG  
ANDRÉ MALRAUX  
MIKE MANDEL  
RICHARD MISRACH  
LAURA MULVEY  
VIK MUNIZ  
CRAIG OWENS  
GIUSEPPE PENONE  
RICHARD PRINCE  
MARCEL PROUST  
OLIVIER RICHON  
GERHARD RICHTER  
SOPHIE RISTELHUEBER  
ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET  
MARTHA ROSLER  
RALPH RUGOFF  
EDWARD RUSCHA  
ALLAN SEKULA  
CINDY SHERMAN  
ROBERT SMITHSON  
JO SPENCE  
JOHN STEZAKER  
THOMAS STRÜTH  
HIROSHI SUGIMOTO  
LARRY SULTAN

MITRA TABRIZIAN  
WOLFGANG TILLMANS  
JEFF WALL  
THOMAS WESKI  
HANNAH WILKE  
GILDA WILLIAMS  
KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO  
PETER WOLLEN





1. [see page 216 ]  
Edward RUSCHA  
Twentysix Gasoline  
Stations [detail]  
1963  
Artist's book, offset,  
softcover  
18 x 14 cm  
[7 x 5.5 in]



2. [see page 219]  
Chris MARKER  
La jélée  
1962  
16mm, black and white,  
28 min.  
'this moment he had been  
granted to watch as a  
child, which had never  
ceased to obsess him,  
was the moment of his  
own death'



3. [see page 222]  
Edward WESTON  
Cabbage leaf  
1931  
Gelatin silver print  
20 x 25.5 cm  
[8 x 10 in]



4. [see page 222]  
Alfred STIEGLITZ  
Equivalent  
1930  
Gelatin silver print  
9.5 x 12 cm  
[3.5 x 4.5 in]



5. [see page 228]  
August SANDER  
Anton Räderscheidt  
1927  
Gelatin silver print  
28.5 x 21 cm  
[11 x 8.5 in]



6. [see page 231]  
Édouard-Denis BALOUS  
Gare de Toulon  
c. 1859  
Albumen print  
28 x 43 cm  
[11 x 17 in]



7. [see page 232]  
Charles SHEELER  
Criss Cross Conveyors,  
Ford Plant  
1927  
Gelatin silver print  
25.5 x 20.5 cm  
[10 x 8 in]



8. [see page 240]  
Eugène DELACROIX  
The Death of  
Sardanapalus  
1827  
Oil on canvas  
392 x 496 cm  
[154 x 192 in]





9. [see page 240]  
Marcel DUCHAMP  
Étant donnés: 1. La  
Chute d'eau. 2. Le Gaz  
d'éclairage  
1946-66  
Wooden door, mixed media  
assemblage  
242.5 × 178 cm  
[95.5 × 70 in]



11. [see page 245]  
Michael LESY  
Wisconsin Death Trip  
[detail]  
1973  
Oblong quarto, black and  
white photographs,  
clothbound, dustjacket  
Pantheon Books, New York



13. [see page 251]  
Thomas STRUTH  
Go and Ayaka Okutsu,  
Yamaguchi  
1996  
C-type print  
53 × 69.5 cm  
[21 × 27 in]



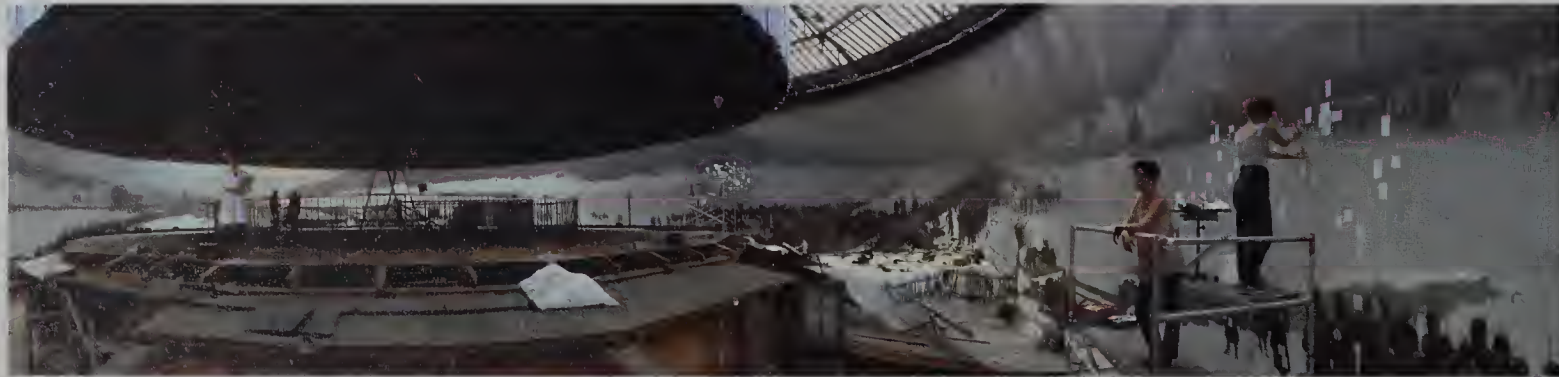
10. [see page 240]  
Gustave COURBET  
The Studio of the  
Painter  
1855  
Oil on canvas  
361 × 598 cm  
[142 × 236 in]



12. [see page 246]  
Rut BLEES LUXEMBURG  
Nach Innen [In Deeper]  
1999  
C-type print mounted on  
aluminium  
150 × 180 cm  
[59 × 71 in]



14. [see page 255]  
Jo SPENCE and Rosy  
MARTIN  
Infantilization, from  
The Picture of Health?  
1984  
Colour photograph  
Dimensions variable



15. [see page 270]  
Jeff WALL  
Restoration  
1993  
Transparency in lightbox  
137 × 507 cm  
[54 × 200 in]



# MEMORIES AND ARCHIVES Since the 1960s

many artists and writers have examined the place of photography in private memory and public history. Questions of context became central in the artistic turn towards the archival image. Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan described the mixture of idealism and pragmatism involved in their archival project *Evidence* (1977) while John Baldessari revealed the subjective method by which he organises his resource of film stills. Allan Sekula and Douglas Crimp addressed the mobility of the photograph and its consequent shifts in meaning. The text which is integral to Sekula's work *Meditations on a Triptych* (1973–78) points towards the constant slippage between image and language in the experience of the contemporary world.

The relation of photography to time and memory was pivotal in Marcel Proust's novel *Remembrance of Things Past* (*A la recherche du temps perdu*, 1913–27) and preoccupied many writers in the inter-war period. Roland Barthes' final and highly influential book *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (*La Chambre claire*, 1980) meditated on the effects of a private and mournful relation to the image. More recent thinkers such as Peter Wollen and Jacques Derrida have drawn on the wealth of ideas put forward by Barthes to further explore the temporalities of the photograph.

## Marcel PROUST Remembrance of Things Past [1913–27]

[...] She would have liked me to have in my room photographs of ancient buildings or of beautiful places. But at the moment of buying them, and for all that the subject of the picture had an aesthetic value, she would find that vulgarity and utility had too prominent a part in them, through the mechanical nature of their reproduction by photography. She attempted by a subterfuge, if not to

eliminate altogether this commercial banality, at least to minimize it, to supplant it to a certain extent with what was art still, to introduce, as it were, several 'thicknesses' of art: instead of photographs of Chartres Cathedral, of the Fountains of Saint-Cloud, or of Vesuvius, she would inquire of Swann whether some great painter had not depicted them, and preferred to give me photographs of 'Chartres Cathedral' after Corot, of the 'Fountains of Saint-Cloud' after Hubert Robert, and of 'Vesuvius' after Turner, which were a stage higher in the scale of art. But although the photographer had been prevented from reproducing directly these masterpieces or beauties of nature, and had there been replaced by a great artist, he resumed his odious position when it came to reproducing the artist's

interpretation. Accordingly, having to reckon again with vulgarity, my grandmother would endeavour to postpone the moment of contact still further. She would ask Swann if the picture had not been engraved, preferring, when possible, old engravings with some interest of association apart from themselves, such, for example, as show us a masterpiece in a state in which we can no longer see it today (like Morghen's print of Leonardo's 'Last Supper' before its defacement). It must be admitted that the results of this method of interpreting the art of making presents were not always happy. The idea which I formed of Venice, from a drawing by Titian which is supposed to have the lagoon in the background, was certainly far less accurate than what I should have derived from ordinary



Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* [8 parts, Paris, 1913–27], trans. C. K. Scott-Moncrieff and S. Hudson, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 7 vols., London, 1922–31; Vol. 1: *Swann’s Way*.

# Allan SEKULA

## Meditations on a Triptych

[1973–78]

ONE

A man and a woman are standing. They are posed in a deliberate way for the making of a photograph. The shadow of a head falls on the scene, obscuring the tip of the man’s right shoe. This negative trace points back to the photographer, who stands, as usual, outside the frame. The photographer stares down at a reversed reflection of the scene, and in trying not to shake the camera, fails to notice the intruding shadow. In presenting themselves as a couple, the man and the woman share their space with the mark of an unseen and unskilled accomplice. This is unfortunate. The man appears to be standing on the photographer’s head. Because of this flaw, this photograph is valued less than others taken on the same day. The picture remains in the processing envelope.

Years later, the photograph reappears in an almost archaeological light. What meanings were once constructed here? What ideas and desires directed this project? Who spoke, who listened, who spoke with a voice not their own? I want to give what was once familiar an exemplary strangeness.

Since this is a still photograph, the man and the woman are still standing. They look to be in their mid-forties. The man could be older. We assume they’re married. Is this a photograph of a man and his wife? Or is it a photograph of a woman and her husband? At this angle the man appears much larger than the woman. Of course this impression is only the result of his being closer to the camera, which faces the couple from an oblique angle. The camera has a wide-angle lens as well, allowing relatives and loved ones to occupy the same frame as monuments and scenic vistas. Perspective is exaggerated. The man tends, slightly, to belong to the foreground. The woman begins to belong to the background. This might be merely an unmotivated optical effect. Or it could be an overdetermined effect of several causes. Perhaps this lack of symmetry was intended. Perhaps it crept into the frame, unthought of. Perhaps social habit drives us to find it in the scene. Women are often in attendance. They attend to male companions within the picture. They attend to unseen male viewers. Thus we might be more inclined to say ‘She is standing at his side’ than to say ‘He is standing at her side.’ There is nothing natural or innocent about this conclusion.

The man has directed the photographer to a point-of-view, mentioning forty-five degree angles and the avoidance of excessive shade. He has told the woman and the photographer of his desires. He has asked the woman

to strike a pose. He has adjusted the angle of her stance. Her *mantilla* has been adjusted to reveal her face. He has drawn himself up, waiting. Instructions have been given. He has failed to notice the juxtaposition of the photographer’s shadow and his shoe.

The man’s eyes are hidden under the shadow of his visor, but we can imagine him squinting despite the shade. His cheek muscles appear tense, as though supporting a tightness of the brow and lids. One side of his mouth curls upward in a half smile which reads as a mild grimace under the shaded eyes. He stands erect, shoulders back, hands at his sides, head turned towards the photographer.

The woman’s hands are hidden. Perhaps they are folded behind her back. She stands nearly at a right angle to the man; her body is more directly oriented towards the camera. She stands with her feet together. She smiles slightly. Her eyes are closed against the light. Although no space is visible between the blue right border of the man and the red left border of the woman, it is likely that their bodies are not touching.

The man and the woman are trying to appear dignified. Perhaps there’s more here than in a casual snapshot. The intense sunlight is an obstacle to composure. As the woman turned her head to the right, towards her husband, she discovered a slight advantage. At this angle the sun was partially blocked by the upper branches of a plum tree. But the relief afforded by the movement was only momentary. As her gaze dropped to the level of the camera she was blinded by an uninterrupted glare from the enamel surface of a trash bin. Her eyes closed against the light.

It’s 1966 or 1967. Quite probably the man and the woman are facing westward, into the direct light of a sun that is beginning to set.

The man is wearing a military uniform. Those of us who know recognize this as the uniform of the United States Air Force. The uniform is dark blue, the colour of the stratosphere. (Somewhere in Washington, in 1946, a team of bureaucrats selected a fabric sample with great care. This was an important public relations decision.) The colour of the ‘frontiers of space’. The colour of ‘national defence’. The colour of a global view of things. The man and the woman could be standing in Dayton, Ohio, or Huntsville, Alabama. Just as easily, they could be standing on Okinawa or Guam. This could be a housing complex near a runway. The numbered garage door behind the couple could be evidence of an orderly military environment.

The man is wearing a large ring with a blue stone on his right hand. It is the sort of ring that commemorates an *alma mater*. On the man’s right shoulder I can make out a blurred insignia, a scrap of metal. This item is bronzed and irregularly shaped. It’s not a star, nor is it a pair of parallel bars. The photograph is poorly resolved; it’s difficult to tell. The man is an officer. Metal means officer. Enlisted men are identified by patches of cloth. I search a dimly remembered catalogue of ranking devices. Could this be an oak leaf? The man is a major. Perhaps he’s a lieutenant colonel. Something is peculiar about this conclusion. Lacking a set of silver wings, he’s no pilot. There’s nothing strange in that. But the absence of campaign ribbons, of

extra stripes on the cuff of his jacket, suggest that he’s only a reserve officer. (Suppose I told you that he’s not a professional soldier. Every other Tuesday night he puts on his uniform and drives to a reserve officers’ meeting. There’s a certain worldly asceticism in this ritual: he receives no salary but accumulates credit towards a pension. His squadron mates are aerospace engineers, chemists, metallurgists, accountants, computer technicians. If a nuclear war came, they would be called into active duty as a ‘recovery unit’. Occasionally they practice with Geiger counters. They study international relations. One day they marched into a darkened auditorium. Suddenly a machine gun opened up, firing tracers across the stage. The burst ended and the lights came up. An actor dressed as a Cuban militiaman crouched behind the gun. Behind him, dressed as a Russian colonel, stood another actor. They both bowed and left the stage. An American colonel, not an actor, appeared and delivered a lecture.)

In this photograph, the man is indulging in a bit of costume drama. He’s playing the military dandy and remembering his upwardly mobile march from the enlisted ranks during the second world war. He exaggerates a sideline, allowing it to expand into an image of self. Personal pride, pride in rank, national pride, patriotism: ultimately he’s assumed a rather public pose. There’s a recruiting-poster aspect to his stance. And yet, looking at this picture, we have no way of knowing how closely he identifies with the ideas of his more vocal generals. Nor do we know how much engineer’s pride derives from association with a sophisticated, technocratic war machine. Hypothetically at least, he’s a commander of men, demanding the respect of military subordinates. He stands in a chain of command, a willing military servant of his economic betters. In the same breath, he ‘speaks for himself’ (or so he believes) and speaks for his rulers and superiors, who view the whole affair somewhat more cynically than he does.

The woman stands demurely next to her uniformed husband. The woman is wearing a red dress. Her mouth is painted with the same red. A century ago this red might have been reserved for a flamboyant eroticism. The red of the courtesan. The red target of male desire. Now this red enters the space of married life. Department stores broadcast a certain poetry of desire. Commodities take on mysterious properties. (It’s a marketing strategy, an outcome of ‘motivational research’, that governs the orchestration of this red.) Women are encouraged to decorate themselves, to see themselves as decoration. Men are encouraged to see women as animate decor, as objects of a possessive glance.

The man took the woman shopping. He made most of the decisions. They bought two dresses, a red one and a green one. The two dresses were placed side by side on a white bedspread. By chance, Chevreul’s law of the simultaneous contrast of colours was demonstrated. The red dress left a green afterimage. The green dress left a red afterimage. The man has a theory of colour. So does Kodak. We’ll get to that later.

The woman feels somewhat uncomfortable in the red dress. She feels overly visible, on display. Her demure



stance clashes with the loud colour. She tempers this flamboyance with a black lace *mantilla*, perhaps finding in it the mark of feminine peity. Latin women wear these things to church. But here, on an Anglo-Saxon woman, the *mantilla* seems weirdly exotic. There'd be a certain stationary tourism at work. The man is happy with the hint of Latin mystery, although he distrusts Mexicans. The man likes the woman's bright dress. She's dressed for Mass, her head covered. She is a convert from a more sedate Protestantism. She agrees to the transformation. There are two different human intentions at work; one, male, prevails over and alters the other, female. The woman has read the journals of famous generals' wives, trying to fathom a code of stalwart obedience.

It's Palm Sunday. More film is sold before holidays than at any other time. The woman is dressed for next week's Mass, wearing her new red Easter costume. The man is dressed for military duty. Being a reservist, he is not allowed to wear his uniform to church. There is something incongruous, then, about this pairing of a member of the armed forces and a member of the flock. This is not an everyday moment, a slice-of-life, but an imaginary construction. Costumes have been selected for this brief fiction. Perhaps the woman finds solace, a phantom wholeness, in religion. Perhaps the man finds the same in a dream of military power. They find comfort in each other, and so they stand together.

There's an older aesthetic, both Eastern European and Catholic, lurking behind the petit bourgeois modernity of this photograph, bracketed as it is by choices made in department stores. The picture is a collage, a product of conventions that are remote in time and place of origin. Somewhere behind this photograph, historically remote, lies a mediaeval image of courtly love, followed by an image of a decorated Madonna. First, a knight and his lady in a walled garden. A book of hours. Later, the moral model of the Holy Family is offered to the toiling masses of Europe. Getting closer to this man's past, we find a familial memory of village life in the Tatra Mountains of southern Poland, a memory of a tradition of peasant courtship and marriage. A fastidious Polish taste for primary colours, for red and white, for elaborately and precisely decorated Easter eggs. The man has decorated his wife and through her, an image of his past has been constructed. So much for art history.

The man and the woman are standing in front of a row of white garages. The white paint is scuffed and faded. The asphalt in front of the garages is spotted with oil stains. To the couple's left, on the right side of the picture, is garage number twelve. Is the garage directly behind them number eleven or number thirteen? The building appears to bow inwards at the middle, as though it were sagging towards its eventual collapse. All the vertical lines in the photograph are distorted in this fashion. This is merely evidence that an inexpensive camera with a poor lens was used to make the picture.'

At this moment the man has a definite sense of purpose, and yet he is unaware of certain peculiar aspects of the image he has composed. He cannot see himself in the viewing screen. He cannot see his own face, nor can he at this moment see the face of his wife. We might guess

that the man is unaware of the dilapidated look of the garage doors behind his back. At the moment the man is unconscious of the significance of peeling paint. What is a senior reserve officer doing in front of garages that suggest run-down apartments? Do they live here? Are they visiting poorer relatives?

Martha has a way of calling one's attention to the discrepant elements of an idealized representation. The garages look a bit squalid and the woman has varicosed legs. The woman's legs bear the marks of several pregnancies, of ninety-six hours a week spent working on her feet in the home. Martha imagines a row of couples in Sunday best, each couple staking claim to meagre territory in front of their numbered garage door. In other images Martha notices dead grass. She has every reason to believe that something is wrong. She finds the whole display rather pathetic.

(The man and the woman live with five children in an apartment complex originally built for wartime shipyard workers. The man works as a chemical engineer. There's a sort of late-Bauhaus public-housing look to the buildings. Their apartment is crowded but orderly. The man disdains his neighbours, most of whom work with their hands and lack college educations. No one is allowed to park in front of anyone else's garage. The man and the woman pose in front of their garage, which houses their most expensive piece of property.)

Something is being memorialized. An artifact is provided for future commemoration. Is this the realm of an ideal and imaginary existence? Does this practice ensure the future's ability to look back on the past with nostalgia? Is this a small, momentary utopia? The grey vinyl album is opened rarely and then only in the most casual manner. Selected negatives are printed and framed. A few pictures are displayed on coffee tables and dressers.

A commemoration of matrimony. A commemoration of monogamy. A commemoration of a long-lasting marriage. A commemoration of austere affection. A commemoration of rank. A commemoration of a new wardrobe. A commemoration of an Easter dress. A commemoration of the interval before Palm Sunday mass. A commemoration of a moment of leisure. A commemoration of rank and possession.

## TWO

The man and the woman are now situated in front of a monument of some sort. Now the woman sits at the man's right. She faces the camera directly. He stands, his body turned towards her as it casts a shadow over her left side. His hips, shoulders and head are turned in different directions, with his gaze directed towards the lens. If he were a painted rather than photographed figure, he would stand as an example of late Renaissance *contrapposto*. He is smiling somewhat and exercising a studied casualness, striking a rather cavalier pose. He's wearing a black silk suit and heavy, shiny, expensive-looking brown wingtip shoes. Now that he's out of uniform, he seems to go for an idiosyncratic dandyism. We discover the receding hairline of a middle-aged man.

The woman sits upright, hands folded in her lap. She sits as demurely as she stood in the last photograph. She's

wearing high-heeled shoes and black leather gloves. A large black leather purse, of the type carried by mothers of small children, sits beside her right foot. She is wearing the same red dress as before, but now instead of a *mantilla* she wears a black *toreador* hat. The hat has been carefully angled across her brow. The man's most involved preparations for the photograph involved the selection of the correct hat angle. He saw this as an important aesthetic decision. The hat is tilted. The right rim is somewhat higher than the left. The shadow of the brim is such that only the woman's chin is illuminated directly. What is the nature of this behind-the-scenes change of hats? Suppose we imagine two poles of a Latin hat iconography. The *mantilla* occupies an extreme feminine end, while the *toreador* hat occupies an extreme masculine end. Is this an image of a glamour that encompasses all possibilities, whether passive or aggressive? Is this 'The Lady in Red?' Does this second hat suggest a female dandy?

This is a colour photograph. The woman's dress is bright red. The man's suit is black. Suppose this were paint, rather than photochemical dye. The man's shoes are raw sienna. The sky is a saturated cerulean blue. The trashcan is a saturated cadmium yellow. The base of the monument is beige. The upper portion of the monument is the colour of oxidized copper although it is quite probably case cement tinted with a pale green pigment.

The man declares his own colour theory. With the first photograph he is aware that a blue uniform and a red dress will stand out dramatically from the white garage door. He's got a certain patriotic effect in mind, but there's more to it than that. A romanticism that has passed from Delacroix to Technicolor allows him to see colour as the realm of the passions, as the locus of a kind of acquisitive optical hedonism. Primary colours and saturated hues are found to be more beautiful and more expressive than the muted hues of a mundane and routinized daily existence. One sees colour on the weekend. Gauguin headed for the tropics. Van Gogh dreamt of bright, chroma-rich southern climates: all painters will flee to the equator, he advised his brother. Unable to afford global tourism, the man opts, like Baudelaire, for the cosmetic, for the artificial paradise. (The man once worked as a house painter in Pennsylvania. During the winter there was no work. To feed his family, the man would cut Christmas trees and spray them with bright enamel paint, using a compressor. He would sell red trees, blue trees, and yellow trees. At the time, this was a novel idea. Now the man orchestrates his wife's and daughters' Easter clothing in the same fashion.) The man takes a certain pleasure in arranging materials that will reveal the full possibilities of the emulsion. The image will be saturated with colour: this will be a sign of abundance.

A building occupies the entire rear ground of the photograph. The architect was inclined to round off corners: this seems to be a distinctive mannerism. The monument in the foreground has an octagonal base and a fluted pedestal. This is New Deal architecture. This is art deco as it revolutionized the public buildings of America. This is an example of monopoly capital saving its own skin through the agency of the state. This is a high school built in 1938 in a working-class community. The man's head



obscures the lower left corner of a bas-relief. The relief is a representation of a male figure operating a wood lathe. We can discern the words ‘Industrial Arts’. The figure in the relief, a blocky social-realist character, appears to be drilling a hole in the posing man’s head. The monument has four sides. Only this side was adequately illuminated for the making of a photograph. Even so, the figure of science would have been much more appropriate to the occasion than that of industrial arts. Science represents the man’s own career and the career he desires for his male children. Science is a bespectacled male figure gripping an Erlenmeyer flask. Science faces south. Home economics is a female figure operating a sewing machine. Home economics faces north. Athletics is a crouching football lineman. Athletics faces east. Someone has scrawled the word ‘squat’ on the lineman’s helmet. Several yards to the south of this pedestal is a marble slab commemorating the death of a football player who dropped dead of a heart attack during the homecoming game. (Suppose I told you that there was something prophetic in the accidentally menacing figure of industrial arts. As he poses the man believes he has climbed above his working-class immigrant family background. Two years later, he joins a growing reserve army of unemployed aerospace engineers. Nearly three years after that he returns to work, to a lower-paying, lower-status job. He is ritually humiliated by his superiors. He is told he will not be promoted. For the first time in his life, his work is subjected to a time-and-motion study. The upper half of the engineering profession assists in the proletarianization of the lower half.)

Why are this man and this woman posed in front of this absurd memorial to the New Deal and liberal educational ideology, the ideology of upward mobility through learning? What is incongruent about this juxtaposition of private and public commemoration? What are imagined to be the ideal properties of this place?

THREE

The woman is standing with two small girls. The man has divided the family into groups. Other photographs are taken of the three older sons. They are asked to hold books as they pose. The only pictures of the complete family are made at a professional portrait studio in Hollywood, against a bright blue backdrop.

The camera has been tilted at an angle so that the figures seem to be sliding downhill to the left. The light is softer now, striking the three of them from their left and from behind. In this light the woman’s dress is less intensely red. The blue and yellow of the daughter’s clothing is likewise muted. All three figures are wearing hats. The older of the two girls wears a hat not dissimilar to her mother’s, although it is white instead of black.

The three female figures are connected at the hands. A series of linkages progresses from left to right. The woman’s gloved right hand holds a purse, now appearing overly large when compared with the stature of the children. The smallest girl clutches the woman’s left glove. This daughter is compelled to raise that hand, her right hand, to the level of her shoulder in order to reach the gloved hand. On her left side her hand is extended

downwards, her fingers covering the bare right hand of her older sister. No one of the three appears uncomfortable in this configuration. Of course the light is less harsh now, and the three faces are shaded by their Easter bonnets.

The absent man, the husband and father, is now behind the camera. Without his presence, the image, the stance of the figures, seems less rigid and austere. There is a certain gentle lack of formality in the linked hands of the three females. The isolation of an individual subject is no longer an issue. The artist is no longer standing within the frame. A family is viewed from without by an affectionate and possessive father. The man is pleased by the harmonious contrast of primary colours, the charming series of hats. Is this a testimonial to a man’s ability to clothe his family? What is this private display? A fashion show? How about a history lesson in which history vanishes, in which generation follows generation, unaltered and unchanging?

The daughters are dressed like tiny replicas of their mother. Did the absent man ask his wife and daughters to join hands or did they do it on their own? The linked hands take on a temporal aspect. The social role of the reproducer is itself being reproduced.

The three figures face the camera in front of a narrow strip of shabby grass. A larger area of the grass is dead than is alive. A row of lilies grows along the base of a concrete wall. These lilies appear at the same level as the children’s heads. That is, the middle of the image is traversed horizontally by a line of white lilies and a line of white bonnets. The lilies and bonnets are signs of the approaching Easter holiday. Lilies are also symbols of purity and the Virgin Mary. Here, aligned with the Easter bonnets of young Catholic girls, the flowers hint at future motherhood.

The woman’s head protrudes above the wall. The wall is probably five or six feet high. The woman’s neck, head, and hat are surrounded by a pale blue sky. We wonder how the same sky that was moments before so intensely saturated with colour could be so washed out. We can discern a flagpole projecting upwards from behind the wall. We could imagine that this pole is anchored in the monument we have already confronted. Comparing the angle of the sunlight in both images we determine that the three females are facing north. The sky behind the wall is seen on a plane parallel to the angle of the late afternoon sunlight. Such a sky is often less intensely coloured than one which catches the full light of the sun. This could be the answer.

FOUR

The three images form a triptych. Two medium shots bracket a somewhat wider shot. The two outer images angle out from the symmetrical central image. We might be reminded of the half-open doors of an altarpiece. A red dress is repeated three times. There is an abundance of primary colours. A camera is confronted squarely in daylight.

Allan Sekula, ‘Meditations on a Triptych’ [1973/78], *Afterimage*, 6:1-2, Summer 1978, 32-33; 43. Reprinted in Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972-1996* [University Galleries of Illinois State University, 1999].

# Mike MANDEL, Larry SULTAN On Publishing *Evidence* [1977]

*Evidence* is a sequence of photographs selected from numerous photographic archives from within the aerospace-weapons-energy industry: Lockheed, Bechtel, TRW, Jet Propulsion Laboratories, Aeronutronic Ford... The primary illusion of the book design is to condition the viewing of the photographs towards a documentary context. As found objects the photographs are made to seem neutral representatives from the technological world from which they originated. Every design decision, type of binding, typography, layout, etc. was made to reinforce this factual illusion.

The actual printing of the book caused us the most stress. An advantage of two artists working together is the process of working through problems together. Ideas are bounced off each other and decisions are speeded. But this kind of interaction requires time for consideration, argument and synthesis. When the book is on the press and the printer pulls off the signature that he claims is the ‘best he can do’, the artist is caught in a vice. There is no time for consideration. It’s either ‘yes’, and all that expensive paper is transformed into your book; or ‘No. These halftones are wrong, they have to be made over again!’ And risk a battle. We were pushed into that corner with *Evidence* and had to have one-third of the book reprinted. The lights in the viewing room and the wet ink promise a depth of contrast that isn’t really there. The printer is arguing over your shoulder that the job is commercially acceptable, the press is ready to run, some of the halftones are good, some aren’t. Tension. Anger.

It’s a cold war and the best defence is just to dig in. It takes a little effort to re-shoot some halftones and make the plates over so that you will not forever be unhappy with the book. Half the money is still in your pocket and the printer understands that kind of leverage. We didn’t dig in deep enough and let one signature get by. There was not enough contrast, the highlights in the photographs were flattened and there were registration problems in the stripping of the negatives for the duotone. We forced the printer to reprint. For the artist the book is the ‘piece’. There is little margin for compromise. The press run becomes the first and final performance of all the preparation and devotion to the work.

Printing, typesetting and case binding of *Evidence* cost us \$9000.00 for 1600 books, a unit price of \$5.60 per book. The commercial pricing formula in the ‘book trade’ is to multiply the unit cost by four to obtain the retail price. That would put *Evidence* at \$22.50. Instead, we charged \$12.95 for the book. *Evidence* was never designed with the intention to make money and never did. *Evidence* is an idea about how context affects our perceptions of the photograph. All of our design decisions approached that conceptual framework, regardless of cost. The idea demanded a case binding and so we did it. The money to publish came from all possible sources: parents, friends,



part of our NEA grant, the University of Arizona bought the photographs and we used that money. We even borrowed money from the Hebrew Free Loan Association in San Francisco, whose objective is to help young Jewish businessmen with interest-free loans. Never question an interest-free loan.

It has been two years since publication and we have sold out the first printing. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art exhibited the *Evidence* photographs and consequently sold more books for us than any outlet. Our distribution system is a patchwork of ad hoc formulae. Bookpeople (a local wholesaler), Light Impressions, a mailing list of art museum bookstores, photographers, galleries etc. A friend would be going to New York and he'd take the book around to the art bookstores. Another friend went to Paris and did the same. Distribution is the key to a successful marketing. We didn't have that much 'product' to 'market', and we weren't going to make any money anyway even if we sold all the books in a week, so we were content to let the sales take care of themselves. The work was reviewed by *Newsweek*, *Village Voice*, *Popular Photography* and many other print media.

Our printer went out of business right after the publication of *Evidence*. The halftones are probably destroyed, but since we had a major dispute over the responsibility of reprinting that one signature anyway, we would never have been able to work with him again. So, to reprint we would have to start all over again, which we have neither the enthusiasm nor the funds to do. Years from now, if the book retains a vitality that significantly contributes to the literature of photography, perhaps we will pursue re-publication. But there are new ideas that capture our energies. Self-publishing in its highest form can be a radically liberating opportunity to participate in the world of art ideas without messing with the art world. It is not at this juncture a way to make a living.

Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan, Letter to Bill Owens describing the production of the book *Evidence* [Clatworthy Colorvues, 1977] in Bill Owens, *Publish Your Photo Book [A Guide to Self-Publishing]* [Livermore: Bill Owens, 1979].

## Roland BARTHES

### Camera Lucida [1980]

28

There I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp, gradually moving back in time with her, looking for the truth of the face I had loved. And I found it.

The photograph was very old. The corners were blunted from having been pasted into an album, the sepia print had faded, and the picture just managed to show two children standing together at the end of a little wooden bridge in a glassed-in conservatory, what was called a Winter Garden in those days. My mother was five at the time (1898), her brother seven. He was leaning against the bridge railing, along which he had extended one arm; she, one shorter than he, was standing a little back, facing the camera; you could tell that the photographer had said,

'Step forward a little so we can see you'; she was holding one finger in the other hand, as children often do, in an awkward gesture. The brother and sister, united, as I knew, by the discord of their parents, who were soon to divorce, had posed side by side, alone, under the palms of the Winter Garden (it was the house where my mother was born, in Chennevières-sur-Marne).

I studied the little girl and at last rediscovered my mother. The distinctness of her face, the naïve attitude of her hands, the place she had docilely taken without either showing or hiding herself, and finally her expression, which distinguished her, like Good from Evil, from the hysterical little girl, from the simpering doll who plays at being a grown-up – all this constituted the figure of a sovereign *innocence* (if you will take this word according to its etymology, which is: 'I do no harm'), all this had transformed the photographic pose into that untenable paradox which she had nonetheless maintained all her life: the assertion of a gentleness. In this little girl's image I saw the kindness which had formed her being immediately and forever, without her having inherited it from anyone; how could this kindness have proceeded from the imperfect parents who had loved her so badly – in short: from a family? Her kindness was specifically *out-of-play*, it belonged to no system, or at least it was located at the limits of a morality (evangelical, for instance); I could not define it better than by this feature (among others): that during the whole of our life together, she never made a single 'observation'. This extreme and particular circumstance, so abstract in relation to an image, was nonetheless present in the face revealed in the photograph I had just discovered. 'Not a just image, just an image', Godard says. But my grief wanted a just image, an image which would be both justice and accuracy – *justesse*: just an image, but a just image. Such, for me, was the Winter Garden Photograph.

For once, photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance, just as Proust experienced it one day when, leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him his grandmother's true face, 'whose living reality I was experiencing for the first time, in an involuntary and complete memory'. The unknown photographer of Chennevières-sur-Marne had been the mediator of a truth, as much as Nadar making of his mother (or of his wife – no one knows for certain) one of the loveliest photographs in the world; he had produced a supererogatory photograph which contained more than what the technical being of photography can reasonably offer. Or again (for I am trying to express this truth) this Winter Garden Photograph was for me like the last music Schumann wrote before collapsing, that first *Gesang der Frühe* which accords with both my mother's being and my grief at her death; I could not express this accord except by an infinite series of adjectives, which I omit, convinced however that this photograph collected all the possible predicates from which my mother's being was constituted and whose suppression or partial alteration, conversely, had sent me back to these photographs of her which had left me so unsatisfied. These same photographs, which phenomenology would call 'ordinary' objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but

the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*.

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Nor could I omit this from my reflection: that I had discovered this photograph by moving back through Time. The Greeks entered into Death backwards: what they had before them was their past. In the same way I worked back through a life, not my own, but the life of someone I love. Starting from her latest image, taken the summer before her death (so tired, so noble, sitting in front of the door of our house, surrounded by my friends), I arrived, traversing three-quarters of a century, at the image of a child: I stare intensely at the Sovereign Good of childhood, of the mother, of the mother-as-child. Of course I was then losing her twice over, in her final fatigue and in her first photograph, for me the last; but it was also at this moment that everything turned around and I discovered her *as into herself*... (...*eternity changes her*, to complete Mallarmé's verse).

This movement of the Photograph (of the order of photographs) I have experienced in reality. At the end of her life, shortly before the moment when I looked through her pictures and discovered the Winter Garden Photograph, my mother was weak, very weak. I lived in her weakness (it was impossible for me to participate in a world of strength, to go out in the evenings; all social life appalled me). During her illness, I nursed her, held the bowl of tea she liked because it was easier to drink from than from a cup; she had become my little girl, uniting for me with that essential child she was in her first photograph. In Brecht, by a reversal I used to admire a good deal, it is the son who (politically) educates the mother; yet I never educated my mother, never converted her to anything at all; in a sense I never 'spoke' to her, never 'discoursed' in her presence, for her; we supposed, without saying anything of the kind to each other, that the frivolous insignificance of language, the suspension of images must be the very space of love, its music. Ultimately I experienced her, strong as she had been, my inner law, as my feminine child. Which was my way of resolving Death. If, as so many philosophers have said, Death is the harsh victory of the race, if the particular dies for the satisfaction of the universal, if after having been reproduced as other than himself, the individual dies, having thereby denied and transcended himself, I who had not procreated, I had, in her very illness, engendered my mother. Once she was dead I no longer had any reason to attune myself to the progress of the superior Life Force (the race, the species). My particularity could never again universalize itself (unless, utopically, by writing, whose project henceforth would become the unique goal of my life). From now on I could do no more than await my total, undialectical death.

That is what I read in the Winter Garden Photograph.

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Something like an essence of the Photograph floated in this particular picture. I therefore decided to 'derive' all Photography (its 'nature') from the only photograph which



assuredly existed for me, and to take it somehow as a guide for my last investigation. All the world's photographs formed a Labyrinth. I knew that at the centre of this Labyrinth I would find nothing but this sole picture, fulfilling Nietzsche's prophecy: 'A labyrinthine man never seeks the truth, but only his Ariadne'. The Winter Garden Photograph was my Ariadne, not because it would help me discover a secret thing (monster or treasure), but because it would tell me what constituted that thread which drew me towards Photography. I had understood that henceforth I must interrogate the evidence of Photography, not from the viewpoint of pleasure, but in relation to what we romantically call love and death.

(I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the 'ordinary'; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound.)

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From the beginning, I had determined on a principle for myself: never to reduce myself-as-subject, confronting certain photographs, to the disincarnated, disaffected *socius* which science is concerned with. This principle obliged me to 'forget' two institutions: the Family, the Mother.

An unknown person has written me: 'I hear you are preparing an album of family photographs' (rumour's extravagant progress). No: neither album nor family. For a long time, the family, for me, was my mother and, at my side, my brother; beyond that, nothing (except the memory of grandparents); no 'cousin', that unit so necessary to the constitution of the family group. Besides, how opposed I am to that scientific way of treating the family as if it were uniquely a fabric of constraints and rites: either we code it as a group of immediate allegiances or else we make it into a knot of conflicts and repressions. As if four experts cannot conceive that there are families 'whose members love one another'.

And no more than I would reduce my family to the Family, would I reduce my mother to the Mother. Reading certain general studies, I saw that they might apply quite convincingly to my situation: commenting on Freud (*Moses and Monotheism*), J. J. Goux explains that Judaism rejected the image in order to protect itself from the risk of worshipping the Mother; and that Christianity, by making possible the representation of the maternal feminine, transcended the rigour of the Law for the sake of the Image-Repertoire. Although growing up in a religion-without-images where the Mother is not worshipped (Protestantism) but doubtless formed culturally by Catholic art, when I confronted the Winter Garden Photograph I gave myself up to the Image, to the Image-Repertoire. Thus I could understand my generality; but having understood it, invincibly I escaped from it. In the Mother, there was a radiant, irreducible core: my mother. It is always maintained that I should suffer more because I have spent my whole life with her; but my suffering

proceeds from *who she was*; and it is because she was who she was that I lived with her. To the Mother-as-Good, she had added that grace of being an individual soul. I might say, like the Proustian Narrator at his grandmother's death: 'I did not insist only upon suffering, but upon respecting the originality of my suffering'; for this originality was the reflection of what was absolutely irreducible in her, and thereby lost forever. It is said that mourning, by its gradual labour, slowly erases pain; I could not, I cannot believe this; because for me, Time eliminates the emotion of loss (I do not weep), that is all. For the rest, everything has remained motionless. For what I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a *quality* (a soul): not the indispensable, but the irreplaceable. I could live without the Mother (as we all do, sooner or later); but what life remained would be absolutely and entirely *unqualifiable* (without quality).

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What I had noted at the beginning, in a free and easy manner, under cover of method, *i.e.*, that every photograph is somehow co-natural with its referent, I was rediscovering, overwhelmed by the truth of the image. Henceforth I would have to consent to combine two voices: the voice of banality (to say what everyone sees and knows) and the voice of singularity (to replenish such banality with all the élan of an emotion which belonged only to myself). It was as if I were seeking the nature of a verb which had no infinitive, only tense and mode.

First of all I had to conceive, and therefore if possible express properly (even if it is a simple thing) how Photography's Referent is not the same as the referent of other systems of representation. I call 'photographic referent' not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph. Painting can feign reality without having seen it. Discourse combines signs which have referents, of course, but these referents can be and are most often 'chimeras'. Contrary to these imitations, in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past. And since this constraint exists only for Photography, we must consider it, by reduction, as the very essence, the *noeme* of Photography. What I intentionalize in a photograph (we are not yet speaking of film) is neither Art nor Communication, it is Reference, which is the founding order of Photography.

The name of Photography's *noeme* will therefore be: 'That-has-been', or again: the Intractable. In Latin (a pedantry necessary because it illuminates certain nuances), this would doubtless be said: *interfuit*: what I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject (*operator* or *spectator*); it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred. It is all this which the verb *intersum* means.

In the daily flood of photographs, in the thousand forms of interest they seem to provoke, it may be that the *noeme* 'That-has-been' is not repressed (a *noeme* cannot be repressed) but experienced with indifference, as a

feature which goes without saying. It is this indifference which the Winter Garden Photograph had just roused me from. According to a paradoxical order — since usually we verify things before declaring them 'true' — under the effect of a new experience, that of intensity, I had induced the truth of the image, the reality of its origin; I had identified truth and reality in a unique emotion, in which I henceforth placed the nature — the genius — of Photography, since no painted portrait, supposing that it seemed 'true' to me, could compel me to believe its referent had really existed.

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I might put this differently: what founds the nature of Photography is the pose. The physical duration of this pose is of little consequence; even in the interval of a millionth of a second (Edgerton's drop of milk) there has still been a pose, for the pose is not, here, the attitude of the target or even a technique of the *Operator*, but the term of an 'intention' of reading: looking at a photograph, I inevitably include in my scrutiny the thought of that instant, however brief, in which a real thing happened to be motionless in front of the eye. I project the present photograph's immobility upon the past shot, and it is this arrest which constitutes the pose. This explains why the Photograph's *noeme* deteriorates when this Photograph is animated and becomes cinema: in the Photograph, something *has posed* in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever (that is my feeling); but in cinema, something *has passed* in front of this same tiny hole: the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images: it is a different phenomenology, and therefore a different art which begins here, though derived from the first one.

In Photography, the presence of the thing (at a certain past moment) is never metaphoric; and in the case of animated beings, their life as well, except in the case of photographing corpses; and even so: if the photograph then becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing. For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past ('this-has-been'), the photograph suggests that it is already dead. Hence it would be better to say that Photography's inimitable feature (its *noeme*) is that someone has seen the referent (even if it is a matter of objects) *in flesh and blood*, or again *in person*. Photography, moreover, began, historically, as an art of the Person: of identity, of civil status, of what we might call, in all senses of the term, the body's *formality*. Here again, from a phenomenological viewpoint, the cinema begins to differ from the Photograph; for the (fictional) cinema combines two poses: the actor's 'this-has-been' and the role's, so that (something I would not experience before a painting) I can never see or see again in a film certain actors whom I know to be dead without a kind of melancholy: the melancholy of Photography itself (I experience this same emotion



listening to the recorded voices of dead singers).

I think again of the portrait of William Casby, ‘born a slave’, photographed by Avedon. The *noeme* here is intense; for the man I see here *has been* a slave: he certifies that slavery has existed, not so far from us; and he certifies this not by historical testimony but by a new, somehow experiential order of proof, although it is the past which is in question — a proof no longer merely induced: the proof-according-to-St.-Thomas-seeking-to-touch-the-resurrected-Christ. I remember keeping for a long time a photograph I had cut out of a magazine — lost subsequently, like everything too carefully put away — which showed a slave market: the slavemaster, in a hat, standing; the slaves, in loincloths, sitting. I repeat: a photograph, not a drawing or engraving; for my horror and my fascination as a child came from this: that there was a *certainty* that such a thing had existed: not a question of exactitude, but of reality: the historian was no longer the mediator, slavery was given without mediation, the fact was established *without method*.

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It is often said that it was the painters who invented Photography (by bequeathing it their framing, the Albertian perspective, and the optic of the *camera obscura*). I say: no, it was the chemists. For the *noeme* ‘That-has-been’ was possible only on the day when a scientific circumstance (the discovery that silver halogens were sensitive to light) made it possible to recover and print directly the luminous rays emitted by a variously lighted object. The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, through impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.

It seems that in Latin ‘photograph’ would be said ‘*imago lucis opera expressa*’; which is to say: image revealed, ‘extracted’, ‘mounted’, ‘expressed’ (like the juice of a lemon) by the action of light. And if Photography belonged to a world with some residual sensitivity to myth, we should exult over the richness of the symbol: the loved body is immortalized by the mediation of a precious metal, silver (monument and luxury); to which we might add the notion that this metal, like all the metals of Alchemy, is alive.

Perhaps it is because I am delighted (or depressed) to know that the thing of the past, by its immediate radiations (its luminances), has really touched the surface which in its turn my gaze will touch, that I am not very fond of Colour. An anonymous daguerreotype of 1843 shows a man and a woman in a medallion subsequently tinted by the miniaturists on the staff of the photographic studio: I always feel (unimportant what actually occurs) that in the same way, colour is a coating applied *later on* to the original truth of the black-and-white photograph. For me, colour is an artifice, a cosmetic (like the kind used to paint corpses). What matters to me is not the photograph’s ‘life’

(a purely ideological notion) but the certainty that the photographed body touches me with its own rays and not with a super-added light.

(Hence the Winter Garden Photograph, however pale, is for me the treasury of rays which emanated from my mother as a child, from her hair, her skin, her dress, her gaze, *on that day*.)

Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire* [Paris, 1980]; trans. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1980], 67-82.

## Douglas CRIMP The Museum’s Old, the Library’s New Subject [1981]

[ ... ] Several years ago, Julia van Haaften, a librarian in the Art and Architecture Division of the New York Public Library, became interested in photography. As she studied what was then known about this vast subject, she discovered that the library itself owned many books containing vintage photographic prints, especially from the nineteenth century, and she hit on the idea of organizing an exhibition of this material culled from the library’s collections. She gathered books illustrated with photographs from throughout the library’s many different divisions, books about archaeology in the Holy Lands and Central America, about ruined castles in England and Islamic ornament in Spain; illustrated newspapers of Paris and London; books of ethnography and geology; technical and medical manuals.’ In preparing this exhibition the library realized for the first time that it owned an extraordinarily large and valuable collection of photographs — for the first time, because no one had previously inventoried these materials under the single category of photography. Until then, the photographs had been so thoroughly dispersed throughout the library’s extensive resources that it was only through patient research that van Haaften was able to track them down. And furthermore, it was only at the time she installed her exhibition that photography’s prices were beginning to sky-rocket. So although books with original plates by Maxime Du Camp or Francis Frith might now be worth a small fortune, ten or fifteen years ago they weren’t even worth enough to merit placing them in the library’s Rare Books Division.

Julia van Haaften now has a new job. She is director of the New York Public Library’s Photographic Collections Documentation Project, an interim step on the way to the creation of a new division to be called Art, Prints, and Photographs, which will consolidate the old Art and Architecture Division with the Prints Division, adding to them photographic materials culled from all other library departments.’ These materials are thus to be reclassified according to their newly acquired value, the value that is now attached to the ‘artists’ who made the photographs. Thus, what was once housed in the Jewish Division under the classification ‘Jerusalem’ will eventually be found in Art, Prints and Photographs under the classification

‘Auguste Salzmann’. What was Egypt will become Beato, or Du Camp, or Frith; Pre-Columbian Middle America will be Désiré Charnay; the American Civil War, Alexander Gardner and Timothy O’Sullivan; the cathedrals of France will be Henri LeSecq; the Swiss Alps, the Bisson Frères; the horse in motion is now Muybridge; the flight of birds, Marey; and the expression of emotions forgets Darwin to become Guillaume Duchenne de Boulogne.

What Julia van Haaften is doing at the New York Public Library is just one example of what is occurring throughout our culture on a massive scale. And thus the list goes on, as urban poverty becomes Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, portraits of Delacroix and Manet become portraits by Nadar and Carjat, Dior’s New Look becomes Irving Penn, and World War II becomes Robert Capa. For if photography was invented in 1839, it was only *discovered* in the 1960s and 1970s — photography, that is, as an essence, photography *itself*. Szarkowski can again be counted on to put it simply:

*The pictures reproduced in this book [The Photographer’s Eye] were made over almost a century and a quarter. They were made for various reasons, by men of different concerns and varying talent. They have in fact little in common except their success, and a shared vocabulary: these pictures are unmistakably photographs. The vision they share belongs to no school or aesthetic theory, but to photography itself.*

It is in this text that Szarkowski attempts to specify the particulars of ‘photographic vision’, to define those things that are specific to photography and to no other medium. In other words, Szarkowski’s ontology of photography makes photography a *modernist* medium in Clement Greenberg’s sense of the term — an art form that can distinguish itself in its essential qualities from all other art forms. And it is according to this view that photography is now being redefined and redistributed. Photography will hereafter be found in departments of photography or divisions of art and photography. Thus ghettoized, it will no longer primarily be *useful* within other discursive practices; it will no longer serve the purposes of information, documentation, evidence, illustration, reportage. The formerly plural field of photography will henceforth be reduced to the single, all-encompassing *aesthetic*. Just as paintings and sculptures acquired a new-found autonomy, relieved of their earlier functions, when they were wrested from the churches and palaces of Europe and consigned to museums in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, so now photography acquires its autonomy as it too enters the museum. But we must recognize that in order for this new aesthetic understanding to occur, other ways of understanding photography must be dismantled and destroyed. Books about Egypt will literally be torn apart in order that photographs by Francis Frith may be framed and placed on the walls of museums. Once there, photographs will never look the same. Whereas we may formerly have looked at Cartier-Bresson’s photographs for the information they conveyed about the revolution in China or the Civil War in Spain, we will now look at them for what they tell us about the artist’s style of expression.

This consolidation of photography’s formerly multiple



practices, this formation of a new epistemological construct in order that we may now *see* photography, is only part of a much more complex redistribution of knowledge taking place throughout our culture. This redistribution is associated with the term *postmodernism*, although most people who employ the word have very little idea what, exactly, they’re naming or why they even need a new descriptive category. In spite of the currency of its use, *postmodernism* has thus far acquired no agreed-upon meaning at all. For the most part, it is used in only a negative sense, to say that Modernism is over. And where it is used in a positive sense, it is used as a catch-all, to characterize anything and everything that is happening in the present. So, for example, Douglas Davis, who uses the term very loosely, and relentlessly, says of it,

‘Post-modern’ is a negative term, failing to name a ‘positive’ replacement, but this permits pluralism to flourish (in a word, it permits *freedom*, even in the marketplace)... ‘Post-modern’ has a reactionary taint – because ‘Modern’ has come to be acquainted with ‘now’ – but the ‘Tradition of the New’ requires a strong counter-revolution, not one more forward move.’

Indeed, counterrevolution, pluralism, the fantasy of artistic freedom – all of these are, for many, synonymous with postmodernism. And they are right to the extent that in conjunction with the end of Modernism all kinds of regressive symptoms are appearing. But rather than characterizing these symptoms as postmodernist, I think we should see them as the forms of a retrenched, a petrified, reductive Modernism. They are, I think, the morbid symptoms of Modernism’s demise.

Photography’s entrance into the museum on a vast scale, its re-evaluation according to the epistemology of Modernism, its new status as an autonomous art – this is what I mean by the symptoms of Modernism’s demise. For photography is not autonomous, and it is not, in the modernist sense, an art. When Modernism was a fully operative paradigm of artistic practice, photography was necessarily seen as too contingent – too constrained by the world that was photographed, too dependent upon the discursive structures in which it was embedded – to achieve the self-reflexive, entirely conventionalized form of modernist art. This is not to say that no photograph could ever be a modernist artwork; the photographs in MOMA’s *Art of the Twenties* show were ample proof that certain photographs could be as self-consciously about photographic language as any modernist painting was about painting’s particular conventions. That is why MOMA’s photography department was established in the first place. Szarkowski is the inheritor of a department that reflected the modernist aesthetic of Alfred Stieglitz and his followers. But it has taken Szarkowski and *his* followers to bestow retrospectively upon *photography itself* what Stieglitz had thought was achieved by only a very few photographs.’ For photography to be understood and reorganized in such a way entails a drastic revision of the paradigm of Modernism, and it can happen only because that paradigm has indeed become dysfunctional. Postmodernism may be said to be founded in part on this paradox: it is photography’s reevaluation as a modernist medium that signals the end of Modernism.

Postmodernism begins when photography comes to pervert Modernism.

If this entry of photography into the museum and the library’s art division is one means of photography’s perversion of Modernism – the negative one – then there is another form of that perversion that may be seen as positive, in that it establishes a wholly new and radicalized artistic practice that truly deserves to be called postmodernist. For at a certain moment photography enters the practice of art in such a way that it contaminates the purity of Modernism’s separate categories, the categories of painting and sculpture. These categories are subsequently divested of their fictive autonomy, their idealism, and thus their power. The first positive instances of this contamination occurred in the early 1960s, when Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol began to silkscreen photographic images onto their canvases. From that moment forward, the guarded autonomy of modernist art was under constant threat from the incursions of the real world that photography readmitted to the purview of art. After over a century of art’s imprisonment in the discourse of Modernism and the institution of the museum, hermetically sealed off from the rest of culture and society, the art of postmodernism begins to make inroads back into the world. It is photography, in part, that makes this possible, while still guaranteeing against the compromising atavism of traditional realism.

Another story about the library will perhaps illustrate my point: I was once hired to do picture research for an industrial film about the history of transportation, a film that was to be made largely by shooting footage of still photographs; it was my job to find appropriate photographs. Browsing through the stacks of the New York Public Library where books on the general subject of transportation were shelved, I came across the book by Ed Ruscha entitled *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, first published in 1963 and consisting of photographs of just that: twenty-six gasoline stations. I remember thinking how funny it was that the book had been mis-catalogued and placed alongside books about automobiles, highways, and so forth. I knew, as the librarians evidently did not, that Ruscha’s book was a work of art and therefore belonged in the art division. But now, because of the reconfigurations brought about by postmodernism, I’ve changed my mind; I now know that Ed Ruscha’s books make no sense in relation to the categories of art according to which art books are catalogued in the library, and that that is part of their achievement. The fact that there is nowhere for *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* within the present system of classification is an index of the book’s radicalism with respect to established modes of thought.

The problem with the view of postmodernism that refuses to theorize it and thereby confuses it with pluralism is that this view lumps together under the same rubric the symptoms of Modernism’s demise with what has positively replaced Modernism. Such a view has it that the paintings of Elizabeth Murray and Bruce Boice – clearly academic extensions of a petrified Modernism – are as much manifestations of postmodernism as Ed Ruscha’s books, which are just as clearly replacements of that

Modernism. For Ruscha’s photographic books have escaped the categories through which Modernism is understood just as they have escaped the art museum, which arose simultaneously with Modernism and came to be its inevitable resting place. Such a pluralist view of postmodernism would be like saying of Modernism at its founding moment that it was signalled by both Manet and Gérôme (and it is surely another symptom of Modernism’s demise that revisionist art historians are saying just that), or, better yet, that Modernism is both Manet and Disdéri, that hack entrepreneur who made a fortune peddling photographic visiting cards, who is credited with the first extensive commercialization of photography, and whose utterly uninteresting photographs hang, as I write this essay, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in an exhibition whose title is *After Daguerre: Masterworks from the Bibliothèque Nationale*.

1 See Julia van Haften, "'Original Sun Pictures': A Check List of the New York Public Library's Holdings of Early Works Illustrated with Photographs, 1844-1900", *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80:3 [Spring 1977] 355-415.

2 See Anne M McGrath, 'Photographic Treasures at the N.Y.P.L.', *AB Bookmans Weekly*, 25 January 1982, 550-560. As of 1982, the photography collection, of which Julia van Haften is the *curator*, was integrated into what is now called the Miriam and Ira D Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs.

3 Szarkowski, 'Introduction', 206.

4 Douglas Davis, 'Post-Everything', *Art in America* 68, no. 2 (February 1980), p. 14. Davis's notion of freedom, like that of Picasso's fans, is the thoroughly mythological one that recognizes no social differences determined by class, ethnicity, race, gender, or sexuality. It is therefore highly telling that when Davis thinks of freedom, the first thing that springs to his mind is 'the marketplace'. Indeed, his notion of freedom appears to be the Reagan-era version of it - as in 'free' enterprise.

5 For a history of MOMA's Department of Photography, see Christopher Phillips, 'The Judgment Seat of Photography', *October*, no. 22 [Fall, 1982] 27-63. Douglas Crimp, 'The Museum's Did, the Library's New Subject, *Parachute*, 22 [Spring, 1981]; reprinted in Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993] 66-83.

# Allan SEKULA

## Reading an Archive:

## Photography between

## Labour and Capital [1983]

[ ... ] The model of the archive, of the quantitative ensemble of images, is a powerful one in photographic discourse. This model exerts a basic influence on the character of the truths and pleasures experienced in looking at photographs, especially today, when photographic books



and exhibitions are being assembled from archives at an unprecedented rate. We might even argue that archival ambitions and procedures are intrinsic to photographic practice.

There are all sorts of photographic archives: commercial archives, corporate archives, government archives, museum archives, historical society archives, amateur archives, family archives, artists' archives, private collectors' archives, and so on. Archives are property, either of individuals or institutions, and their ownership may or may not coincide with authorship. One characteristic of photography is that ownership of individual images and the control and ownership of archives do not commonly reside in the same individual. Photographers are detail workers when they are not artists or leisure-time amateurs, and thus it is not unreasonable for the legal theorist Bernard Edelman to label photographers the 'proletarians of creation'. [ ... ]

Archives, then, constitute a *territory of images*; the unity of an archive is first and foremost that imposed by ownership. Whether or not the photographs in a particular archive are offered for sale, the general condition of archives involves the subordination of use to the logic of exchange. Thus, not only are the pictures in archives often *literally* for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs. New owners are invited, new interpretations are promised. The purchase of reproduction rights under copyright law is also the purchase of a certain semantic licence. This *semantic availability* of picture in archives exhibits the same abstract logic as that which characterizes goods on the marketplace.

In an archive, the possibility of meaning is 'liberated' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an *abstraction* from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context. Thus, the specificity of 'original' uses and meanings can be avoided, and even made invisible, when photographs are selected from an archive and reproduced in a book. (In reverse fashion, photographs can be removed from books and entered into archives, with a similar loss of specificity.) So new meanings come to supplant old ones, with the archive serving as a kind of 'clearing house' of meaning [ ... ]

Imagine two different gazes. Imagine the gaze of a stockholder (who may or may not have ever visited a coal mine) thumbing his way to the table of earnings and lingering for a moment on the picture of a mining machine, presumably the concrete source of the abstract wealth being accounted for in those pages. Imagine the gaze of a miner, or of a miner's spouse, child, parent, sibling, lover or friend drifting to a portrait during breaks or odd moments during the working day [ ... ] In an archive, the difference, the *radical antagonism* between these looks is eclipsed. Instead we have two carefully made negatives, available for reproduction in a book in which all their similarities and differences could easily be reduced to 'purely visual' concerns. (And even visual differences can be homogenized out of existence when negatives first printed as industrial glossies and others printed on flat paper and tinted by hand are subjected to a uniform standard of printing for reproduction in a book. Thus the difference between a mode of pictorial address which is

primarily 'informational' and one which is 'sentimental' is obscured.) In this sense, archives establish a relation of *abstract visual equivalence* between pictures. Within this regime of the sovereign image, the underlying currents of power are hard to detect, except through the shock of montage, when pictures from antagonistic categories are juxtaposed in a polemical and disorienting way.

Conventional wisdom would have it that photographs transmit immutable truths. But although the very notion of photographic reproduction would seem to suggest that very little is lost in translation, it is clear that photographic meaning depends largely on context. Despite the powerful impression of reality (imparted by the mechanical registration of a moment of reflected light according to the rules of normal perspective), photographs, in themselves, are fragmentary and incomplete utterances. Meaning is always directed by layout, captions, text, and site and mode of presentation, as the example given above suggests. Thus, since photographic archives tend to suspend meaning and use, within the archive meaning exists in a state that is both residual and potential. The suggestion of past uses coexists with a plenitude of possibilities. In functional terms, an active archive is like a toolshed, a dormant archive like an abandoned toolshed. (Archives are not like coal mines: meaning is not extracted from nature, but from culture.) In terms borrowed from linguistics, the archive constitutes the paradigm or iconic system from which photographic 'statements' are constructed. Archival potentials change over time; the keys are appropriated by different disciplines, discourses, 'specialties'. For example, the pictures in photo agency files become available to history when they are no longer useful to topical journalism. Similarly, the new art history of photography at its too prevalent worst rummages through archives of every sort in search of masterpieces to celebrate and sell.

Clearly archives are not neutral; they embody the power inherent in accumulation, collection and hoarding as well as that power inherent in the command of the lexicon and rules of a language. Within bourgeois culture, the photographic project itself has from the very beginning been identified not only with the dream of a universal language, but also with the establishment of global archives and repositories according to models offered by libraries, encyclopaedias, zoological and botanical gardens, museums, police files, and banks. (Reciprocally, photography contributed to the modernization of information flows within most of these institutions.) Any photographic archive, no matter how small, appeals indirectly to these institutions for its authority. Not only the truths, but also the pleasures of photographic archives are linked to those enjoyed in these other sites. As for the truths, their philosophical basis lies in an aggressive empiricism, bent on achieving a universal inventory of appearance. Archival projects typically manifest a compulsive desire for completeness, a faith in an ultimate coherence imposed by the sheer quantity of acquisitions. In practice, knowledge of this sort can only be organized according to bureaucratic means. Thus, the archival perspective is closer to that of the capitalist, the professional positivist, the bureaucrat, and the engineer —

not to mention the connoisseur — than it is to that of the working class. Generally speaking, working-class culture is not built on such high ground.

And so archives are contradictory in character. Within their confines meaning is liberated from use, and yet at a more general level an empiricist model of truth prevails. Pictures are atomized, isolated in one way and homogenized in another. (Alphabet soup comes to mind.) But any archive that is not a complete mess establishes an order of some sort among its contents. Normal orders are either taxonomic or diachronic (sequential); in most archives both methods are used, but at different, often alternating, levels of organization. Taxonomic orders might be based on sponsorship, authorship, genre, technique, iconography, subject matter, and so on, depending on the range of the archive. Diachronic orders follow a chronology of production or acquisition. Anyone who has sorted or simply sifted through a box of family snapshots understands the dilemmas (and perhaps the folly) inherent in these procedures. One is torn between narration and categorization, between chronology and inventory.

What should be recognized here is that photographic books (and exhibitions) frequently cannot help but reproduce these rudimentary ordering schemes, and in so doing implicitly claim a share in both the authority and illusory neutrality of the archive. Herein lies the 'primitivism' of still photography in relation to the cinema. Unlike a film, a photographic book or exhibition can almost always be dissolved back into its component parts, back into the archive. The ensemble can seem to be both provisional and artless. Thus, within the dominant culture of photography, we find a chain of dodges and denials: at any stage of photographic production the apparatus of selection and interpretation is liable to render itself invisible (or conversely to celebrate its own workings as a kind of moral crusade or creative magic). Photographer, archivist, editor, and curator can all claim, when challenged about their interpretations, to be merely passing along a neutral reflection of an already established state of affairs. Underlying this process of professional denial is a common-sensical empiricism. The photograph reflects reality. The archive accurately catalogues the ensemble of reflections, and so on. Even if one admits — as is common enough nowadays — that the photograph interprets reality, it might still follow that the archive accurately catalogues the ensemble of interpretations, and so on again. Songs of the innocence of discovery can be sung at any point. Thus, the 'naturalization of the cultural' that Roland Barthes saw as an essential characteristic of photographic discourse is repeated and reinforced at virtually every level of the cultural apparatus — unless it is interrupted by criticism.<sup>2</sup>

In short, photographic archives by their very structure maintain a hidden connection between knowledge and power. Any discourse that appeals without scepticism to archival standards of truth might well be viewed with suspicion [ ... ]

*There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also*



*the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.*<sup>3</sup>

Walter Benjamin’s wording here is careful. Neither the contents, nor the forms, nor the many receptions and interpretations of the archive of human achievements can be assumed to be innocent. And further, even the concept of ‘human achievements’ has to be used with critical emphasis in an age of automation. The archive has to be read from below, from a position of solidarity with those displaced, deformed, silenced, or made invisible by the machineries of profit and progress.

- 1 Bernard Edelman, *Le Drott saisi par la photographie* [Paris: Librairie Francois Maspero, 1973], translated by Elizabeth Kingdom as *Ownership of the Image: Elements for a Marxist Theory of Law* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979] 45.
- 2 Roland Barthes, ‘Rhétorique de l’image’, *Communications*, 4 [1964]; in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath [New York: Hill and Wang, 1977] 51.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, 256–57.

Allan Sekula, ‘Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital’, in Brian Wallis [ed.], *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987] 114–28. First published as the introduction to a three-part essay in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie [eds.], *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Sheddin Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton, 1948–1968* [Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and The University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983].

# John BALDESSARI My File of Movie Stills [1985]

Below are the current categories in my files of movie stills, which form a large part of the raw material from which I draw to do my work. I hope the categories (which are continually shifting according to my needs and interests) will provide some clues to what animates the work I do.

- A  
Attack, animal, animal/man, above, automobiles (left), automobiles (right)
- B  
Birds, building, below, barrier, blood, bar (man in), books, blind, brew, betray, bookending, bound, bury, banal, bridge, boat, birth, balance, bathroom
- C  
Cage, camouflage, chaos/order, city, cooking, chairs, curves, cheering celebrity, consumerism, curiosity, crucifixion, crowds, climbing, colour, civic
- D  
Dwarf, death, disgrace, danger, discipline, disaster, division, door
- E

- Escape, eat, ephemeral, exteriors
- F  
Facial (expression), fall, fake, framing, freeway, fire, foreground, falling, forest, females, form
- G  
Good/evil, goodbye, giant, gate, grief, guns, guns (aggression), gamble, growth, groups
- H  
Hope, horizontal, hard/soft, hands, heel (ankle), hole (cavity), houses, hiding
- I  
Injury (impair), interiors
- J  
Judgment, journey (path, guide)
- K  
Knife, kiss
- L  
Lifeless, letter, light, looking (watching), laughing
- M  
Money, music, males (+ 1 female), males 2 (+ 1 female), male/female, message, mutilation, movement, masks (monsters), missing (area), macho
- N  
Naked, noose, nature, nature (water), nourish, newsphotos
- O  
Octopus, operation, oval, obstacle
- P  
Phallic, prison, purity, perspective, posture, paint, past, parachute, products, portrait (male), portrait (male, colour), parallelograms, pairs (images)
- R  
Roller coaster, rescue, repel, radiating (lines), race, relief, revive, rectangle (long), rectangle (wavy), reason
- S  
Snakes, shadows, ships, smoke sports, signal, search, secret, survive, stress, separation, safe, struggle, sad, soul, suitcase, switch, sinking, structure, seduction, sex (desire), small, shape (smear), shape (awkward), shape (black), shape (arc), shape (circle), shape (blue), shape (white)
- T  
Technology, tables, table (settings), thinking, trapeze, time, three, trains, two, teeth, thought, triangle, triangle (truncated)
- U  
Upside down, unconscious
- V  
Vision, victim, vulnerable
- W  
Walls, water, wound, watching, winning, women, women (2), women (group)

A bargain always must be struck between what is available in movie stills and the concerns I have at the moment – I don’t order the stills, I must choose from the menu. Also, one will read from this a rather hopeless desire to make words and images interchangeable – yet it is that futility that engrosses me. Lastly, I think one will notice the words falling into their own categories, two being those of formal concerns and content.

John Baldessari, ‘My File of Movie Stills’, *Carnegie International Exhibition*, 1985 [Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1985] 91–93.

## Peter WOLLEN Fire and Ice [1989]

The aesthetic discussion of photography is dominated by the concept of time. Photographs appear as devices for stopping time and preserving fragments of the past, like flies in amber. Nowhere, of course, is this trend more evident than when still photography is compared with film. The natural, familiar metaphor is that photography is like a point, film like a line. Zeno’s paradox: the illusion of movement.

The lover of photography is fascinated both by the instant and by the past. The moment captured in the image is of near-zero duration and located in an ever-receding ‘then’. At the same time, the spectator’s ‘now’, the moment of looking at the image, has no fixed duration. It can be extended as long as fascination lasts and endlessly reiterated as long as curiosity returns. This contrasts sharply with film, where the sequence of images is presented to the spectator with a predetermined duration and, in general, is only available at a fixed programme time.

It is this difference in the time-base of the two forms that explains, for example, Roland Barthes’ antipathy towards the cinema and absorption in the still photograph. Barthes’ aesthetic is governed by a prejudice against linear time and especially against narrative, the privileged form of linear time as he saw it, which he regarded with typically high-modernist scorn and disdain. His major work on literature, *S/Z*, is a prolonged deceleration and freeze-framing, so to speak, of Balzac’s (very) short story, marked throughout by a bias against the hermeneutic and proaeretic codes (the two constituent codes of narrative) which function in ‘irreversible time’.

When Barthes wrote about film he wrote about film stills; when he wrote about theatre he preferred the idea of *tableaux vivants* to that of dramatic development. Photography appeared as a spatial rather than temporal art, vertical rather than horizontal (simultaneity of features rather than consecutiveness) and one which allowed the spectator time to veer away on a train of thought, circle back, traverse and criss-cross the image. Time, for Barthes, should be the prerogative of the reader/spectator: a free re-writing time rather than an imposed reading time.

I don’t want, here and now, to launch into a defence of narrative; that can keep for another day. But I do want to suggest that the relationship of photography to time is more complex than is usually allowed. Especially, it is impossible to extract our concept of time completely from the grasp of narrative. This is all the more true when we discuss photography as a form of art rather than as a scientific or instructional instrument.

First, I am going to talk about ‘aspect’ rather than ‘tense’. Linguists do not completely agree about the definition of ‘aspect’. But we can say that while ‘tense’



locates an event in time in relation to the present moment of speech, 'aspect' represents its internal temporal structure. Thus, some verbs, like 'know' are 'stative' – they represent 'states', whereas others like 'run' represent dynamic situations that involve change over time – so we can say 'he was running', but not 'he was knowing'. 'Situations' can be subdivided into those that involve single, complete 'events' and those that involve 'processes', with continuous change or a series of changes, and so on. The verbs which represent 'events' and 'processes' will have different relations to 'aspectual' verb forms such as the 'imperfect', the 'perfect' (both past tense), the 'progressive', etc. (Here I must acknowledge my dependence on and debt to Bernard Comrie's book on 'Aspect', the standard work on the subject). Aspect, on one level, is concerned with duration but this, in itself, is inadequate to explain its functioning. We need semantic categories which distinguish different types of situation, in relation to change (or potential for change) and perspective as well as duration. Comrie distinguishes between states, processes and events. Events themselves can be broken down between durative and punctual events. Alongside these categories aspect also involves the concepts of the iterative, the habitual and the characteristic. It is the interlocking of these underlying semantic categories which determines the various aspectual forms taken by verbs in different languages (*grosso modo*).

It is useful to approach photography in the light of these categories. Is the signified of a photographic image to be seen as a state, a process or an event? That is to say, is it stable, unchanging, or, if it is a changing, dynamic situation, is it seen from outside as conceptually complete, or from inside, as ongoing? (In terms of aspect, stative or perfective/imperfective non-stative?) The fact that images may themselves appear as punctual, virtually without duration, does not mean that the situations that they represent lack any quality of duration or other qualities related to time.

Some light is thrown on these questions by the verb-forms used in captions. (A word of warning: English, unlike French, distinguishes between perfective and imperfective forms, progressive and non-progressive, in the present tense as well as the past. The observations which follow are based on English-language captions). News photographs tend to be captioned with the non-progressive present, in this case, a narrative present, since the reference is to past time. Art photographs are usually captioned with noun-phrases, lacking verb-forms altogether. So also are documentary photographs, though here we do find some use of the progressive present. This imperfective form is used more than usual, for example, in Susan Meiselas' book of photographs, *Nicaragua*. Finally, the imperfective is used throughout in the captions of Muybridge's series photographs, in participle form.

Evidently these choices of verb-form correspond to different intuitions about the subjects or signifieds of the various types of photograph. News photographs are perceived as signifying events. Art photographs and most documentary photographs signify states. Some documentary photographs and Muybridge's series in

particular are seen as signifying processes. From what we know about minimal narratives, we might say that an ideal minimal story-form might consist of a documentary photograph, then a news photograph, then an art photograph (process, event, state).

In fact, the classic early film minimal narrative, Lumière's '*L'Arroseur Arrosé*', does follow this pattern: a man is watering the garden (process), a child comes and stamps on the hose (event), the man is soaked and the garden empty (state). What this implies of course is that the semantic structure of still and moving images may be the same or, at least, similar, in which case it would not be movement but sequencing (editing, *découpage*) which made the main difference by determining duration differently.

Still photographs, then, cannot be seen as narratives in themselves, but as elements of narrative. Different types of still photograph correspond to different types of narrative element. If this conjecture is right, then a documentary photograph would imply the question: 'Is anything going to happen to end or to interrupt this?' A news photograph would imply: 'What was it like just before and what's the result going to be?' An art photograph would imply: 'How did it come to be like this or has it always been the same?' Thus different genres of photography imply different perspectives within durative situations and sequences of situations.

While I was thinking about photography and film, prior to writing, I began playing with the idea that film is like fire, photography is like ice. Film is all light and shadow, incessant motion, transience, flicker, a source of Bachelardian reverie like the flames in the grate. Photography is motionless and frozen, it has the cryogenic power to preserve objects through time without decay. Fire will melt ice, but then the melted ice will put out the fire (like in '*Superman III*'). Playful, indeed futile, metaphors, yet like all such games anchored in something real.

The time of photographs themselves is one of stasis. They endure. Hence there is a fit between the photographic image which signifies a state and its own signified, whereas we sense something paradoxical about the photograph which signifies an event, like a frozen tongue of fire. In a film, on the contrary, it is the still image (Warhol, Straub-Huillet) which seems paradoxical in the opposite sense: the moving picture of the motionless subject.

Hence the integral relationship between the still photograph and the pose. The subject freezes for the instantaneous exposure to produce a frozen image, state results in state. In *La Chambre claire* [trans. *Camera Lucida*, 1980], Barthes keeps returning to the mental image of death which shadows the photographs that fascinate him. In fact these particular photographs all show posed subjects. When he treats unposed photographs (Wessing's photograph of Nicaragua, Klein's of May Day in Moscow) Barthes sees not death, even when they show death, but tableaux of history, 'historemes' (to coin a word on the model of his own 'biographemes'). Images, in fact, submitted to the Law.

I can't help wondering whether Barthes ever saw James Van Der Zee's *Harlem Book of the Dead*, with its

photographs of the dead posed for the camera in funeral parlours: a triple registration of stasis – body, pose, image. The strange thing about these photographs is that, at first glance, there is an eerie similarity between mourners and corpses, each as formal and immobile as the other. Indeed, the interviewers whose questioning of Van Der Zee makes up the written text of the book, ask him why the eyes of the bodies aren't opened, since this would make them look more life-like, virtually indistinguishable from the mourners even to the smallest detail.

This view of death, of course, stresses death as a state rather than an event. Yet we know from news photographs that death can be photographed as an event: the Capa photograph of the Spanish Civil War soldier is the *locus classicus*, taken as he is felled. There is a sense, though, in which Barthes was right. This photograph has become a 'historeme', a 'pregnant moment' after Diderot or Greuze, or like the habitual narrative present in Russian, where, according to Comrie, 'a recurrent sequence of events is narrated as if it were a single sequence, i.e. one instance stands for the whole pattern'. In my book of Capa photographs, it is captioned simply 'Spain, 1936'.

The fate of Capa's photograph focuses attention on another important aspect of the way images function in time: their currency, their circulation and re-cycling. From the moment they are published, images are contextualized and, frequently, if they become famous, they go through a whole history of re-publication and re-contextualization. Far more is involved than the simple doubling of the encounter of photographer with object and spectator with image. There is a very pertinent example of this in the case of Capa's photograph. It is clearly the model for the pivotal image of death in Chris Marker's film photo-roman *La Jetée* – the same toppling body with outstretched arm.

Marker's film is interesting for a lot of reasons. First of all, it is the exemplar of a fascinating combination of film and still: the film made entirely of stills. (In just one image there is an eye-movement, the converse of a freeze frame in a moving picture). The effect is to demonstrate that movement is not a necessary feature of film; in fact, the impression of movement can be created by the jump-cutting of still images. Moreover, *La Jetée* shows that still photographs, strung together in a chain, can carry a narrative as efficiently as moving pictures, given a shared dependence on a soundtrack.

It is not only a question of narrative, however, but also of fiction. The still photographs carry a fictional diegetic time, set in the future and in the present as past-of-the-future, as well as an in-between near-future from which vantage point the story is told. Clearly there is no intrinsic 'tense' of the still image, any 'past' in contrast with a filmic 'present', as has often been averred. Still photography, like film (and like some languages), lacks any structure of tense, though it can order and demarcate time.

Aspect, however, is still with us. In the 'past' of memories to which the hero returns (through an experiment in time-travel) the images are all imperfective, moments within ongoing states or processes seen as they occur. But the object of the time-travel is to recover one fixated memory-image, which, it turns out at the climax of the film, is that of the hero's own death. This image, the



one based on Capa's 'Spain, 1936', is perfective; it is seen from the outside as a complete action, delimited in time with a beginning and an end. Although *La Jetée* uses a whole sequence of photographs, the single Capa image in itself carries the condensed implication of a whole action, starting, happening and finishing at one virtual point in time: a 'punctual' situation, in Comrie's terms. And, at this very point, the subject is split into an observer of himself, in accordance with the aspectual change of perspective.

My own fascination with pictorial narrative is not a recalcitrant fascination, like that of Barthes. Unlike him, I am not always longing for a way of bringing the flow to a stop. It is more a fascination with the way in which the spectator is thrown in and out of the narrative, fixed and unfixed. Traditionally, this is explained in terms of identification, distanciation, and other dramatic devices. Perhaps it is also connected with aspect, a dimension of the semantics of time common to both still and moving picture and used in both to place the spectator, within or without a narrative.

Peter Wollen, 'Fire and Ice', in Olivier Richon and John X Berger [eds.], *Other Than Itself* [Manchester: Cornerhouse Publications, 1989] n.p.

# Jacques DERRIDA The Photograph as Copy, Archive and Signature [1993]

[...] Let us stay with this question of time. Barthes' interpretation of what only took place once, as well as other common interpretations of the ineradicable referent, is dominated by a chronology of the moment, the logic of the isolated *stigmé*. This *Einmaligkeit* [German word used in the original] presupposes beyond all analysis an indissoluble simplicity [*simplicité indecomposable*] of a time of the moment: the *Augenblick* of the take [German word used in the original; French *clin d'oeil*, the blinking of an eye]. But if the 'one single time', if the single, first and last time of the take already includes a heterogeneous time, this presupposes a duration that postpones and differentiates: at any fragment of a second the light can change; we have to do here with the divisibility of the first time. The reference proves complex, it is not simple, and within that time subevents can form, differentiations, micrological modifications, providing the occasion for possible compositions, disassociations and recompositions, 'trick takes' if you will, that make a definitive break with the presupposed phenomenological naturalism which saw in photography the miracle of a technology that obliterates itself so as to give us natural purity [*virginité*], time itself, the unalterable and uniterable experience of a pre-technical perception (as if the like had ever existed). Once one considers the calculability of time in perception as a photographic take, once one does not see time as a sequence of irreducible and atomistic moments but as a more or less calculable differential duration, a duration that is correlative to a technology, then the issue of the reference, and subsequently the

question of the art, of photography as *techné*, becomes complicated. For one thing that Barthes suggests, and which is at least outside his productive and moving discourse on death, the *studium* and the *punctum* (the point, the flowering, the gripping, etc.), is the hereafter of art: Whatever the nature of the art of photography, that is to say, its intervention, its style, there is a point at which the photographic act is not an artistic act, a point where it registers passively, and this poignant, piercing passivity represents the opportunity of this reference to death; it seizes a reality that is there, that was there, in an indissoluble now. In a word, one must choose between art and death. Or to put it another way, between an art linked with technology and an art that goes beyond art and *techné*, whereby it fulfils their authentic determination so as to manage truth itself (in a sense close to what Heidegger expressed in *Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*). That would be the beauty or sublimity of photography, but its fundamentality non-artistic quality: at a stroke, one would be exposed to a basically uncontrollable experience, that which only takes place once. Under these circumstances, one would be passive and exposed, the gaze itself would be exposed to the exposed thing in the time-without-density of a zero time, in an exposure time reduced to the point of the momentary. Art itself would be determined by a non-art, or by, what amounts to the same thing, a hyper-aesthetic, by an, in some respects, immediate and natural perception: an immediately reproduced, immediately archived perception. If, however, one assumes that a duration exists, that this duration is constituted by a *techné*, then the totality of the photographic act either belongs to the order of the *techné* or is at least indubitably marked by it. For us too, it is an obligation to rethink the essence of the *techné*.

Jacques Derrida, extract from a 1993 conversation with Hubertus von Amelnunxen and Michael Wetzel, translated into English from Wetzel's German translation and published as 'The Photograph as Copy, Archive and Signature', *European Photography*, 19/20: 64/65, Winter 1998/Summer 1999.



Below are the current categories in my files of movie stills, which form a large part of the raw material from which I draw to do my work. I hope the categories (which are continually shifting according to my needs and interests) will provide some clues to what animates the work I do. **A** Attack, animal, animal/man, above, automobiles (left), automobiles (right) **B** Birds, building, below, barrier, blood, bar (man in), books, blind, brew, betray, bookending, bound, bury, banal, bridge, boat, birth, balance, bathroom **C** Cage, camouflage, chaos/order, city, cooking, chairs, curves, cheering celebrity, consumerism, curiosity, crucifixion, crowds, climbing, colour, civic **D** Dwarf, death, disgrace, danger, discipline, disaster, division, door **E** Escape, eat, ephemeral, exteriors **F** Facial (expression), fall, fake, framing, freeway, fire, foreground, falling, forest, females, form **G** Good/evil, goodbye, giant, gate, grief, guns, guns (aggression), gamble, growth, groups **H** Hope, horizontal, hard/soft, hands, heel (ankle), hole (cavity), houses, hiding **I** Injury (impair), interiors **J** Judgment, journey (path, guide) **K** Knife, kiss **L** Lifeless, letter, light, looking (watching), laughing **M** Money, music, males (+ 1 female), males 2 (+ 1 female), male/female, message, mutilation, movement, masks (monsters), missing (area), macho **N** Naked, noose, nature, nature (water), nourish, newsphotos **O** Octopus, operation, oval, obstacle **P** Phallic, prison, purity, perspective, posture, paint, past, parachute, products, portrait (male), portrait (male, colour), parallelograms, pairs (images) **R** Roller coaster, rescue, repel, radiating (lines), race, relief, revive, rectangle (long), rectangle (wavy), reason **S** Snakes, shadows, ships, smoke sports, signal, search, secret, survive, stress, separation, safe, struggle, sad, soul, suitcase, switch, sinking, structure, seduction, sex (desire), small, shape (smear), shape (awkward), shape (black), shape (arc), shape (circle), shape (blue), shape (white) **T** Technology, tables, table (settings), thinking, trapeze, time, three, trains, two, teeth, thought, triangle, triangle (truncated) **U** Upside down, unconscious **V** Vision, victim, vulnerable **W** Walls, water, wound, watching, winning, women, women (2), women (group) A bargain always must be struck between what is available in movie stills and the concerns I have at the moment – I don't order the stills, I must choose from the menu. Also, one will read from this a rather hopeless desire to make words and images interchangeable – yet it is that futility that engrosses me. Lastly, I think one will notice the words falling into their own categories, two being those of formal concerns and content.

# OBJECTIVE OBJECTS

From the late 1960s the adoption by artists of photography as a medium of description and anecdote has allowed a redefinition of art making. The embrace of subject matter broke with a notion of Modernism premised on abstraction, while the adoption of industrial standards echoed the interests of Minimalism. A concentrated network of paradoxes and new possibilities for art has been elaborated in the writings and statements of artists such as Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joseph Kosuth, Edward Ruscha and Jeff Wall. By the early 1980s the ambiguities of the medium were being discussed by artists such as Keith Arnatt as a source of often contradictory attitudes to photography on the part of museums and galleries. Over the twentieth century's last few decades the relationship of photography to subject matter became one of the most complex questions for contemporary art and for representation in general. These debates have been deepened and extended in writings on photography by the philosopher Jean Baudrillard.

## Clement GREENBERG The Camera's Glass Eye: Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston [1946]

Photography is the most transparent of the art mediums devised or discovered by man. It is probably for this reason that it proves so difficult to make the photograph transcend its almost inevitable function as document and act as work of art as well. But we do have evidence that the two functions are compatible.

The heroic age of photography covered the half-century or more following immediately upon its invention in the late 1830s. During this period its physical technique was still relatively imperfect in result and clumsy in procedure. However, since art is a matter of conception and intuition, not of physical finish, this did not prevent – Indeed it seems to have aided – the deliberate or accidental production of a quantity of masterpieces by such photographers as Hill, Brady, Nader, Atget, Stieglitz, Peter Henry Emerson, Clarence White and others. Hill's photographs were conceived in accordance with the

portrait-painting style of his time – he was a painter himself; Brady's documentary photographs, with the exception of his portraits, became art more or less unconsciously; Atget's likewise. In an instinctive way both Brady and Atget anticipated the *modern* and produced a legitimate equivalent of post-impressionism in painting; which was permitted them no doubt by a medium clean of past and tradition, through which they could sense contemporary reality naively and express it directly, untrammelled by reminiscences and precedents that in an art such as painting could be escaped from only by dint of conscious effort on the part of a sophisticated genius like Seurat. Stieglitz, for his part, absorbed Impressionist influences in his early work but transposed them radically into terms proper to his own medium. And so, to a lesser extent did Clarence White.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the procedure of photography has been made swift, sure and simple. Yet its results, in the hands of those who strive to render it art, have on the whole become more questionable than before. The reasons for this decline are complex and have still to be cleared up. But a few of the more obvious ones become apparent in the work of such a serious and ambitious contemporary as Edward Weston, a selection of whose *oeuvre* to date is being shown at the Museum of Modern Art.

Two of the most prominent features of latter-day art photography are brilliant physical finish – sharpness or evenness of focus, exact declaration of lights and darks – and the emulation of the abstract or impersonal arrangements of modern painting. In the first respect modern photography, eschewing the blurred or retouched effects by which it used to imitate painting, has decided to be completely true to itself; in the second respect, which concerns subject matter, it takes this decision back. This logical contradiction is also a plastic one. Merciless, crystalline clarity of detail and texture, combined with the anonymous or inanimate nature of the object photographed, produces a hard, mechanical effect that seems contrived and without spontaneity. Hence the estranging coldness of so much recent art photography.

It again becomes important to make the differences between the arts clear. Modern painting has had to reduce its ostensible subject matter to the impersonal still life or landscape, or else become abstract, for a number of reasons, historical, social, and internal, that hardly touch photography in its present stage. Photography, on the other hand, has at this moment an advantage over almost all the other arts of which it generally still fails to avail itself in the right way. Because of its superior transparency and its youth, it has, to start with, a detached approach that in the other modern arts must be struggled for with great



effort and under the compulsion to exclude irrelevant reminiscences of their pasts. Photography is the only art that can still afford to be naturalistic and that, in fact, achieves its maximum effect through naturalism. Unlike painting and poetry, it can put all emphasis on an explicit subject, anecdote or message; the artist is permitted, in what is still so relatively mechanical and neutral a medium, to identify the ‘human interest’ of his subject as he cannot in any of the other arts without falling into banality.

Therefore it would seem that photography today could take over the field that used to belong to genre and historical painting, and that it does not have to follow painting into the areas into which the latter has been driven by the force of historical development. That is, photography can, while indulging itself in full frankness of emotion, still produce art from the anecdote. But this does not mean pictures of kittens or cherubs. Naturalism and anecdotalism are required to be as original in photography as in any other art.

The shortcomings of Edward Weston’s art do not usually lie in this direction, rather in its opposite. He has followed modern painting too loyally in its reserve towards subject matter. And he has also succumbed to a combination of the sharp focus, infallible exposure and unselective atmosphere of California — which differentiates between neither man and beast nor tree and stone. His camera defines everything, but it defines everything in the same way — and an excess of detailed definition ends by making everything look as though it were made of the same substance, no matter how varied the surfaces. The human subjects of Weston’s portraits seem to me for the most part as inanimate as his root or rock or sand forms: we get their coverings of skin or cloth but not their persons. A cow against a barn looks like a fossilized replica of itself; a nude becomes continuous with sand, and of the same temperature. Like the modern painter, Weston concentrates too much of his interest on his medium. But while we forgive the painter for this, because he puts the feeling he withholds from the object into his *treatment* of it, we are reluctant to forgive the photographer, because his medium is so much less immediately receptive to his feeling and as yet so much less an automatic category of art experience. This is why the photographer has to rely more upon his explicit subject and must express its identity or personality and his feeling about it so much more directly.

Nor do the abstract factors make up in Weston’s art for the lack of drama or anecdotal interest. To secure decorative unity in the photography, the posing of the subject and the effects of focus and exposure must be modulated just as the analogous elements in painting have to be modulated for the same purpose. (Of course, decorative unity in photography is made more difficult by the infinitely more numerous and subtle gradations between black and white.) The defects of Weston’s art with respect to decorative effect flow from its lack of such modulation. In this Weston resembles the Flemish ‘primitive’ painters, who also liked to define everything in sharp focus and who likewise lost decorative unity by their failure to suppress or modulate details — rejoicing self-

indulgently as they did in the new-found power of their medium to reproduce three-dimensional vision. Unlike the Flemish, however, Weston tries to achieve decorative unity at the last moment by arranging his subject in geometrical or quasi-geometrical patterns, but these preserve a superimposed, inorganic quality. Or else they overpower every other element in the photograph to such an extent that the picture itself becomes nothing more than a *pattern*.

The truth of this analysis is borne out, it seems to me, by the fact that almost the best pictures in Weston’s show are two frontal views of ‘ghost sets’ in a movie studio. Here the camera’s sharply focused eye is unable to replace the details left out by the scene painter or architect; and the smoothly painted surfaces prevent that eye from discovering details it would inevitably find in nature or the weathered surface of a real house. At the same time a certain decorative unity is given in advance by the unity, such as it is, of the stage set.

Weston’s failure is a failure to select; which is moved in turn by a lack of interest in subject matter and an excessive concentration on the medium. In the last analysis this is a confusion of photography with painting — but a confusion not so much of the effects of each as of the approaches proper to each. The result, as is often the case with confusions of the arts, shows a tendency to be artiness rather than art.

If one wants to see modern art photography at its best let him look at the work of Walker Evans, whose photographs have not one-half the physical finish of Weston’s. Evans is an artist above all because of his original grasp of the anecdote. He knows modern painting as well as Weston does, but he also knows modern literature. And in more than one way photography is closer today to literature than it is to the other graphic arts. (It would be illuminating, perhaps, to draw a parallel between photography and prose in their respective historical and aesthetic relations to painting and poetry.) The final moral is: let photography be ‘literary’.

*The Nation*, 9 March 1946; reprinted in Beaumont Newhall and Amy Conger [ed.], *Edward Weston Omnibus*, 1984.

## Edward **RUSCHA** Interview with John Coplans [1965]

*John Coplans* This [*Various Small Fires and Milk*, 1964] is the second book of this character you have published?

*Edward Ruscha* Yes, the first, in 1962, was *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*.

*Coplans* What is your purpose in publishing these books?

*Ruscha* To begin with — when I’m planning a book, I have a blind faith in what I’m doing. I’m not inferring I don’t have doubts, or that I haven’t made mistakes. Nor am I really interested in books as such, but I am interested in unusual kinds of publications. The first book came out of a play with words. The title came before I even thought about the pictures. I like the word ‘gasoline’ and I like the

specific quality of ‘twenty-six’. If you look at the book you will see how well the typography works — I worked on all that before I took the photographs. Not that I had an important message about photographs or gasoline, or anything like that — I merely wanted a cohesive thing. Above all, the photographs I use are not ‘arty’ in any sense of the word. I think photography is dead as a fine art; its only place is in the commercial world, for technical or information purposes. I don’t mean cinema photography, but still photography, that is, limited edition, individual, hand-processed photos. Mine are simply reproductions of photos. Thus it is not a book to house a collection of art photographs — they are technical data like industrial photography. To me, they are nothing more than snapshots.

*Coplans* You mean there’s no design play within the photographic frame?

*Ruscha* No.

*Coplans* But haven’t they been cropped?

*Ruscha* Yes, but that arises from the consciousness of layout in the book.

*Coplans* Did you collect these photos as an aid to painting, in any way?

*Ruscha* No, although I did subsequently paint one of the gasoline stations reproduced in the first book — I had no idea at the time that I would eventually make a painting based on it.

*Coplans* But isn’t the subject matter of these photos common to your paintings?

*Ruscha* Only two paintings. However, they were done very much the same way I did the first book. I did the title and layout on the paintings before I put the gasoline stations in.

*Coplans* Is there a correlation between the way you paint and the books?

*Ruscha* It’s not important as far as the books are concerned.

*Coplans* I once referred to *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and said ‘it should be regarded as a small painting’ — was this correct?

*Ruscha* The only reason would be the relationship between the way I handle typography in my paintings. For example, I sometimes title the sides of my paintings in the same manner as the spine of a book. The similarity is only one of style. The purpose behind the books and my paintings is entirely different. I don’t quite know how my books fit in. There is a whole recognized scene paintings fit into. One of the purposes of my book has to do with making a mass-produced object. The final product has a very commercial, professional feel to it. I’m not in sympathy with the whole area of hand-printed publications, however sincere. One mistake I made in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was in numbering the books. I was testing — at that time — that each copy a person might buy would have an individual place in the edition. I don’t want that now.

*Coplans* To come back to the photos — you deliberately chose each subject and specially photographed them?

*Ruscha* Yes, the whole thing was contrived.

*Coplans* To what end? Why fires and why the last shot, of milk?



**Ruscha** My painting of a gas station with a magazine has a similar idea. The magazine is irrelevant, tacked onto the end of it. In a like manner, milk seemed to make the book more interesting and gave it cohesion.

**Coplans** Was it necessary for you, personally, to take the photographs?

**Ruscha** No, anyone could. In fact, one of them was taken by someone else. I went to a stock photograph place and looked for pictures of fires, there were none. It is not important who took the photos, it's a matter of convenience, purely.

**Coplans** What about the layout?

**Ruscha** That is important, the pictures have to be in the correct sequence, one without a mood taking over.

**Coplans** This one – I don't know what it is – some kind of fire, looks rather arty.

**Ruscha** Only because it's a kind of subject matter that is not immediately recognizable.

**Coplans** Do you expect people to buy the book, or did you make it just for the pleasure?

**Ruscha** There's a very thin line as to whether this book is worthless or has any value – to most people it's probably worthless. Reactions are very varied; for example, some people are outraged. I showed the first book to a gasoline station attendant. He was amused. Some think it's great, others are at a loss.

**Coplans** What kind of people say it's great – those familiar with modern art?

**Ruscha** No, not at all. Many people buy the book because they are curiosities. For example, one girl bought three copies, one for each of her boyfriends. She said it would be a great gift for them, since they had everything already.

**Coplans** Do you think your books are better made than most books that are marketed today?

**Ruscha** There are not many books that would fit into this style of production. Considered as a pocket book, it's definitely better than most. My books are as perfectly made as possible.

**Coplans** Would you regard the book as an exercise in the exploration of the possibilities of technical production?

**Ruscha** No, I use standard and well-known processes; it can be done quite easily, there is no difficulty. But as a normal, commercial project most people couldn't afford to print books like this. It's purely a question of cost.

**Coplans** Do you know a book called *Nonverbal Communication* by Ruesch and Kees?

**Ruscha** Yes, it's a good book, but it has a text that explains the pictures. It has something to say on a rational level that my books evade. The material isn't collated with the same intent at all. Of course, the photographs used aren't art photographs, but it's for people who want to know about the psychology of pictures or images. This [*Various Small Fires and Milk*] is the psychology of pictures. Although we both use the same kind of snapshots, they are put to different use. *Nonverbal Communication* has a functional purpose, it's a book to learn things from – you don't necessarily learn anything from my books. The pictures in that book are only an aid to verbal content. That's why I've eliminated all text from my books – I want absolutely neutral material. My pictures aren't that interesting, nor the subject matter. They are simply a collection of 'facts';

my book is more like a collection of 'readymades'.

**Coplans** You are interested in some notion of the readymade?

**Ruscha** No, what I'm after is a kind of polish. Once I've decided all the detail – photos, layout, etc. – what I really want is a professional polish, a clear-cut machine finish. This book is printed by the best book printer west of New York. Look how well made and crisp it is. I'm not trying to create a precious limited edition book, but a mass-produced product of high order. All my books are identical. They have none of the nuances of the handmade and crafted limited edition book. It's almost worth the money to have the thrill of seeing 400 exactly identical books stacked in front of you.

Edward Ruscha, John Coplans, 'Concerning "Various Small Fires": Edward Ruscha Discusses His Perplexing Publications', *Artforum*, 3:5, February, 1965.

## Stanley CAVELL Sights and Sounds [1971]

[What is film?] The beginning of an answer is given by the two continuously intelligent, interesting, and to me useful theorists I have read on the subject. Erwin Panofsky puts it this way: 'The medium of the movies is physical reality as such'.<sup>1</sup> André Bazin emphasizes essentially this idea many times and many ways: at one point he says, 'Cinema is committed to communicate only by way of what is real'; and then, 'The cinema [is] of its essence a dramaturgy of Nature'.<sup>2</sup> 'Physical reality as such', taken literally, is not correct: that phrase better fits the specialized pleasures of *tableaux vivants*, or formal gardens, or Minimal Art. What Panofsky and Bazin have in mind is that the basis of the medium of movies is photographic, and that a photograph is of reality or nature. If to this we add that the medium is one in which the photographic image is projected and gathered on a screen, our question becomes: What happens to reality when it is projected and screened?

That it is reality that we have to deal with, or some mode of depicting it, finds surprising confirmation in the way movies are remembered, and misremembered. It is tempting to suppose that movies are hard to remember the way dreams are, and that is not a bad analogy. As with dreams, you do sometimes *find* yourself remembering moments in a film, and a procedure in *trying* to remember is to find your way back to a characteristic mood the thing has left you with. But, unlike dreams, other people can help you remember, indeed are often indispensable to the enterprise of remembering. Movies are hard to remember, the way the actual events of yesterday are. And yet, again like dreams, *certain* moments from films viewed decades ago will nag as vividly as moments of childhood. It is as if you had to remember what happened *before* you slept. Which suggests that film awakens as much as it enfolds you.

It may seem that this starting point – the projection of reality – begs the question of the medium of film, because movies, and writing about movies, have from their beginnings also recognized that film can depict the

fantastic as readily as the natural.<sup>3</sup> What is true about that idea is not denied in speaking of movies as 'communicating by way of what is real': the displacement of objects and persons from their natural sequences and locales is itself an acknowledgement of the physicality of their existence. It is as if, for all their insistence on the newness of the medium, the antirealist theorists could not shake the idea that it was essentially a form of painting, for it was painting which had visually repudiated – anyway, forgone – the representation of reality. This would have helped them neglect the differences between representation and projection. But an immediate fact about the medium of the photograph (still or in motion) is that it is not painting. (An immediate fact about the *history* of photography is that this was not at first obvious.)

What does this mean – not painting? A photograph does not present us with 'likenesses' of things; it presents us, we want to say, with the things themselves. But wanting to say that may well make us ontologically restless. 'Photographs present us with things themselves' sounds, and ought to sound, false or paradoxical. Obviously a photograph of an earthquake, or of Garbo, is not an earthquake happening (fortunately), or Garbo in the flesh (unfortunately). But this is not very informative. And, moreover, it is no less paradoxical or false to hold up a photograph of Greta Garbo and say, 'That is not Garbo', if all you mean is that the object you are holding up is not a human creature. Such troubles in notating so obvious a fact suggest that we do not know what a photograph is; we do not know how to place it ontologically. We might say that we don't know how to think of the *connection* between a photograph and what it is a photograph of. The image is not a likeness; it is not exactly a replica, or a relic, or a shadow, or an apparition either, though all of these natural candidates share a striking feature with photographs – an aura or history of magic surrounding them.

One might wonder that similar questions do not arise about recordings of sound. I mean, on the whole we would be hard put to find it false or paradoxical to say, listening to a record, 'That's an English horn'; there is not trace of temptation to add (as it were, to oneself), 'But I know it's really only a recording'. Why? A child might be very puzzled by the remark, said in the presence of a phonograph, 'That's an English horn', if something else had already been pointed out to him as an English horn. Similarly, he might be very puzzled by the remark, said of a photograph, 'That's your grandmother'. Very early, children are *no longer* puzzled by such remarks, luckily. But that doesn't mean we know why they were puzzled, or why they no longer are. And I am suggesting that we don't know either of these things about ourselves.

Is the difference between auditory and visual transcription a function of the fact that we are fully accustomed to hearing things that are invisible, not present to us, not present with us? We would be in trouble if we weren't so accustomed, because it is the nature of hearing that what is heard comes *from* someplace, whereas what you can see you can look *at*. It is why sounds are warnings, or calls; it is why our access to another world is normally through voices from it; and why a man can be spoken to by God and survive, but not if he sees God, in



which case he is no longer in *this* world. Whereas we are not accustomed to seeing things that are invisible, or not present to us, not present with us; or we are not accustomed to acknowledging that we do (except for dreams). Yet this seems, ontologically, to be what is happening when we look at a photograph: we see things that are not present.

Someone will object: ‘That is playing with words. We’re not seeing something not present; we are looking at something perfectly present, namely, a *photograph*.’ But that is affirming something I have not denied. On the contrary, I am precisely describing, or wishing to describe, what it means to say that there is this photograph here. It may be felt that I make too great a mystery of these objects. My feeling is rather that we have forgotten how mysterious these things are, and in general how *different* different things are from one another, as though we had forgotten how to value them. This is in fact something movies teach us.

Suppose one tried accounting for the familiarity of recordings by saying, ‘When I say, listening to a record, “That’s an English horn”, what I really mean is, “That’s the *sound* of an English horn”; moreover, when I am in the presence of an English horn playing, I still don’t literally hear the horn, I hear the sound of the horn. So I don’t worry about hearing a horn when the horn is not present, because *what* I hear is exactly the same (ontologically the same, and if my equipment is good enough, empirically the same) whether the thing is present or not’. What this rigmarole calls attention to is that sounds can be perfectly copied, and that we have various interests in copying them. (For example, if they couldn’t be copied, people would never learn to talk.) It is interesting that there is no comparable rigmarole about visual transcriptions. The problem is not that photographs are not visual copies of objects, or that objects can’t be visually copied. The problem is that even if a photograph were a copy of an object, so to speak, it would not bear the relation to its object that a recording bears to the sound it copies. We said that the record reproduces its sound, but we cannot say that a photograph reproduces a sight (or a look, or an appearance). It can seem that language is missing a word at this place. Well, you can always invent a word. But one doesn’t know what to pin the word *on* here. It isn’t that there aren’t sights to see, nor even that a sight has by definition to be especially *worth* seeing (hence could not be the sort of thing we are *always* seeing), whereas sounds are being thought of here, not unplausibly, as what we always hear. A sight *is* an object (usually a very large object, like the Grand Canyon or Versailles, although small southern children are frequently held, by the person in charge of them, to be sights) or an extraordinary happening, like the aurora borealis; and what you see, when you sight something, is an object – anyway, not the sight of an object. Nor will the epistemologist’s ‘sense-data’ or ‘surfaces’ provide correct descriptions here. For we are not going to say that photographs provide us with the sense-data of the objects they contain, because if the sense-data of photographs were the same as the sense-data of the objects they contain, we couldn’t tell a photograph of an object from the object itself. To say that a

photograph is of the surfaces of objects suggests that it emphasizes texture. What is missing is not a word, but, so to speak, something in nature – the fact that objects don’t *make* sights, or *have* sights. I feel like saying: Objects are too *close* to their sights to give them up for reproducing; in order to reproduce the sights they (as it were) make, you have to reproduce *them* – make a mould, or take an impression. Is that what a photograph does? We might, as Bazin does on occasion, try thinking of a photograph as a visual mould or a visual impression. My dissatisfaction with that idea is, I think, that physical moulds and impressions and imprints have clear procedures for getting *rid* of their originals, whereas in a photograph, the original is still as present as it ever was. Not present as it once was to the camera; but that is only a mould-machine, not the mould itself.

Photographs are not *hand*-made; they are manufactured. And what is manufactured is an image of the world. The inescapable fact of mechanism or automatism in the making of these images is the feature Bazin points to as ‘[satisfying], once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism’.<sup>4</sup>

It is essential to get to the right depth of this fact of automatism. It is, for example, misleading to say, as Bazin does, that ‘photography has freed the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness’,<sup>5</sup> for this makes it seem (and it does often look) as if photography and painting were in competition, or that painting had wanted something that photography broke in and satisfied. So far as photography satisfied a wish, it satisfied a wish not confined to painters, but the human wish, intensifying in the West since the Reformation, to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation – a wish for the power to reach this world, having for so long tried, at last hopelessly, to manifest fidelity to another. And painting was not ‘freed’ – and not by photography – from its obsession with likeness. Painting, in Manet, was *forced* to forgo likeness exactly because of its own obsession with reality, because the illusions it had learned to create did not provide the conviction in reality, the connection with reality, that it craved.<sup>6</sup> One might even say that in withdrawing from likeness, painting freed photography to be invented.

And if what is meant is that photography freed painting from the idea that a painting had to be a picture (that is, *of* or *about* something else), that is also not true. Painting did not free itself, did not force itself to maintain itself apart, from *all* objective reference until long after the establishment of photography; and then not because it finally dawned on painters that paintings were not pictures, but because that was the way to maintain connection with (the history of) the art of painting, to maintain conviction in its powers to create paintings, meaningful objects in paint.

And are we sure that the final denial of objective reference amounts to a complete yielding of connection with reality – once, that is, we have given up the idea that ‘connection with reality’ is to be understood as ‘provision of likeness’? We can be sure that the view of painting as dead without reality, and the view of painting as dead with it, are both in need of development in the views each takes of reality and of painting. We can say, painting and reality

no longer *assure* one another.

It could be said further that what painting wanted, in wanting connection with reality, was a sense of *presentness*<sup>7</sup> – not exactly a conviction of the world’s presence to us, but of our presence to it. At some point the unhinging of our consciousness from the world interposed our subjectivity between us and our presentness to the world. Then our subjectivity became what is present to us, individuality became isolation. The route to conviction in reality was through the acknowledgement of that endless presence of self. What is called expressionism is one possibility of representing this acknowledgement. But it would, I think, be truer to think of expressionism as a representation of our *response* to this new fact of our condition – our terror of ourselves in isolation – rather than as a representation of the world from within the condition of isolation itself. It would, to that extent, not be a new mastery of fate by creating selfhood against no matter what odds; it would be the sealing of the self’s fate by theatricalizing it. Apart from the wish for selfhood (hence the always simultaneous granting of otherness as well), I do not understand the value of art. Apart from this wish and its achievement, art is exhibition.

To speak of our subjectivity as the route back to our conviction in reality is to speak of romanticism. Perhaps romanticism can be understood as the natural struggle between the representation and the acknowledgement of our subjectivity (between the acting out and the facing off of ourselves, as psychoanalysts would more or less say). Hence Kant, and Hegel; hence Blake secreting the world he believes in; hence Wordsworth competing with the history of poetry by writing out himself, writing himself back into the world. A century later Heidegger is investigating Being by investigating *Dasein* (because it is in *Dasein* that Being shows up best, namely as questionable), and Wittgenstein investigates the world (‘the possibilities of phenomena’) by investigating what we say, what we are inclined to say, what our pictures of phenomena are, in order to wrest the world from our possessions so that we may possess it again. Then the recent major painting which Fried describes as objects of *presentness* would be painting’s latest effort to maintain its conviction in its own power to establish connection with reality – by permitting us presentness to ourselves, apart from which there is no hope for a world.

Photography overcame subjectivity in a way undreamed of by painting, a way that could not satisfy painting, one which does not so much defeat the act of painting as escape it altogether: by *automatism*, by removing the human agent from the task of reproduction.

One could accordingly say that photography was never in competition with painting. What happened was that at some point the quest for visual reality, or the ‘memory of the present’ (as Baudelaire put it), split apart. To maintain conviction in our connection with reality, to maintain our presentness, painting accepts the recession of the world. Photography maintains the presentness of the world by accepting our absence from it. The reality in a photograph is present to me while I am not present to it; and a world I know, and see, but to which I am nevertheless not present

Making a distinction between, or  
opposing, **artists** and  
**photographers**  
is, it strikes me, like making a  
distinction between, or opposing,  
**food** and **sausages**  
— surely odd.



(through no fault of my subjectivity), is a world past.

- 1 André Bazin, What Is Cinema?, trans. Hugh Gray [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967] 110.
- 2 Certainly I am not concerned to deny that there may be, through film, what Paul Rotha in his *The Film Till Now* [first published in 1930] refers to as 'possibilities ... open for the great sound and visual [i.e. non-dialogue sound, and perhaps non-photographically visual] cinema of the future'. But in the meantime the movies have been what they have been.
- 3 Bazin, *op. cit.*, 12.
- 4 Bazin, *op. cit.*
- 5 See Michael Fried, *Three American Painters* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Fogg Art Museum; Harvard University, 1965] n. 3; and 'Manet's Sources', *Artforum*, March, 1969, 28–79.
- 6 See Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, June 1967; reprinted in Gregory Battcock [ed.], *Minimal Art* [New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968] 116–47.

Stanley Cavell, 'Sights and Sounds', *The World Viewed* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971] 16–23.

# Carl ANDRE

## A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher [1972]

Bernhard and Hilla Becher began their series of photographic typologies in 1957 with a study of half-timbered workers' houses in the old German industrial are of South Westphalia. Within the limits of a definite vernacular style, the houses manifest a wide range of variation in the mix of basic surface materials: slate, timber, and brick. The theme of variations within limits determined by function is made apparent by the Bechers in their grouping of similar views of different structures built to serve the same purpose. The Bechers use the term 'typology' to describe these ordered sets of photographs.

Bernhard Becher's first studies of industrial structures were paintings and lithographs done from 1953 through 1957. His main interest was in the iron-ore preparation plants of the Siegen area in Germany. These buildings, huge conglomerations of machine and structure, proved more fascinating to him than the act of painting. He began to collect old photographs of them and later to photograph the plants himself. At this point he met Hilla who had left her job in advertising to set up the photography department at the Dusseldorf Art Academy. She was fascinated by his ideas and began to help him. They continue to employ photography because it affords the possibility of a more objective record than painting does. Photography also makes it easier to compare the proportions of similar structures of unequal size.

From 1961 through 1965, the Bechers worked mostly in the German Ruhr District and in Holland making comparative photographs of the pithead towers and preparation plants of coal and iron-ore mines, blast furnaces, coke ovens and oil refineries. These structures

and others such as water towers, cooling towers, gas holders, high-tension electrical pylons and lime kilns are built to perform particular economic functions. When these structures no longer serve their purposes efficiently they are abandoned. The photographs of the Bechers record the transient existence of purely functional structures and reveal the degree to which form is determined by the invariant requirements of function.

A partial catalogue of the typological subjects of Bernhard and Hilla Becher includes: structures with the same function (all water towers); structures with the same function but with different shapes (spherical, cylindrical and conical water towers); structures with the same function and shape but built with different materials (steel, cement, wood, brick or some combination such as wood and steel); structures with the same function, shape and materials; comparative perspective views of ore and coal preparation plants; comparative frontal views of pithead towers; comparative frontal and perspective views of pithead towers, high tension electrical pylons, blast furnaces, and factory buildings.

The Bechers have worked in the major industrial regions of Germany and Holland (1961–1965); England, Scotland and Wales (1965–1966); France and Luxemburg (1966–1967); Pittsburgh, USA (1968); and Belgium (1970). As a part of their work, the Bechers also record the dimensions, dates and construction details of the structures they photograph. As Hilla Becher has written: 'The question if this is a work of art or not is not very interesting for us. Probably it is situated in between the established categories. Anyway the audience which is interested in art would be the most open-minded and willing to think about it.'

Carl Andre, 'A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher', *Artforum*, 11:4, December, 1972.

# John BALDESSARI

## Interview with James Hugunin [1976]

*James Hugunin* What restrictions within the painting medium motivated you to utilize photography?  
*John Baldessari* Well, the first restriction in painting was that I was caught up in a traditional discipline and making moves within the homeostatic system. I was also doing work dealing more with strategy and working out various theories, and setting up situations. That seemed to be the most important thing to me, not the physical doing which traditional painting involves. So that was in part why I got out of painting. Another reason was that I had a parallel interest in photography at the time and was using it as feedback information for my paintings. So it was very natural to start diminishing one and increasing the other. Another thing which helped break the orbit I was in with painting was seeing a lot of photographs and not being content with what I saw, wanting to change what I saw, offering positive alternatives. And lastly, wanting to do that perverse thing and give the public what it wants!

*Hugunin* In other words, one of the important factors in your work is the digestibility of it at the narrative level?  
*Baldessari* Yes, in my book *Parables About Art*, my original ideas concerning that book are summed up in a notebook entry which reads: 'Tell stories like Jesus'. This sort of always interested me – the whole idea of the teaching strategm, you know, the parable is the best teaching strategm; the minute you start telling a story the interest level of your audience picks up. It's not like pure prose. Then my peers at the time were beginning to deal with the same kind of issues, trying to make the same kind of push using information rather than the more traditional relational imagery of painting. I was just really bored with my peer group's efforts at prepositional exposition, and I thought using another level of verbal communication could accomplish the same thing, but better. And so that's why I tried that hat on instead of the prepositional prose stuff.

*Hugunin* When in your work did language become important?  
*Baldessari* I think it was always there, it is simply a matter of coming to terms with yourself and trusting your genetic code. Instead of asking permission you sort of do what you do best. I had a lot of doubts. At one time I wanted to be an art historian, another an art critic. I was really interested in theorizing, but it seemed that wasn't art. But then you also realize that that's a model which the world imposes upon you, as a lot of other models are.  
*Hugunin* What relationship does language take in your work? Is it more explanation or more poetic evocation?  
*Baldessari* It's rather difficult to come up with an all-inclusive statement, but as I read a lot and talk a lot many things I do come from that source. It's more a matter of being constantly fascinated by the similarities and dissimilarities between visual and verbal material and how they interact, how they function as signs, but in different ways.

*Hugunin* What particularly interests me is the interaction between the two different sign systems of language and photography, where the image can take on the characteristics of denotative propositions, while the words can assume a very connotational level in relationship to the images. The use of image as indicator, words as connotator, like in your pieces [A Person Was Asked to Point; and the *Commissioned Paintings*, 1969] where the finger pointing acts as the indicator [ ... ] How do you feel about the label 'conceptual photographer'?  
*Baldessari* To relate a parable: I was looking through an issue of *Flash Art* in which there was a ponderous article on photography like this one, in which I only glimpsed the words '... but Baldessari in this case offers a very interesting exception'. I may offer to be such an exception here, but if you are simply referring to my interest in getting something other than an attractive photograph, then maybe yes. But I am not very interested in such categories, which come after-the-fact. The tail shouldn't wag the dog! I have no particular allegiance to photography, other than that it's quick.  
*Hugunin* The camera as 'dumb recording device'?  
*Baldessari* Yes, but in the best sense of that term [ ... ]

John Baldessari, James Hugunin, 'A Talk With Baldessari' *The*



Keith ARNATT

Sausages and Food [1982]

Somebody like Bill Brandt for example, we would not collect because he is exclusively a photographer.

– Alan Bowness, Director of the Tate Gallery, 1982'

The January issue (No. 205) of Creative Camera published an interview between Colin Osman and Alan Bowness concerning the Tate Gallery's policy towards photography.

As the quoted extract indicates, except in the exceptional few cases of an artist or painter whose photographic works are collected because of their personal status as artists; the Tate's studied avoidance of photography is clearly at odds with the developing situation and increasing public interest in the photographic arts generally. Clearly its lack of a positive policy in this field distinguishes it from the other major museums of modern art, notably MoMA in New York and the Pompidou Centre in Paris, both of which have assumed attitudes that properly acknowledge the role that photography has played in the history of twentieth century art.

Meanwhile the Tate declares proudly: 'The Modern Collection consists of works by British Artists born after 1850. It incorporates the most thorough and authoritative survey of British art of its period in any public collection and includes a large number of works by the leading younger artists.' And yet photography, the most influential development in the arts since 1850 is the one area that the Tate's curators seem curiously dismissive of. Colin Osman is to be applauded for bringing the situation into the open and revealing the gaps in the present collecting policy, for clearly things are a little confused down at Millbank. Even retrogressive if you consider that Elizabeth Glazebrook raised the very same issues thirteen years ago in an article about photography in Britain that was published in the June 1969 issue of Creative Camera. She quoted Norman Reid, then director of the Tate Gallery: 'There is a certain snobbishness about the inclusion of photography ... but I personally feel quite convinced that photographs by someone such as Cartier-Bresson display the same sort of imaginative quality as people who are more commonly regarded as fine artists.' And in the same article, Richard Morphet, Assistant Keeper of the Tate's Modern Collection at that time, is also quoted as saying: 'I can't understand why anyone interested in the visual arts isn't interested in photography in principle. After all, it is the major visual art of the twentieth century.' In response to the Bowness interview, Ffotoviews (No. 3) the magazine of the Photographic Gallery, Cardiff, asked Keith Arnatt to write a piece about the dichotomy in the Tate's policy. Keith Arnatt is one of the few British photographers particularly qualified to comment in this area. Over the last fifteen years he has acquired a substantial reputation as an artist,

being represented in such exhibitions as 'The British Avant-Garde' at the New York Cultural Centre, 'The New Art' at the Hayward Gallery and currently in 'Ten Contemporary British Photographers' at the MIT Creative Photography Gallery in the USA. Significantly he was included in the Tate Gallery exhibition 'British Artists of the Sixties' and is represented in their collection.

[Creative Camera, editorial introduction]

Alan Bowness, director of the Tate Gallery, says: 'You have to be an artist and not only a photographer to have your work in the Tate'. He also says that they collect artists rather than photographs though they would not collect an artist if he or she was an artist purely in the photographic media. It might appear then, as though the Tate collects artists who are photographers but not photographers who are artists. If this is so it is not terribly clear what distinction is being drawn between artist/photographer and photographer/artist. Does acceptance by the Tate mean, for example, that you must not have worked or work exclusively in the medium of photography, that you must gain your laurels in some other medium before your photographic work is considered worthy? Further, if we take the opening quotation at face value, being 'only a photographer' would seem to exclude the very possibility of being an artist. Bill Brandt though, who is described as a substantial artist, is not collected 'because he is exclusively a photographer'. It becomes increasingly difficult therefore, to understand the claim made by Elizabeth Underhill, also of the Tate, that what the Tate collects 'is a matter of the substance of the artist himself, not what he works in'. There is surely something odd about all this though it is by no means easy to say exactly what.

I can accept that the Tate does not collect photographs because of lack of money and space, but as they do collect some photographs (even though, as Colin Osman suggests, they do not call it photography), it must raise the question as to what criteria they use in deciding that certain photographic works are relevant to its main collection. Alan Bowness admits that he is not sure that the criteria the Tate uses for judging photographs are those a photography expert would use, and, according to another member of the Tate staff 'the criteria differ tremendously from artist to artist'. Insistence, on the part of Alan Bowness, that the criterion is always the stature of the artist making the work gets us nowhere for it begs all the questions already raised.

'The photographic works in the Tate collection all have this same characteristic: they are works by artists who 'would not call themselves photographers'. But, if their principal tool of expression is a camera one wonders why not. After all, those who use paintbrushes and paint are not normally averse to calling themselves painters (though they may also want to call themselves artists). Perhaps then, Richard Long, John Hilliard, *et al.*, feel that they are doing something with a camera so fundamentally different from most photographers that they do not wish to be identified with them. Let us look at one case then, Bernd and Hilla Becher who have a photographic work in the Tate. There is surely much in common between the work of this couple and the photographs of August Sander,

a very highly regarded photographer. Sander's typology of early twentieth-century members of German society is paralleled closely by the Becher's typology of twentieth-century industrial architecture. Both are photographing 'specimens'; one people, the other architecture. Both are documentary photographers of a very thorough kind. The structures that the Bechers photograph may be seen as a kind of anonymous sculpture and it is this comparison with sculpture which is felt to make the photographs relevant to the Tate's collection of modern art. I'm sure, incidentally, that it would not prove too difficult to make a case for the equal relevance of Sander's photographic portraits to that collection also. But the point I want to make is, that in terms of an enterprise, there is no significant difference between them and that this is at least one case where nothing is added by calling either or both of them artists as opposed to photographers.

Calling oneself an artist need be no more than a way of establishing a connection between what one does and what others, who are already regarded as artists, do or have done. The thread of connection may be, and frequently is, tenuous. The boundaries between disparative activities and disciplines are often blurred at the edges and one activity can develop in such a manner as to take on the complexion of another. I think this latter assertion applies, particularly, to someone like Hamish Fulton. Elizabeth Underhill says: 'We collect Fulton because we clearly see the kind of sculptural operation he is involved with as being relevant to this collection'. But it is not easy to see Fulton's operation as a sculptural one – one might, I suggest, see it as a rather conventional photographic concern. Alan Bowness even admits that he is chiefly known as a photographer. If Hamish Fulton does prefer to call himself an artist – rather than a photographer – it can only be for the reason that he wishes to connect his photographic activity with sculptural concerns. However, it is not the actual *photographs* that are to be regarded as relating to sculpture, but rather, as the captions make clear, what's involved in getting them, namely the walking. And walking has become an accepted (though not by all) mode of sculptural behaviour. Walking and travelling, though, might be seen equally as an ingredient in purely photographic activity; that is, one has at least to get to where one takes a photograph. I am reminded here, of the American nineteenth-century pioneer photographers, Jackson, O'Sullivan and Watkins, for example. An appreciation of their photographs is surely connected to an understanding of what was involved in getting them, the hardships they must have endured in the then wilderness. In Fulton's case, as in theirs I believe, the arduous nature of his undertaking (his four-day, one hundred-mile walk in Iceland, for example) is directed towards the taking of the often spectacular photographs he does take. Like Jackson, O'Sullivan and Watkins, Fulton depicts, in his photographs, the quintessential features of the landscape he travels through. Fulton's work then, may be about experiencing the landscape through walking in it. But so, in a sense, is the work of the American pioneers. In both cases, through their photographs and captions, we may experience, vicariously, their endeavours. Also, the experience of confronting Fulton's large panoramic views



— intended to be comparable to experiencing the landscape itself — is, to a degree, similar to viewing the American photographers’ large scale prints. The similarities, therefore, are so considerable that we cannot ignore them. The fact that Fulton may regard himself as an artist rather than a photographer in no way changes the fact that his operation relates closely to a classic photographic venture and that its connection with sculpture is, at most, tenuous. Again, calling himself an artist adds nothing to our appreciation of his photographic works.

I should like to make it clear that I’m not against the use of the word ‘artist’. But I am worried by the Tate’s insistence on calling the Bechers, Fulton et al, artists *rather* than photographers. And, if they do, I’m equally worried by those concerned doing the same thing. In the case of the Bechers and Fulton, where photographic concerns are so patently obvious, it is not clear what is gained in making this distinction. Saying that they are artists rather than photographers adds nothing, as I’ve already suggested, to our appreciation and understanding of their work. It can, at most, make only this tenuous connection with sculpture. Further, what sounds like an opposition — artist as opposed to photographer — is not an opposition at all. Making a distinction between, or opposing, artists and photographers is, it strikes me, like making a distinction between, or opposing, food and sausages — surely odd. In the way that sausages may be given as an example of food, photography may be given as an example of artists’ practice. The notions of distinction and opposition simply do not — and *cannot* — apply to these differing category terms.

There are many who work solely in the medium of photography and who think of themselves as artists as well as photographers. And, if there is some connection between what they do, as photographers, and those who are regarded as artists irrespective of the media they work in, why not? The connections may be tenuous but need not be more so than, let us say, the connections between painters themselves. All this does not mean, however, that the range of photographers’ concerns is absolutely parasitic upon the range of concerns dealt with in other media. It does not mean that your concerns, as a photographer/artist, must ‘follow’ concerns expressed in other media. There are numerous occasions, both in the past and recently, where a photographic concern is seen to be relevant and is ‘taken-up’ by painting for example. There is then, this continual crossover between the concerns of painting, sculpture and photography. A good instance of a concern shared by these three media is, of course, ‘painting about painting’, ‘sculpture about sculpture’ and ‘photography about photography’. John Hilliard, surely the paradigm case of a photographer/artist comes to mind here. In Hilliard’s case — despite what Bowness says — I find it difficult to believe that he insists on being called an artist rather than a photographer. He came to photography as a result of using the camera to record his early ephemeral sculptural installations, but the work he has become known for is to do with the very nature of photography itself and is carried out exclusively in that medium. To deny that *he* is a photographer would

be very puzzling indeed.

I should like to deal with one other and related issue arising out of the Osman/Bowness interview. A number of those mentioned as having work in the Tate use photographs as, at least, a part of their work. Now the mere *use* of the photograph does not, of course, make one a photographer. Richard Long, who uses photographs, is not to be considered a photographer in the way that Hamish Fulton is. Long uses photography to record his activity in the landscape. This activity is essentially sculptural in character. He takes a photograph, for example, of the 554 stones he places at a point 554 feet above sea level. The photograph, along with its caption, is not the point, but rather makes the point, of his activity in the landscape. The photograph is evidence, or proof, that he has performed this act. They are straightforward documentary photographs. In view of what the Tate says about *other* artists whose works are similarly recorded, one might expect to find Long’s photographs in the archives. But not so. Long’s photographs are enshrined (not necessarily by the Tate) within a sea of off-white mounting card, captioned in hand-written inscriptions, bounded by darkly stained oak frames of an institutional complexion and displayed along with items from the main collection. Mounting and displaying them in this manner tends, I suggest, to distort their meaning. It creates the impression that *they* are the ‘works of art’ — that they are the primary rather than the secondary objects of concern. The photographs’ function and status is clearer, I feel, in a space given over to documentation exclusively, or in book form. However photographic documentation as art has become commonplace and it is not surprising that this is so, for the artists involved would say that they have no other means of presenting their work to a public — their work being, by its very nature, ephemeral or physically inaccessible. Such photographic documentation is presented then, as a kind of surrogate art object. It is tarted up and offered for sale as a *unique* art object. Unique because uniqueness is still very much tied to the monetary value of an art object. It does not surprise me that some photographer/artists are tempted to play the same game despite the principle of infinite reproducibility attached to their medium.

Whilst I accept that the photographic works of the Bechers, Fulton, Hilliard, *et al.*, *are* relevant to the Tate’s collection of modern painting and sculpture, I cannot accept that they are *more* so than many other works by photographer/artists I could mention. What bothers me, in the Osman/Bowness interview, is the more than faint suggestion that they *are* — that they are more relevant than Bill Brandt, for example. Many excellent photographers deal with many slices of the art-cake and what is not clear is why the Tate choose some slices rather than others. What is the conceptual basis underlying their choice? Alan Bowness’s rule of thumb and resort to common sense is of little help here. The basis is surely not that the works are made by artists *rather* than photographers, for, as I’ve tried to show, this cannot amount to much. And though I am sure the Tate would deny it, their use of the word ‘artist’ sounds very much like a covert value-judgement. There is again, on their part, more than a faint suggestion that they

believe an artist to be something more than a photographer — that an artist does something that a photographer doesn’t, or cannot, do. What this could possibly be is difficult to see. If I’m right and there is such a value-judgement at work it is unfortunate, for it would extend the terminal illness of that moribund question, ‘Can photography be art?’

Perhaps the Victorian photographer Emerson offers the best solution to the above problem: ‘Do not call yourself an “artist photographer” and make “artist painters” and “artist sculptors” laugh: call yourself a photographer and wait for artists to call you brother.’

1 Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the Osman/Bowness Interview, published in *Creative Camera*, January, 1982. Other interviews in the series include Roy Strong, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum [October 1981] and Colin Ford and Dame Margaret Weston on the National Museum of Photography at Bradford [September 1982].

Keith Arnatt, ‘Sausages and Food: A Reply to the Interview with Alan Bowness of the Tate Gallery’, *Creative Camera*, 214, October, 1982.

## Jeff WALL Dan Graham’s *Kammerspiel* [1988]

[...] In 1966 Graham redesigned Pop in the grim, grey style of ‘factography’ in order to present an image of the miserable consequence of architectural thought in the post-war era — the barracks-like tract house. Upon this structure his thought dwells consistently over the years. A sense of the social misery congealed across the abstract surfaces of the Pop-Minimal coalescence is retrieved as Graham marks off the affirmativeness of both types of art. Minimalism is seen through *Homes for America* (1966–67) as a repressed social semiotics which is barred from accepting itself as such by its roots in Idealist abstraction.

*Homes for America* is indeed a form of Pop art, in that it mimics a certain kind of magazine article the way Lichtenstein copied comic strips. However, it establishes its particular form of mimesis as both Pop and antithetical to Pop (in part by *not* being traditional artwork). More importantly, this piece of ‘photojournalism’ becomes the vehicle by which means the social surfaces of American culture, brightened and celebrated by Pop, are reinvested with the grey, funereal and somewhat distressing atmosphere of the Johnsian mid 1950s, the Cold War era in which corporate emblems still retained vestiges of their then-recent function as war-propaganda. The text of *Homes for America* discusses the development of tract-housing after World War II. The insistent comparison of the new suburb to a barracks or prison is articulated in language combining journalistic concreteness with a sense of the deliriously labyrinthine. Graham’s text is as Borgesian as those of Robert Smithson, whose *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* (1967) is its closest



parallel (and who played a part in having *Homes* commissioned as a ‘think-piece’ for *Arts Magazine*). Graham’s intention with this work is to reveal the structural and historical isomorphism of Minimal and Pop art. The consequences for both trends of the repression are not directly linked with any particular attitude towards the political problems of urbanism since the 1920s, but the issue is evoked obliquely in the unveiling of the consequences of those problems both for architecture itself and for Pop and Minimalism, which appropriate material from the common or popular signifiers put in place by urbanism.

Thus, through a series of assumptions of roles or functions, *Homes for America* arrives at its position as unique within conceptual art. Like much conceptualism, it attempts to breach the dominance of the established art forms and to articulate a critique of them. However, unlike the more academic types of conceptual art (as practised by Art-Language, they could arrive only at a paradoxical state of establishing themselves as works of art *negatively*, by enunciating conditions for art which they had no interest in actually fulfilling) Graham’s photojournalistic format demands that his work have a separable, distinguishable subject-matter. Instead of making artistic gestures which were little more than rehearsals of first principles, as Kosuth or Art-Language were to do, Graham brings into being his analysis of the institutional status of art through the dynamism of a journalistic subject which is implicitly the inner truth of purer forms of art. This is, of course, the antithesis of the formalist abolition of subject-matter. In a single gesture Graham establishes the primacy of social subject-matter as *the* historically essential problem to be posed by conceptualism, and at the same time he identifies the single grand subject which will remain central to the development of the movement’s historical self-consciousness: the city. *Homes for America* is the work in which Graham recognizes that the conceptual critique indeed has an inherent subject, which he begins to investigate – the historical development of city as site of cultural conflict. This investigation begins on the ground of conceptualism by posing anew the antithesis faced by the more revolutionary artists of the 1920s and 30s: one between the isolated and exalted ‘pure’ work of art (the highest product of the distraught bourgeois self-consciousness) and the social machine as a whole that reproduces this distraught consciousness in the process of its own reproduction as city.

*Homes for America* is, however, of its own time and does not pose this historical contradiction in terms of the explicit dynamism of Lissitzky or Tatlin. Although Graham manages to identify the historical consequences of the collapse of the hopes of the utopian artists and planners of the 1920s, he cannot rekindle them. He can go no further than specifying those conditions resulting in the era when this hope appears to have been permanently eclipsed. Graham’s reminiscence of the oppressive greyness of the 50s sets off a further reminiscence of the history of earlier planning schemes whose liberating rhetoric has shrunk into the gratuitous structures of the suburban grid, the garden of subjection for a lost proletariat. For Graham, as for many other young artists, in 1966, the key revelation of

the city was in the shock of the absolute loss of hope. This loss was as much a stimulant for critical memory as was indignation: the city of Antonioni provoked the memory of de Chirico and Breton, as the city of Godard did that of Heartfield or Meyerhold. Although his response to this shock shares neither Smithson’s black indignation nor his black humour, Graham appreciates both, and commits himself to the decipherment of this image of mechanistic domination. When Smithson leads the incensed Romantics into the desert, Graham remains in the city and suburbs.

*Homes for America* is the finest of the group magazine pieces of the late 1960s, all articulating the theme of the defeat of those ideals of rational, critical language by bureaucratic-commercial forms of communication and enforcement. The magazine pieces are structured as small, ironically insignificant defeats for liberationist ideas, as ‘defeatist interventions’ in the mechanisms of ideological dominations. They are aimed at interrupting the flow of standardized, falsified representation and language, and inducing a ‘mini-crisis’ for the reader or viewer by means of the inversions they create. This strategy, carried out most insidiously and brilliantly in *Detumescence* (1966/69), parallels the creation of distancing effects in everyday environments by early conceptualists such as Weiner (particularly in his series of ‘removals’). Reflected in the provocations and interventions characteristic of 1960s Situationism in which an unexpected and confrontational gesture interrupts the established rhythm of relationships in a specific context, and induces a form of contestation, paradox or crisis, this approach thereby exposes the forms of authority and domination in the situation, which are normally imperceptible or veiled. The most notable artistic image of this is the unexpected ‘void’ or ‘rupture’ in the seamlessly designed social surface, and conceptualism’s origins are filled with such blanks, erasures, tears and cuts. These gestures interrupt the induced habits of the urban masses, and the interruption theoretically permits social repression (which is the veiled content of habit) to emerge in a kind of hallucination provoked by the work. This liberating hallucination is the objective of the work, and its claim to value. Such Situationist intervention is also related to Pop, but inversely, as is conceptualism; it aggravates Pop irony by means of *humeur noir*, and attempts to elicit a recognition of the terroristic aspects of the normalized environment of images, things, spaces and mechanisms.

Graham’s magazine pieces fuse a Situationist-inspired strategy of the ‘cut’, of *détournement*, with that of the mimesis of bureaucratic forms of ‘factography’. The interventions designed by him remain primarily concrete, functioning through the dynamics of specific subjects. Conceptualism, in relapsing into ‘radical formalism’, tended to empty the ‘cut’ or intervention of its specific character, thereby absolutizing it as an extreme form of emblematic abstraction. Such interventions are reduced to decorativism, as is the case with many later works by Buren, for example.

Graham uses an actual text – an article, an advertisement, a chart – which constitutes its intervention

through a structured difference with the norms of the genre in question. Thus, in these works, a specific social genre, existing functionally, is altered in a prescribed direction aimed at bringing out and making perceptible the underlying historical oppression.

Thus, *Homes for America*’s theme, the subjection of the romantic ideal of the harmonious garden suburb to the systems of ‘land development’, is presented in the pseudo-Readymade form of a ‘think-piece’ or popular photo-essay. This format is retained, mimetically, as the means by which the subject-matter is altered and made perceptible in a negative sense. Graham’s approach accepts the existing formalism of culture – its rigidified generic structure – as a first principle, and applies pseudo-Readymade, pseudo-Pop, and authentically Situationist strategies to it. The result is formalism intensified to the qualitative crisis point. The work makes its intervention in the context of a formalized emptiness of existing genres, but does not create an antithetical emptiness, a purely abstract or emblematic intervention. In fusing the journalistic attitude which accepts the primacy of subject-matter together with the Situationist-conceptualist strategy of interventionism and *détournement*, the work establishes a discourse in which its subject matter, a critique of Minimalism and Pop via a discussion of the architectural disaster upon which they both depend, can be enlarged to the point of a historical critique of reigning American cultural development [ ... ]

Jeff Wall, *Dan Graham’s Kammerpiele* [1988] [Toronto: Art Metropole, 1991] 26–32.

## Bernd and Hilla BECHER Conversation with Jean- François Chevrier, James Lingwood and Thomas Struth [1989]

*James Lingwood* Your practice has continued for over thirty years now; how do you perceive it overall? Do you see it as a global project that encompasses all of the different series?

*Hilla Becher* I don’t think we have an overall project. We just go on; we have completed certain things and left others open.

*Lingwood* Have your pictures or your concepts changed much since you began in the 1950s?

*Bernd Becher* I don’t think so; the idea is to make families of objects.

*Lingwood* Where did this idea of making families of objects come from?

*Bernd Becher* At first I made paintings – paintings from photographs – but I wasn’t satisfied with them; I preferred the photographs to the paintings. Then I started to make collages, cutting out photographs of mines and miners’ houses which I had taken from different sides. I took the photographs standing on a ladder, so that there was no



optical distortion; I also noticed that if you take a picture from a high viewpoint the background becomes higher and surrounds the object completely.

*Thomas Struth* In the beginning, were the objects in the paintings the same as in the photographs?

*Bernd Becher* Yes, then I met Hilla and we started to have conversations, take photographs and go on walks together. We discovered that this industrial world was going to disappear, and we had the idea of fixing it ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, you start and then you go on and you don't have any idea, in the beginning, how far you will go. Then you get involved and you begin to learn the nature of the subject. Photography is all about subject; the subject determines the way you photograph it. So you have to learn about its nature, its function, the different landscapes and the way people think about them. There was also the idea that these industrial landscapes will not be there for eternity; even if they last for fifty years they change all the time. They are nomadic forms of architecture, they come and go almost like nature. This was interesting for us.

*Jean-François Chevrier* This makes me think of something you said at the beginning, that some projects were still open and some were finished. When do you consider a project, a subject, to be finished?

*Hilla Becher* I could say that it is finished when the object is destroyed. For instance, in the Pennsylvania area where we had been working on a mine, there was a crisis and the mine was closed. So we thought it was finished and we made an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, thinking that the project was closed. This happened in 1976. But, the following year, we went back to this area just to see friends and we discovered that the mine had been re-opened, so the whole project started again. So every project is always open. In any case, the objects are never restricted to a geographical area, so that in a certain sense a project can be finished and still be open at the same time. Until now our work has been limited to Europe and the United States, but this is only a physical or economic limitation. There is no conceptual limitation, nothing is really closed.

*Chevrier* When you started, were you aware of works which had been made in the nineteenth century, by Edouard-Denis Baldus (1820–82), for example?

*Hilla Becher* We admire the photographers of the last century because they really used photography in the best way, whilst we had the impression that in our century photography had been misused ...

*Lingwood* Are you thinking of the German school of Subjective Photography in the 1950s?

*Hilla Becher* Yes, they were not really exploiting its possibilities fully ...

*Chevrier* Do you think that the main possibility of photography is descriptive and documentary?

*Hilla Becher* Yes. In the nineteenth century, you have both the object and the metaphor, and if you use them in the right way it becomes so fascinating that in the end you can really say: this is a certain object, it has a name and so on, but it also stands for a certain historical condition. This is a matter of choice, of course; you cannot photograph everything, you choose typical objects.

*Struth* One of the last times we spoke of Subjective Photography, one of you said that you could understand Otto Steinert's attitude, the looking inwards, because after the war, nobody dared look at what the outside was like ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, Steinert and the people of his generation did not want to look back, they did not even want to look into the present, they just looked towards the future. It was a kind of escape ...

*Chevrier* In Subjective Photography there were references to the experimental photography of the 1920s, a very subjective way of dealing with personal feelings and so on. This attitude was very much opposed to reportage, but you did not choose reportage either.

*Hilla Becher* Reportage was on another level. There were complicated distinctions between commercial, journalistic and art photography. Our work, of course, could not be considered as art photography, so in a sense we were nowhere. We couldn't discuss our work with anyone. In the beginning there was no response.

*Lingwood* When did you begin to find a community of interest among artists?

*Hilla Becher* Ten years later.

*Lingwood* Was it in Germany or with American artists?

*Bernd Becher* Our first exhibition was in Munich, in the Neue Sammlung, but there was still a kind of misunderstanding. This museum was primarily interested in the history of modern architecture.

*Chevrier* In the beginning, was there a good response from the architectural community?

*Hilla Becher* Yes, there was some interest. But the subject was wrong, and the way of photographing it was also wrong, because it was too straight, there was nothing artistic about it.

*Chevrier* Is it true that Carl Andre's text on your work, published in *Artforum* in 1972, 'changed a lot of things, that it enabled people to understand your work better?

*Hilla Becher* Yes, in the sense that they simply accepted the fact that you can just photograph an object in a straight way, without any composition ...

*Bernd Becher* Some of the water towers, for instance, resemble kitchen tools ... Another important thing, which became more clear, was that our method of photographing objects from a high viewpoint made them look more rooted in the ground ...

*Struth* Why is this so important in relation to the content?

*Hilla Becher* These objects are fixed to the ground, they are part of the landscape, you could almost say that they have roots. Other objects, like a cup or a sewing machine, do not have roots, but a water tower is strictly connected to the ground, it is not a moveable object, although it is an object which is put up only for a certain period of time. This object is linked to a certain mechanism and to the landscape, to people working there and to a social network. You have to isolate the object, otherwise you surrender to chaos and confusion, but at the same time you have to show a part of its background, to show that this is not a moveable object like a cup of coffee.

*Chevrier* Is this idea of the object being rooted linked in any way to the minimalist idea of sculpture that is rooted to the ground, which is important for Carl Andre?

*Bernd Becher* No, I don't think so. Carl was interested in

the idea that the object was not created by composition but was defined by the situation. It is about the concept of 'found objects', of prefabricated parts, like bricks or iron, which are there, which you just have to look at; and when you isolate them and put them together and transport them to another context, they change. You do not have to put them into a line, you just have to make some order ...

*Chevrier* It is interesting to see how Carl Andre worked with this idea of found objects, Hollis Frampton photographed them, and now the sculpture has disappeared; the photographs of the objects remain, and are presented in series ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, it is also very much about remembering things. This is one of the main functions of photography, to transfer things into the form of images, whilst always retaining the connection with the real object.

*Chevrier* I suppose that August Sander (1876–1964) was very important for you ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, absolutely. We admired him enormously. As a portrait photographer, Sander respected his subjects, he respected their role.

*Chevrier* You spoke about memory earlier. Does the social value of photography reside in preserving the memory of things which are disappearing?

*Hilla Becher* It is one of the values. But it also has an egoistical value for us. We have a lot of fun doing this, learning about things, travelling and working on a subject which fascinates us and which was, to start with, very mysterious, very confusing and chaotic.

*Struth* Did you want to find some order?

*Hilla Becher* To find out about something ...

*Struth* Yes, but what can other people learn from looking at these objects, apart from seeing the different forms and varieties.

*Hilla Becher* When you learn how it is put together and how it looks, then you are able to understand it better; and of course there is a lot behind that, which I don't have to mention.

*Struth* It seems to me that the renewed interest of people of my generation or even younger people in your work is linked to its historical value, which also makes it different from the work of Minimal artists who were more interested in art theory ...

*Bernd Becher* I would put it differently. I would say that we want to complete the world of things. When you look, for instance, at objects which were made in mediaeval times, when you look at a church, you can read many things about the way the people who constructed it thought. There is no comparable archaeology relating to the industrial era, yet you can still learn a lot about the way people in our century have lived and thought from looking at a steel factory or a gas refinery. Building a church, today, would just be a repetition of older models. I think that the idea underlying industrialization is Calvinism – a kind of 'Calvinist baroque', concerned with the idea of making money, doing things fast, being efficient – and the form of architecture also derives from that idea. There is no aesthetic thinking behind that architecture, no idea of making it look beautiful. But the very idea of not wanting to make it look beautiful creates a variety, a very independent aesthetic. On the other hand, when you look at



postmodernist architecture today, you have the impression that all is open, that everything is possible from a stylistic point of view, and yet these variations are not interesting ...

*Lingwood* Is this because there's now a kind of global culture which imposes this postmodern style, as opposed to local variations or the idea of something coming from the roots?

*Hilla Becher* Yes, of course. One might think, for instance, that the functional design of a coal mine would produce a standard shaped structure. This is not true, we find an endless variety of possibilities ...

*Chevrier* I think that James was also talking about the difference between the vernacular and the international style, and it seems to me that you are deeply interested in the vernacular.

*Hilla Becher* Yes, of course. It's an interesting challenge to work with a subject that isn't accepted.

*Bernd Becher* I'd like to go back for a moment to this idea of completing the world of things. You see, all these objects which are linked to industrialization are disappearing. As in the world of nature, they consume each other. The old type of blast furnace, for example, is superseded by the newer model ...

*Lingwood* So you observe all these artefacts as being in the process of dying ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, just as things in nature die and then grow back again ...

*Chevrier* You made an interesting distinction between art and aesthetics; you said that all these objects are very functional but because of this they can give rise to variations. Aesthetics can also be open like that, but of course it is not art, because art is the definition we give of aesthetics in a very closed field.

*Lingwood* Is the idea of being democratic significant to you – in the sense of giving each object a status and not creating a hierarchy, not making one more important than others?

*Hilla Becher* Yes. First of all you cannot afford to judge what is good and what is not. There's a kind of morality that you have to put aside if you want to be democratic about it and not to judge before you have experienced it. You have to respect the object as it is, as it appears ... Sometimes an object which doesn't look interesting turns out in the photograph to be very important as a metaphor ... You have to force a kind of neutrality.

*Lingwood* And what about the choice of objects?

*Bernd Becher* In the 1920s and 1930s, artists such as Charles Sheeler represented industrial objects, such as furnaces or tools, but as a composition. What we do is create families of objects, a sort of alphabet, so that people can still read the pictures although they don't have the possibility of going into the landscape to see them; the factories aren't there any more.

*Hilla Becher* The principle of the catalogue, in the natural sciences, is for us an artistic principle; Linnaeus [the eighteenth-century botanist and taxonomist] is as much an artist as Einstein.

*Chevrier* There is a very strong idea behind this, which is the idea of comparative anatomy.

*Hilla Becher* Yes, absolutely. Most of the time you learn by

7. Charles Sheeler

comparing things to other things you already know ... In our work, we put together things that look similar, that have the same function ...

*Chevrier* Do you feel in some ways as close to scientists as to artists?

*Bernd Becher* No, I don't think so. There are many people who do research in the field of industrial archaeology but they go in other directions. Things that can be interesting for technical historians, certain machines for example, are not visually interesting for us.

*Chevrier* The title of your first book of photographs was *Anonymous Sculptures* (1970), but this idea of sculpture doesn't appear in your more recent work. Why has this reference to sculpture disappeared?

*Hilla Becher* The reference to sculpture in our first book should not be taken too seriously. It was intended to provoke people into thinking about it. The publisher proposed this title, and we thought it could be a nice provocation.

*Chevrier* Yes, but was it taken seriously ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, too seriously, and we didn't like it, we thought it was not honest, and we added the subtitle 'A typology of technical buildings'.

*Chevrier* Is there any idea of redemption in your work as in, for example, the work of the American photographer Robert Adams?

*Bernd Becher* I was born in a small village, where the principal activities were iron-ore mining and steel making. The majority of the people living there were Calvinists but my parents were Catholic. I looked at all my neighbours, these Calvinists going to their little church, and it seemed a bit ridiculous ... They were so industrious, so attached to their daily routine, and it seemed to me that even the landscape and the houses there looked exactly like them. These people were on the border between still being farmers and becoming industrial workers; their houses had a bourgeois façade but the back looked like a farm. Exactly like them.

*Chevrier* I don't see how you can associate this with the idea of redemption. Was it a redemption for you?

*Bernd Becher* Yes, the fact of photographing this de-dramatized the situation ...

*Chevrier* So you do not want to be dramatic?

*Hilla Becher* No. You can't put all your feelings into the images; on the contrary you have to remove your feelings.

*Chevrier* If you think like this, you must feel very uncomfortable next to artists such as the new expressionists.

*Hilla Becher* But there are many possibilities in the world, many ways of expressing yourself. We are not very interested in self-expression; this does not work well in photography.

*Chevrier* Are you interested in Flaubert's work? It seems to me that your sensibility is very close to his...

*Bernd Becher* Yes, I've just read *Madame Bovary* for the third time ...

*Chevrier* What do you find in Flaubert?

*Bernd Becher* Well, it's very exact, very factual, and there is also a certain irony ...

*Chevrier* The artefacts you photograph provide an interesting metaphor; they are at once both strong and

fragile, like human beings. Is there a process of identification, as with Flaubert, who could say 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi', even though he preserved a complete distance from the subject ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, absolutely. You can find the same attitude in Truman Capote, whom I also like very much, especially *In Cold Blood*. What is interesting is his way of being absolutely distant and yet completely involved. If you get very involved in something, you have to find a way to distance yourself. You have to be honest with your object and to make sure that you don't destroy it with your subjectivity, and yet remain involved at the same time.

*Chevrier* You also spoke of irony, but I think there is more humour than irony in your work ...

*Hilla Becher* Yes, irony already implies a judgement and this is precisely what we want to avoid. We should not judge now. All these objects still belong to our time, to our society, although they may sometimes seem distant; therefore, many misjudgements are possible. All we can do now is just describe them visually, and not yet verbally.

1 Carl Andre, 'A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher', *Artforum*, 11:4, December, 1972; reprinted in this volume, 227.

Bernd and Hilla Becher, conversation with Jean-François Chevrier, James Lingwood and Thomas Struth, 21 January 1989, in Jean-François Chevrier and James Lingwood [ed.], *Another Objectivity/Un'altra obiettività* [Milan: Idea Books, 1989] 57-62; revised translation, 2003.

## Lynne COHEN

### Interview with Ramon Tio Bellido [1992]

*Ramon Tio Bellido* Why do you use photography as your chosen means of expression?

*Lynne Cohen* The answer is easy. I was at university making sculpture when Minimalism and conceptual art were very much in the air ... People declared art to be dead, meaning painting was dead and there existed a general movement towards making art that was more political and conceptual.

Photography in that sort of intellectual environment seemed somehow to offer a more 'honest' means of expression and appeared less of a commodity than the sculpture I was involved in making at that time. Apart from being more direct, photography provided great precision. It recorded elements that were already out there just waiting to be 'framed', and did this without extraneous 'interferences'. The possibility of interference or even its very existence only dawned on me later when I realized that the very act of choosing what to put into the photograph, of framing the image, constituted an interference and an intrusion in itself.

Nevertheless, photography represented a way of not backing down in front of reality, of not closing a door on society. It served to avoid the traditional isolation of the artist alone in the studio.

*Bellido* Thus, you chose photography more for



psychological and technical reasons than for its intrinsic properties of being able to reproduce and record, aspects that have been confirmed throughout the almost parallel evolution of the fine arts and photography.

**Cohen** Let me clear up one or two points. Firstly, I came to photography with no specific notions of its history, techniques or theory. I approached photography in the light of my interest in art history and as a practising artist. Any predispositions that may have existed were closer to Duchamp’s conception of the medium than Cartier-Bresson’s. In a funny way, I was drawn by the idea that everything could be conceived as a ‘readymade’ and I naturally hoped to develop this point of view further. Turning now to photography as a craft and mastering its manipulation, I must admit that it was surprising to discover just how quickly one could learn when compared to the effort required in making my first sculptures. In only two weeks it was possible to obtain reasonable results! What matters most in fact, depends on your mind’s eye and how ideas are exploited ...

**Bellido** What you have just said seems to be particularly relevant to the long-running debate on the relationship between fine art and photography. I sometimes wonder if the importance we accord to certain types of photograph is not related to a deep-rooted nostalgia for pictorial representation; the power to imitate, mimic reality, convey light and shadow. Faced with this, you immediately respond by declaring that the most important elements of a picture are its subject matter and the way it is shown, or in other words the photographer’s ‘point of view’ in its largest sense. Alternatively, photography can be appreciated for its ‘instantaneous’ quality, its capacity to seize an image or moment. Your photography however does not fall into this category. It is a genuine ‘reflexive space’. Before considering the essential question of how you select your subject matter I would like you to say a few words on the various methods you employ as well as the transactions and exchanges which occur with other people when you take your photographs.

**Cohen** All photographs have a minimalist side to them; they are the ideal medium for making us believe that what we see in them is true. I feel one should exploit this aspect as far as possible. The subjects I photograph – in my case it is often difficult to separate subject from final effect – render this operation easier and the actual process of photographing is in itself highly orthodox.

I might spend a whole month photographing but then only select one of those pictures. It is often forgotten that photography is not limited to simply reproducing the same picture *ad libitum* from one single negative but that more than ever with the ease of today’s technology, it involves taking innumerable pictures beforehand. Thus the art of photography increasingly relies on a process of selection. Its ‘instantaneous’ nature evoked in your question, oddly enough has always seemed to produce pictures that were too unlikely and contrived, which is why I have never attempted to work in that idiom.

A central element of my work consists of interaction, inevitably introduced when one takes pictures of places normally hidden from the public’s gaze. Permission to photograph may involve long and arduous negotiations,

especially as can be imagined in the case of such a series as that depicting the military target ranges. My essential aim is to preserve a feeling of ‘privacy’, suggesting that unless a member of the public visits these places for a specific purpose, their existence otherwise goes unnoticed. They are closed spaces entered only through the artifice of the camera’s eye. Therefore any interfering factors must be avoided and people find themselves excluded from my pictures, since the spaces are then closed to the outside world. Sophie Calle’s works springs to mind in this context. She manages to instill a sensation of unease and psychological threat by the mere suggestion of half-open windows and doors left ajar. It is true that a certain distance exists between camera and subject. Through the artifice of photography, I exploit this distance not by simply trying to banish it but as a means of *cleaning* the conceptual field of reality I want to record. The scene’s sense remains unaltered therefore unless I choose the way it fills my camera frame and consequently, though everything is still the same, certain things may go unnoticed. Incidentally, I was greatly amused by one critic recently who thought the work consisted of artificially constructed situations, a practice which would of course constitute a total contradiction of the essence of my work [...]

**Bellido** If you have no wish to use photography as a discipline with its own separate history, do you then consider it more as a means than an end?

**Cohen** I have no desire to free myself from the weight of photographic tradition and fully appreciate Walter Benjamin’s analysis of Atget’s photos when he described them as pictures of ‘the scene of a crime’. Nevertheless, photography is important to me because of its physical presence, forcing me to become involved physically and directly. In fact, photography is an artifice with no room for trickery [...]

Lynne Cohen interviewed by Ramon Tio Bellido, *Lynne Cohen: L'endroit du decor/Lost and Found* [Limousin: Fonds regional d’art Contemporain, Limousin, 1992] 92-95.

## Joseph KOSUTH 1979 [1979]

### PART TWO

*The questioning of the fictions of ‘source’ and ‘origin’ is made through an attention to the reality of language, to forms of the articulation of division and difference, to structures (understanding structures as ‘that which puts in place an experience for the subject whom it includes’). Our concept of the author and that of Man, of which the former is a particular expression, are interdependent with an elision of that reality.*

— Stephen Heath

Although photography has had a direct participatory influence in the experimental art of this century, its most direct effect on art practice began at the beginning of the 1960s, with work such as Rauschenberg’s which mixed the dominant style of painting at the time (Abstract

Expressionism) with photographic imagery. As well, there is Warhol’s and other ‘pop’ artists’ use of photo silkscreens in ways which were less composed, and less painterly. My use of photography (in works from 1965 such as *One and Three Chairs*) came about through an attempt to make work which didn’t signify that it was art *a priori*, because of its form. Since I saw the nature of art to be *questioning* the nature of art, I felt the form the work took shouldn’t end the questioning process, but begin it. As I said at the time, a painting – which brings with it a media-defined tradition – says *this* is the nature of art, that magical aura and belief system of the painting and the fictive space that it constructs. So the photographs used were always clean, cool, factual, almost scientific – as uncomposed as I could manage, and always taken by someone else, in order to make clear that they were art in their *use* (in *relation*) not through the aesthetic choice, composition or craftsmanship. Photography was usable as a device because it could be employed to present a matter-of-fact presentation of the world (the ‘objective’ detachment of science) while the photography itself, as a cultural object, was pervasive to the point of being ‘naturalized’ as a given part of the world. I could still, at that point, retrieve the photograph from the sphere of its more prevalent pragmatic role (as a ‘neutral’ device) and engage it in a signifying activity, devoid as it was of any painterly associations. An important point to remember here is that photography, as a medium, is employed as a *means* – no more than paint, photography cannot be considered as an end in itself; it is for this reason that such work begins what some have referred to as the *postmodern* period. ‘Fine Art’ photography has long suffered from the conservatism which plagued painting; attempting to make its technical definition a modernist virtue, it permitted formal invention only to the extent that it didn’t rupture its conceptual isolation.

The perpetual drive towards ‘fine art’ acceptability seemed to foreclose any possibility of escape from its captivity within the Realism/Modernism controversy; while it seemed to repress its ‘modernity’ it seemed doomed to receive acceptance in the terms which painting was attempting to leave behind. It’s ironically that very isolation which permitted me (and others) to find photography a useful, and *non-artistic* tool. The rate however at which photography gained acceptance within the ‘avant-garde’ after its use by artists in the early 1970s not only altered the reading of *any* photograph used within an art context (as photography accumulated new uses as art, it became associated with ‘avant-garde’ practice) but also meant that the barriers between ‘fine art’ and photography were finally down. What that activity beginning to be called ‘conceptual art’ in fact did was to convey a kind of conceptual respectability to an activity which, labouring as it did as a media-defined activity, was perceived as craft. The recent ‘recuperation’ of ‘Photography’ as another ‘fine art’ medium is part of the process of *re-structuring* which is the cultural by-product of our economic machine. One aim of a practice engaged with alterations of meaning (and thereby perception) is the rupture of the structures of fixed meanings and the interdependent sets of separation which they produce. By



contrast, what the autonomy of painting suggests is that there is a ‘real’ world of which it is separate; the postulation of its own ‘subjectively’ constructed artifice (that’s art) implies that the rest of the world as given is naturally real. Of course, the attempts to constrain photography as a modernist practice cannot hope for the kind of autonomy with which painting is associated – the nature of photography (as we have discussed) makes that impossible. However, one thing has become clear: the institutionalization of Modernism is the structure which – with painting continuing to function as its causal nexus – exerts a kind of centrifugal force through which it maintains a system of changes within fixed meanings. All the while, of course, it adheres to this structure any artistic activity not content with the signifying implications of *other* economic bases than that complex of art criticism, art history, and the art market. So, photography, as well as ‘conceptual art’, became assimilated into a structure which re-makes it in its own likeness; rather than being eclipsed, painting re-emerges as a contender within yet again another modernist battle. Beyond that false controversy which is its own death-throes, at the climax of that last modernist morality play, painting offers itself as its own ‘alternative’.

### PART THREE

*‘Reality’, that is, needs to be understood not as an absolute and immutable given but as a production within which representation will depend on (and dialectically, contribute to) what ... Althusser has described as ‘practical ideology’, a complex formation of montages of notion, representations, images, and modes of action, gestures, attitudes, the whole ensemble functioning as practical norms which govern the concrete stance of men in relation to the objects and problems of their social and individual existence; in short, the lived relation of men to their world. In this sense, the ‘realistic’ is not substantial but formal (a process of significant ‘fictions’) ... [in regard to art, then] it may be described in the notion of the vraisemblable of a particular society, the generally received picture of what may be regarded as ‘realistic’ ... Evidently, this vraisemblable is not recognized as such, but rather as, precisely, ‘Reality’: its function is the naturalization of that reality articulated by a society as the ‘Reality’ and its success, is the degree to which it remains unknown as a form...*

– Stephen Heath

*The visual receiving system in its untrained state has only very limited powers. We are perhaps deceived by the fact that the eye is a sort of camera. Contrary to what we might suppose, the eye and brain do not simply record in a sort of photographic manner the pictures that pass in front of us. The brain is not by any means a simple recording system like a film ... Many of our affairs are conducted on the assumption that our sense organs provide us with an accurate record independent of ourselves. What we are now beginning to see is that much of this is an illusion, that we have to learn to see the world as we do ... In some sense we literally create the world we speak about ... The point is to grasp that we cannot speak simply as if there is a world*

*around us of which our senses give true information. In trying to speak about what the world is like we must remember all the time that what we see or what we say depends on what we have learned; we ourselves come into the process.*

– J. Z. Young<sup>1</sup>

Photography, as invention, was both art and science. The view it gave us of the world was in some measure acceptable because it was a product of our vision of the world; and it did so as part of that same process which seemed to impart ‘truth’: science. It is this suggested ‘scientific detachment’ which lends to photography a sense of *objectivity*. Unlike the marks of the painting, the photo seems to organize its ‘opinions’ *in relation to the world*; even when the photos have clearly been manipulated, the ‘opinions’ seem to have all the more force, with the suggested ‘participation of the world’ articulating that ‘opinion’ as a difference.

In a sense it is a construction of the ‘unreal’ by the ‘real’. By ‘unreal’ I mean that which is made visible through articulation and separates itself from the *vraisemblable*, the ‘seamless web’ which culture constructs; it is the act of *structure breaking*, which ‘making’ is. The ‘real’ here means *blindness*, it is that structured world of given situations which organize us politically within an ideologized ‘sanity’.

The photograph, then, as an artifact which signals a kind of break from the cultural belief system of which painting is a part, speaks of more than itself. In ‘making from’ photographic culture one constructs from the world as presented – not simply as ‘content’ *within* the photos (though, as I mentioned above, this tends to connect and make concrete) but what one is using is a signifying system of relations. This system, as part of the *vraisemblable*, seems to construct meaning ‘naturally’; I mean by that, of course, that use of photography in advertising, the news media, ‘domestic culture’, and so on which increasingly is the cultural format of intersubjective space in our society. It is in relation to this intersubjective space that one must have effect, if one is ever to have any effect at all. The shift away from the ‘aura’ and the preciousness of objects towards an understanding of the creative process as a kind of mediation of meaning through an intervention and manipulation in the ‘real’ world – the ‘real’ being not simply ideologized space and the cultural ‘materials’ with which it is constructed, but also the nature of the play of relations with which it maintains its equilibrium. This might suggest a resolution of the conflict between ‘the avant-garde’ and mass culture. The last of which, Adorno commented, ‘Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up.’

1 From *Doubt and Certainty: A Biologist’s Reflections on the Brain* [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951].

Joseph Kosuth, ‘1979’, *Symposium über Fotografie* [cat.] [Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlag anstalt, 1979] 37–44; reprinted in Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993] 186–90.

## Jean BAUDRILLARD

### For Illusion Is Not the Opposite of Reality [1998]

Photography is our exorcism. Primitive society had its masks, bourgeois society its mirrors. We have our images. We believe we can overpower the world with technology. But through technology, the world has imposed itself on us and the surprise effect generated by that reversal has been considerable.

You think you photograph a particular scene for the pleasure it gives. In fact it’s the scene that wants to be photographed. You’re merely an extra in the production. The photographing subject is just the agent of the ironic appearance of things. The image is the prime medium for this gigantic advertising campaign which the world lays on for itself, which objects lay on for themselves – overwhelming our imaginations, forcing our passions out into the world, breaking the mirror we held up – hypocritically as it happens – to capture them.

The miracle today is that appearances, which were long reduced to voluntary servitude but have now gained their independence, are turning around on us, turning against us, through the very technology we use to drive them out. They now come from somewhere else, from their own place, from the heart of their banality; they are bursting in on us from everywhere, joyously multiplying on their own. The joy of taking photographs is an objective delight. Whoever has not experienced the objective rapture of the image one morning in town or desert will never in any way understand the pataphysical refinement of the world.

If something wants to be photographed, that is precisely because it does not want to yield up its meaning; it does not want to be reflected upon. It wants to be seized directly, violated on the spot, illuminated in its detail. If something wants to become an image, this is not so as to last, but in order to disappear more effectively. And the photographing subject is a good medium only if s/he joins in the game, exorcizes his/her own gaze and judgement, revels in his/her own absence.

It falls to the very grain of the details of the object, the play of lines and light, to signify this interruption of the subject – and hence the irruption of the world – which gives the photograph its quality of suspense. Through the image the world asserts its discontinuity, its fragmentation, its artificial instantaneousness. In this sense, the photographic image is the purest, because it does not simulate time or movement and keeps to the most rigorous unrealism. All other forms of image (cinema, video, computer-generated etc.) are merely attenuated forms of the pure image and of its break with reality.

The degree of intensity of the image matches the degree of its denial of the real, its invention of another scene. To make an image of an object is to strip the object of all its dimensions one by one: weight, relief, smell, depth, time, continuity and, of course, meaning. This



THE MAGIC OF  
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disembodiment is the price to be paid for that power of fascination which the image acquires, the price for its becoming a medium of pure objectality, become transparent to a subtler form of seduction.

To add back all these dimensions one by one – relief, movement, emotion, ideas, meaning and desire – in order to produce something better, more real – in other words, something more effectively simulated – is, where images are concerned, utter nonsense. And technology itself is hoist here with its own petard.

The desire to take photographs may perhaps arise from the following observation: looked at in general, from the angle of meaning, the world is distinctly disappointing. In detail, taken unawares, it is always perfectly self-evident.

The dizzying impact of the perpetual detail. The magical eccentricity of the detail. In photographs, things are conjoined by a technical operation which matches the way they interconnect in their commonplace reality. An image for another image and a photograph for another photograph are simply this: a contiguity of fragments. There is no ‘view of the world’ here, no ‘approach’ to things: merely the refraction of the world, in its detail, on equal terms.

The absence of the world in each detail, like the absence of the subject which shows in every feature of a face. You can achieve such an illumination of detail by mental gymnastics or by a subtle use of the senses too. But, here, technology brings it about as smoothly as can be. Perhaps it is a trap.

Objects are such that, in themselves, their disappearance changes them. It is in this sense that they deceive us, that they generate illusion. But it is in this sense too that they are faithful to themselves, and we must be faithful to them: in their minute detail, in their exact figuration, in the sensuous illusion of their appearance and connectedness. For illusion is not the opposite of reality, but another more subtle reality which enwraps the former kind in the sign of its disappearance.

Every photographed object is merely the trace left behind by the disappearance of all the rest. It is an almost perfect crime, an almost total resolution of the world, which merely leaves the illusion of a particular object shining forth, the image of which then becomes an impenetrable enigma. Starting out from this radical exception, you have an unimpeded view on the world.

It isn’t a question of producing; it’s all in the art of disappearing. Only what comes into being in the mode of disappearance is truly other. And yet that disappearance has to leave traces, has to be the place where the Other, the world or the object appears. This is indeed the only way for the Other to exist: on the basis of your own disappearance. ‘We shall be your favourite disappearing act!’

The only profound desire is object desire (including desire for the sexual object). Not, in other words, desire for what one lacks, nor even for that which (or the person who) lacks me (which is more subtle), but for the person who does not lack me, for that which can quite happily exist without me. It’s the one who doesn’t lack me who is the Other. That is radical otherness.

Desire is always the desire for that alien perfection at the same time as the desire to wreck or destroy it. You only

get excited about those things whose perfection and impunity you want both to share and to destroy.

To take photographs is not to take the world for an object, but to make it an object, to exhume its otherness buried beneath its alleged reality, to bring it forth as a strange attractor, and pin down that strange attraction in an image.

It is, basically, to become again ‘a thing among things’ – all foreign to each other, but collusive, all opaque, but familiar. To become this rather than a universe of subjects who are opposed, and transparent, to each other.

It is photographs which bring us closest to a universe without images, or in other words to pure appearance.

The dramatic quality of the photographic image comes from the struggle between the subject’s resolve to impose itself in its discontinuity and immediacy. In the best case, the object wins and the photographic image is an image of a fractal world which has no summation, which is contained in no equation. In this way it differs from art and cinema, which, by way of ideas, vision or movement, always tend towards a totalizing pattern.

Against the philosophy of the subject and the contemplating gaze – of stepping back from the world in order to grasp it – the anti-philosophy of the object, of the disconnectedness of objects, of the random succession of part-objects and details. Like musical syncopation or the movement of particles.

Photographs are what bring us closest to flies, to their compound eyes and their jerky flight.

In order for the object to be grasped, the subject has to relinquish his hold. But this turns out to be the subject’s last adventure, his last chance – the chance of a dispossession of self in the reverberation of a world in which he henceforth occupies the unseen site of representation. The object, for its part, has much greater scope for play, since, not having passed through the mirror stage, it is not dealing with its image, identity or likeness – since, stripped of desire and having nothing to say, it eludes commentary and interpretation.

If you manage to capture something of this dissimilarity and this singularity, something changes in so far as the ‘real’ world and, indeed, the reality principle itself, are concerned.

Rather than having the presence and representation of the subject foisted upon the object, the point is to have the object become the site of the absence and disappearance of the subject. And the object here can be a situation, a quality of light or a living creature. The key thing is that there should be a fracture in this excessively well-crafted machinery of representation (and the moral and philosophical dialectic attaching to it) and that, through a pure coming-to-pass of the image, the world should burst forth as insoluble self-evidence.

It is a mirror reversal. Up to now the subject was the mirror of representation. The object was merely the content. In this case it is the object which says: ‘I shall be your mirror’.

Photography is obsessive, temperamental, ecstatic and narcissistic in character. It is a solitary activity. The photographic image is discontinuous, selective, unpredictable and irreparable, like the state of things at

any given moment. Any touching-up, second thoughts or staging assumes an abominably aesthetic character. The solitude of the photographic subject in space and time is correlative of the solitude of the object and its temperamental silence.

The object must be fixed with an intense, immobilizing gaze. It is not the object of the photograph who must pose, but the photographer who must hold his breath in order to create a blank region in time and in his body. But who must also refrain mentally from breathing, and empty his mind, so that the mental surface is as virgin as the film. Who must not see himself as a representative being, but as an object working in its own cycle, without any concern for *mise-en-scène*, in a kind of frenzied circumscribing of self and object. There is in this an enchantment which one can also find in playing – the enchantment of passing beyond your own image and being delivered up to a kind of happy fatality. It is you and it isn’t you who are playing. In this way you create a void within and around yourself, by a kind of initiatory confinement. You no longer project yourself into an image – you produce the world as a singular event, without commentary.

The photograph isn’t an image in real time. It retains something of the negative, something of the suspense of the negative. It is this slight time-lag which allows the image to exist as such, as an illusion different from the real world. It is this time-lag which affords it the discreet charm of a previous life, which digital or video images do not have, occurring as they do in ‘real time’. In computer-generated images the real has already disappeared. And for that reason they are not, strictly speaking, images.

Photography produces a kind of thunderstruck effect, a form of suspense and phenomenal immobility which interrupts the precipitation of events. The ‘freeze-frame’ is a freezing of the world. However, that suspense is never definitive, since photographs refer on one to another and the image’s only destiny is to be an image. And yet each is distinct from all the others.

It is through this kind of distinction and secret complicity that photography has recovered the aura it had lost with the coming of cinema. But cinema too can recover this specific quality of the image – which is both complicit with, and apparently foreign to, narration – having its own static intensity, though fired with all the energy of movement, crystallizing a whole course of events in a still image by a principle of condensation which runs counter to the principle of high dilution and dispersion of all our current images. In Godard, for example.

It is rare for a piece of writing to present itself with the same brute self-evidence, instantaneity or magic as a shadow, a quality of light or the grain of some material. And yet, in Nabokov or Gombrowicz, for example, writing sometimes recovers something of the material, objectal autonomy of things without qualities, something of the erotic potency and supernatural disorder of a meaningless world.

Genuine stillness is not the immobility of a static body, but the stillness of a weight on the end of a pendulum that has barely stopped swinging and is still vibrating imperceptibly. It is the stillness of time in the instant (the



instant of photographic ‘instantaneity’, behind which there is always the idea of movement, but only the idea), the image being there to keep movement at a respectful distance, without ever showing it, which destroys the illusion. It is this stillness things dream of, it is this stillness we dream of. It is this the cinema lingers over increasingly today, in its nostalgia for slow-motion and the freeze-frame, as the highest point of drama.

The same goes for silence. And the paradox of television will no doubt have been that it has restored all the charm of the silence of the image.

The silence of the photograph. One of its most precious qualities, unlike cinema and television, which always have to have silence imposed on them – though no-one ever succeeds in this. The silence of the image, which requires (or should require!) no commentary. But the silence, too, of the object, which it wrests from the deafening hurly-burly of the real world. Whatever the noise and the violence around them, photographs return objects to a state of stillness and silence. In the midst of urban hustle and bustle, they recreate the equivalent of the desert, a phenomenal isolation. They are the only way of passing through cities in silence, of moving through the world in silence.

Photography conveys the state of the world in our absence. The lens explores that absence. Even in emotionally charged faces and bodies, it is still this absence it explores. The best photographs, then, are of those people and things for whom the other does not exist, or no longer exists – primitive peoples, down-and-outs, objects. Only the inhuman is photogenic. That is the price to be paid for reciprocal stupefaction to come into play, and hence for there to be collusion with the world – and of the world with us.

Human beings are too sentimental. Even animals and plants are too sentimental. Only objects have no sexual or sentimental aura. So you don’t have to violate them in cold blood to photograph them. Having no problems of resemblance, they are marvellously self-identical. By using technology, you can only add to the magical self-evidence of their indifference and the innocence of their *mise-en-scène*, and hence can only bring out what they personify: the objective illusion, and the subjective disillusionment, of the world.

It is very difficult to photograph individuals or faces. It is impossible to bring someone into focus photographically when you are so little able to get them into focus psychologically. Human beings are sites of such *mise-en-scène*, such complex (de)construction, that the lens strips them of their character in spite of themselves. They are so laden with meaning that it is almost impossible to separate them from that meaning to discover the secret form of their absence.

They say there is always a moment when the most commonplace – or the most masked – person reveals their secret identity. But what is interesting is their secret alterity. And rather than seeking out the identity beneath the mask, one should seek out the mask beneath the identity – the face which haunts us and deflects us from our identity – the masked divinity which in fact haunts each one of us for a moment, at some time or other.

For objects, savages, beasts and primitives, otherness is sure, singularity is sure. A beast has no identity, but for all that it is not alienated – it is foreign to itself and to its own ends. As a result it has that charm of beings foreign to their image, but consequently enjoying an organic familiarity with their bodies and with all others. If you find both this connivance and this foreign-ness, then you are approaching a poetic quality of otherness – the quality of dreams and ‘paradoxical’ (REM) sleep, identity merging here with deep sleep.

Objects, like primitive peoples, are a length ahead of us in the photogenic stakes. Being free, from the outset, of psychology and introspection, they retain the whole of their seduction in the face of the camera. Being free of representation, they retain their entire presence. So far as the subject is concerned, matters are much less certain, as the subject most often succeeds – is this the price he pays for his intelligence or the mark of his stupidity? – in denying his otherness, even though it costs him enormous efforts, and in existing only within the limits of his identity. What is needed, then, is to make him a little more enigmatic to himself and to make human beings in general a little stranger (or more alien) to each other. It is a question not of treating them as subjects, but of turning them into objects, into something different – that is to say treating them as what they are.

‘People have to be grasped in their relation to themselves, that is to say, in their silence’. (Henri Cartier-Bresson).

We base our lives, in large part, on the machinery of will and representation, but the real story goes on elsewhere. This is not to deny that everyone is there with their wills and desires, but their decisions and thoughts secretly come from elsewhere and it is in this very strange interference that their originality lies. It does not lie in the mirrors in which they recognize themselves nor in the lens which wants to recognize them. Traps are always based on resemblance and the greatness of an image lies in its ability to defy all resemblance, to seek elsewhere that which comes from elsewhere.

There was a time when the confrontation with the lens was dramatic, when the image itself was still a thing of risk, a magical and dangerous reality. Everything expressed an absence of complaisance towards the image (whether through fear, defiance or pride) and this gave any early-century bourgeois or peasant, surrounded by his family, the same wild, deathly seriousness as a primitive. Their being is immobilized, their eyes dilate before the image; they spontaneously take on the stature of dead men. As a result, the lens itself becomes a savage thing. Promiscuity between the photographer and his object is entirely excluded (the opposite of present practice). The distance between the two cannot be bridged and the photograph produced is the technical equivalent of the radical exoticism Segalen wrote of. This lends the photographic event genuine nobility, like a distant echo of the primal clash of cultures.

In the heroic period, the photographic relationship is a duel. And it really is a matter of life and death. The corpse-like immobility of the object, the lack of expression (though not of character) is as powerful as the mobility of

the lens, which it counterbalances. The destiny they have in their heads, their mental universes imprint themselves directly onto the film – an effect as tangible today as it was a century ago when the photograph was taken. It is we who capture the savage or primitive in our lens, but it is s/he who imagines us.

This death or disappearance, which in the heroic age was the virtual death of the object, is always present, according to Barthes, at the anthropological heart of the image. The ‘punctum’: that figure of nothingness, absence and unreality which stands opposed to the ‘studium’, the whole context of meaning and references. It is the nothingness at the heart of the image which lends it its magic and its power and which is most often driven out by significations. In the festivals, galleries, museums and exhibitions the images teem with messages, testimony, aesthetic sentimentality, and stereotypes. This is a prostitution of the image to what it signifies, to what it seeks to communicate – the image taken hostage, either by media operators or news managers. In the profusion of our images death and violence are everywhere, but as things of pathos, ideology and spectacle. There is nothing of the ‘punctum’ here, that fateful trait or mechanism internal to the image which has now been driven out of it.

Instead of the image symbolically enfolding death, death enfolds the image (in the outward form of the exhibition, the museum or the cultural necropolises which glorify photographic art).

The image is off-camera, off-stage. Photographic *mise-en-scène*, whether it be a staging internal to the image or a staging by the institution is a nonsense. Once the hallucination which should properly inhabit the image is buried beneath commentary, walled up in aesthetic celebration and condemned to the plastic surgery of the museum, it is finished. This is no longer even a question of ‘punctum’ versus ‘studium’. What we have here is quite simply the medium in circulation. And the fundamentally dangerous form of the image gives way to the mere cultural circulation of masterpieces.

What I bemoan is the aestheticization of photography, its having become one of the Fine Arts, culture having taken it to its bosom. The photographic image, by its technical essence, came from somewhere beyond, or before, aesthetics, and by that token constitutes a substantial revolution in our mode of representation. The irruption of photography throws art itself into question in its aesthetic monopoly of the image. Now, today, things have turned around: it is art which is swallowing up photography and not the other way about.

Photography belongs very much to another dimension, which is not, strictly speaking, aesthetic. It is something like the dimension of *trompe-l’oeil*, which runs through the history of art but remains virtually indifferent to its twists and turns. *Trompe-l’oeil* is only apparently realistic. It is in fact linked to the self-evidence of the world, with such meticulous likeness that it becomes magical. *Trompe-l’oeil*, like photography, preserves something of the magical status of the image and hence something of the radical illusion of the world. It is an instinctive, irreducible form, closer to the origin of representation, the throes of representation – linked to the appearance and

the self-evidence of the world, but to a deceptive self-evidence—and hence opposed to any realist vision, and, even today, valid not so much in terms of judgement and taste as for its sheer fascination.

By dint of the non-realist play with technique, and by its absolute stillness, its silence, its excision of objects from the world, its phenomenological reduction of movement and, in some cases, of colour, the photograph is the purest and most artificial image. It isn't beautiful, it's worse. And it's as such that it assumes the force of an object in a world in which the aesthetic principle is in fact petering out.

It's technics which gives the photograph its originality. It's through technicity that our world reveals itself to be radically non-objective. It is, paradoxically, the so-called objective lens of the camera which reveals the unobjectivity of the world, that little something which will not be resolved by analysis or resemblance.

It is technics which takes us beyond resemblance, to the heart of the *trompe-l'oeil* of reality. In so doing, it also transforms the vision we have of technics. This becomes now the site of a double game, the magnifying mirror of illusion and forms. There is a collusion between technical equipment and the world, a convergence between an objective technics and the very potency of the object. Photography might be said to be the art of slipping into this collusion, not to control the process but to play on it and to show that the die is not cast irrevocably.

The world in itself resembles nothing. As concept and discourse it relates to many other things – as pure object, it is unidentifiable.

The photographic operation is a kind of reflex or automatic writing of the self-evidence of the world, which is not self-evident at all.

In the generic illusion of the image, the problem of the real no longer arises. It is effaced by its very movement, which passes immediately and spontaneously beyond true and false, beyond real and unreal, beyond good and evil.

The image is not a medium for which we have to find the proper use. It is what it is and it is beyond all our moral considerations. It is by its essence immoral, and the world's becoming-image is an immoral process. It is up to us to escape our representation and to become ourselves the immoral vehicle of the image. Up to us to become objects again, and to become once again other in a seductive relation to the world.

To make way for the silent complicity between object and objective lens, between appearances and technology, between the physical quality of light and the metaphysical complexity of the technical apparatus, without bringing in either vision or meaning.

For it is the object which sees us, the object which dreams us. It is the world which reflects us, it is the world which thinks us. This is the basic rule.

The magic of photography is that it is the object which does all the work. Photographers will never admit this and will argue that all the originality lies in their inspiration and their photographic interpretation of the world. As a result they take photographs which are either bad or too good, confusing their subjective vision with the reflex miracle of the photographic act.

Jean Baudrillard, 'For illusion is not the opposite of

reality...', *Photographies 1985-1998* [Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1999], 129-42.



# TRACES OF TRACES

Photography has been central to the

artistic exploration of the trace. The performance and process art of Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Ana Mendieta, Bruce Nauman, Giuseppe Penone, Hannah Wilke and others exemplified art's move in the 1970s towards ephemeral forms and the photograph as record. Since then other modes of the trace have been central to photography in art. Writings and statements by artists such as Anthony Hernandez, Richard Misrach and Sophie Ristelhueber, and writers such as Régis Durand and Ralph Rugoff, reflect upon the function of the trace as a mark of the real within the photograph as document.

## Vito ACCONCI Notes on My Photographs, 1969–1970 [1988]

[ ... ] These were my first pieces, in an art context, that had a place in a gallery or museum. The last pieces I did, in a poetry context, were 'poetry events': the occasion was a poetry reading – I used props (an audio recorder, the walls of the room or the chairs in that room) – the attempt was not to read from a page but to read the room. The first pieces I did, in an art context, were activities in the street, activities that only I knew I was performing; some of these were keyed into a performance situation – all of them could be documented later, and hence made public. Once they were documented, either through words or photographs, they could be shown on the walls of a gallery or museum; but the documents were only souvenirs, after the fact, whose proper place was in the pages of a book or magazine. These photographic pieces, on the other hand, were first-hand information: their only existence was as photographs – the activity of a photograph wasn't an end in itself, the activity was performed only to cause a photograph. I wonder if, in the back of my mind, there wasn't the urge to prove myself as an artist, prove myself a serious artist, make my place in the art world: in order to do this, I had to make a picture, since a picture was what a gallery and museum was meant to hold (all the while, of course, I was claiming that I was denying that standard, rejecting it, I was claiming that my work couldn't, shouldn't, have the finished quality of a photograph; my work was an event and a process that couldn't, shouldn't, be stilled by a camera and hung up on a gallery wall – all the while I was claiming that my work was meant to subvert the closure of museum and gallery). These

photographic pieces, then, might have been the first steps in taming, domesticating, an agent whose proper method should have been that of a wanderer.

These pieces were ways to put my work (put myself) up on the wall; these pieces were ways to push myself up against the wall. On the one hand, they were a way to make something like a landscape, a mural, a backdrop as if on a stage or in a movie; on the other hand, they were a way to drive myself into a dead-end position.

These pieces need to be seen all together; they had to be done all together, quickly, in a short time period. There probably should have been more of them: the scheme they imply demanded exercising every part of my body, every activity my body could do – there should have been an exhaustion of bodily activities, a draining of behaviour. On the other hand, there might already be too many; or maybe it has to seem that way, it has to seem as if there's just too much – it has to appear as if I'm grasping at straws, I have to keep searching for possible activities, for more and more activities, I have to find activities that almost don't exist. It was as if there was so much activity so that the body could be exhausted, so that the body no longer existed, so that the body drifted out of the body and into the environment. So maybe this wasn't exhaustion at all: rather, the body existed only as it blended into the environment – the body was growing up, out of privacy and become public [ ... ]

The early photographs suggest that I might have side-stepped this process, taken a short cut directly into the street and the park. but then those places might have remained stilled, as if in a photograph; or they might have been distant places, as if in a movie, places held up in front of the eye, places that could only be desired. I had to stop photographing them so that I could learn to touch.

Vito Acconci, 'Notes on My Photographs, 1969–1970',

Artist's statement, New York, January 1988.

## Giuseppe PENONE Untitled Statement [1974]

A finger that touches a surface leaves an image corresponding to the points of contact. This operation is the result of a clear, precise pressure which generates the image. What gives rise to the sensation of pressure derives from the mechanical deformation of the skin tissue with respect to the surface that is the object of the pressure. There exists furthermore an intimate relationship between the 'points' sensitive to pressure and the hairs that participate in the process of deforming the tissues. Every sensation of pressure constitutes a model, with characteristics of space, time and intensity, which provides different images. These images form a map of the pressure points and correspond to the exploration, conducted point by point and in a systematic manner, of a sample area of skin (fingerprint). By enlarging a 'fingerprint' photographically, one obtains a clear image of the intensity of pressure exercised by the various points of the skin. By projecting the photographic image on a surface (a wall) and following *with graphite* the pattern of the 'fingerprint' in its different intensities of pressure, one obtains a faithful record of the pressure points of the skin surface. This affords the person who carries out the operation other types of pressure and cutaneous sensitivity. For instance, in the area of skin of the finger which is stimulated on contact with the stick of graphite, the sensation of pressure is repeated. The only variables are the point of stimulation and the size of the area of skin subjected to the contact. They *influence* the intensity of the sensation because of the prolonged action of the execution. Considering instead the role of the skin in the explication of its usual activity of transmitting information regarding objects and situations in the outside world, one



has in the graphic execution of the ‘fingerprint’ a complete identification of the material touched (the wall). In fact one exercises, in a particular way, a movement of the fingers which explore the surface (the wall) with the stick of graphite. The slight disturbances that are imparted to the area of skin affected transmit vibratory ‘waves of impact’ which bring the skin to a state of cutaneous excitement that makes it possible to make contact with the surface and to decipher the structure that characterizes it. To record graphically the photographic enlargement (of the fingerprint), one must continuously vary the pressure of the stick of graphite against the surface (the wall). The pressure, which initially was made on a small area of skin, becomes a complex phenomenon that involves, in a single unitary presence, many of the psychophysical structures of the person who carries out the operation. There exists, furthermore, a relationship between the initial operation (the fingerprint) and the final one (the transcription of the photographic image of the fingerprint). In fact, whereas the ‘fingerprint’ is a *total image* proportionate to the pressure exercised by the entire area of skin involved, the transcription of the enlargement of the fingerprint is a *total image* proportionate to the pressure exercised by the person in constructing the single details of the photographic image.

Giuseppe Penone, ‘Untitled Statement, 1974’, Germano Celant, *Giuseppe Penone* [Milan: Electa, 1989].

## Dan GRAHAM

### The Destroyed Room of Jeff Wall [1979]

*The Destroyed Room*, exhibited so that it faced the street within a gallery’s front window, and illuminated during both day and night, is a photograph of a specially constructed set. The central image is a bedroom whose bed has been partly overturned and ripped through the middle. The wallpaper is also ripped apart, and women’s clothes are scattered about the room in violent disarray. The walls of this room/stage set are an intense red, a redness which ‘makes the space simultaneously abstract (in its unrealness) as well as intensifying the sensuous, jewel-like romantic over-all atmosphere’.<sup>8</sup> Wall continues, ‘Red was mixed to match a tone I saw in reproductions of walls in Pompeii’s *Villa of Mysteries*, which were taken over by Neoclassicism as a colour of coolly controlled passion. Other references are to Romantic painting (Delacroix, for example, often uses this sense of red), and also to movies and soft porn’.

At the edges of the photograph the observer glimpses a studio wall through the door to the left of the set, and the rear windows of the studio through the window to the right. The imagery suggests a kind of erotic violence as well as the debasement of the (absent) ‘eternal female’, but at the same time, in Wall’s words, ‘attempts to criticize the pleasure which has become ideologically attached to this kind of subject by making explicit allusions to its acceptable manifestations in fashion magazine

illustrations, shop window displays, advertising, art, cinema’.

Wall wishes the art object to reflect its commodity status, making conscious that it is placed within, and part of, the present system of economic/symbolic exchange, while functioning dialectically as a critique of this system. This is also a critique of the abstract idealism of conceptual art, for to reduce any work to a formal, conceptual problem, as that kind of art does, prevents a ‘more dialectical involvement for the work with other social factors/factors of production’. Wall believes that the work must strategically position itself in a dialectical relation to deal with other mythologies if it is not to be ‘ultimately formalist, a logical tautology of self-reference to itself’.

Unlike most media art, which tries to compete with the technical quality of media’s speed of comprehension as it (advertising, TV, film) indoctrinates the spectator, Wall provides his work with two readings simultaneously, one referring to the fast forms of mass media, and the other restoring a historical reading. The art historical reading slows down the viewer’s comprehension of its iconographic and philosophic content. It refers the work back to the historical problem of representation. This second reading does create a tautology (in contradiction to the contextualization of the first reading to the strictly present, surrounding external world of commercial signs), but unlike Minimal art’s closed, self-referential systems, it is a tautology encompassing the history of the picture’s found origins, that is, the history of representation as such.

For instance, Wall’s ‘light box’ refers to Marcel Duchamp’s *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas* (1946–66), but at the same time the back lit, advertising-like tableau also refers to the showcase display system in commercial use. Like Duchamp’s work, it is ambiguously a representation of Nature and of an artificial Culture. Wall takes this one step further; his work is actually part of the street, in its shop window context it is related to other displays and street signs. Like these displays and many signs, it is illuminated by night and day via rear artificial illumination, and by day by reflections on its front caused by sunlight. Through voyeuristic window shopping and fetishistic identification with the potentially possessable commodity displayed or advertised, the spectator is induced to buy goods. This has both an aesthetic and a psychological dimension. The spectator looking at a picture is doubly alienated when the picture is contained within a showcase. Wall’s ‘picture’ utilizes its front plane as a screen to project the spectator’s narcissistic fantasies in the same way in which the glass façade of a shop window projects a reflected image of his body onto the goods it displays, and which Duchamp’s work alludes to in its subject matter. The show case display, in alienating the spectator’s self-image from the commodity while suggesting that they may be joined if he possesses the commodity he desires, and the subject of an art work both create a ‘lack’ which they promise to fill. The art work and the commodity, as systems of representation, produce and control pleasure.

‘Violence (in terms of imagery of advertising/display; is fetishized as masochism, and identified with the

possession (destruction) of commodities and is inscribed as a distinct form of pleasure. The pleasure is replicated in window shopping and transformed again in terms of voyeurism.’ Wall uses a strategy similar to one Martha Rosler has identified, he ‘mimics some well known cultural form so as to strip it of its mask of innocence.’<sup>9</sup>

Wall’s imagery refers to sexual division in its psychological aspect; it seems to replicate the classical image of erotic violence directed against the woman, who is represented only through her non-presence. It, like Duchamp’s earlier work, is embarrassingly voyeuristic – making a female or male spectator uncomfortably aware that aspects of (erotic) pleasure (satisfaction and non-satisfaction) and looking are intimately involved in representation. Laura Mulvey has noted that an active/passive heterosexual division of labour controls narrative representation in Hollywood film. The female character motivates the actions of the story by motivating the male protagonist, and by identification with the male, the spectator may indirectly come to possess her. But the female presents a deeper problem. Her ultimate meaning, which is sexual difference is a threat to the man’s sense of ego wholeness, for she symbolizes castration. ‘The woman as an icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, threatens the flow of narrative action.’<sup>10</sup> Her potentially threatening look can only be sublimated by her fetishization – by her presenting herself (in the film) as an iconic mask, or by playing out the role of the satisfying and reassuring image for the male spectator to comfortably rest his eyes upon. Wall’s work alludes to, but undermines (in not providing a fetish image to mask the representation of woman as castrated, as lack) the usual pleasure produced in this type of representation of sexual violation (a common theme in high fashion display). These ideas also apply to Wall’s *Picture for Women*.

Wall’s stage set, consisting of three walls plus the frontal plane of the picture image which the spectator sees, as a picture within a picture, bares the picture’s own device, revealing how its representation of a representation in a second container, the show window, equates the show case display container (as well as art gallery show rooms) to the perspective system of classical Renaissance painting. All systems of Western representation are seen to be variants of the same basic system.

Wall’s images are set-ups, carefully contrived in a studio setting (a photography studio relates to the movie studio and the painter’s studio) in order, only, to be photographed. Studio architecture, the stage set box, and the final photograph which can only be seen in either an art gallery or a show case (or reproduced two-dimensionally on a magazine page) are all variants on the Renaissance perspective box. In making its subject matter (partially) the exposure of the architectural setting behind the picture’s produced illusion, *The Destroyed Room* alludes, among its other predecessors, to Courbet’s *The Painter’s Studio* (1855) where the artist is ‘shown painting a landscape that he does not have before him, while his model (nude) watches him paint’.<sup>11</sup> *The Studio* represents the system of pictorial representation, and the artist’s

8. Eugène Delacroix

9. Marcel Duchamp

10. Gustave Courbet



place within this system in relation to his personal world and to his public.

Photography, as a medium, stands half-way between commercial and fine art. *The Destroyed Room* was designed first for exhibition in a gallery specializing in both ‘fine’ photography and photography by artists; perversely, Wall positioned it in the window, facing out onto the street and the commercial world of signs and advertising. It thus was contextualized both to our relationship to commercial codes whose purpose principally is to sell goods, and to art objects, showing that they are both part of the same economic and semiotic representational system.

In a show case, as in an art gallery interior, commodities are often displayed as if in a domestic room, and are organized to meet the gaze of the individual spectator. The show window, like the movie or painting, presents a view inside the contained space which substitutes for a view of the actual world just behind the spectator. However, *The Destroyed Room* deliberately contradicts this convention by presenting a view of reality whose artificiality mocks the glamorous skein which it conventionally has in representations, and which is, at the same time, disorganized. It makes apparent, by revealing the stage set located within a studio door, that the image is a reproduced contrivance – a fake. Also, by showing its framing within the studio space, it calls attention, by implication, to its framing within the show window, and therefore within the market/commercial system.

The mechanical lighting system, especially that fluorescent system which Dan Flavin has utilized/foregrounded has, in Wall’s words, ‘repositioned the history of pictorial art’.<sup>3</sup> Wall’s works, because of their continuous fluorescent back-lighting, as well as their iconographic content, simultaneously relate to both the art context and to the context of the external commercial sign system. Outdoor advertising display signs combine a transparent colour façade with fluorescent back illumination. Wall would attempt to merge Flavin’s earlier experiments with fluorescents in their architectural re-positionings with the re-insertion of the frontal plane as iconic sign, thus re-introducing subject matter.

- 1 The following statements attributed to the artist were made to the author during the course of an exchange of letters in 1979.
  - 2 Martha Rosler, quoted by Lucy Lippard, ‘Retrochic’, *The Village Voice*, 10 December 1979.
  - 3 Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, Autumn, 1975.
  - 4 Roland Barthes, ‘The World as Object’, *Art and Literature*, Autumn/Winter, 1964.
  - 5 Jeff Wall, *Introduction*, Jeff Wall Installation, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 1979.
- Dan Graham, ‘The Destroyed Room of Jeff Wall’ [1979], *Real Life Magazine*, March, 1980, 4–6

## Hannah WILKE Visual Prejudice [1980]

Visual prejudice has caused world wars, mutilation, hostility, and alienation generated by fear of ‘the other’. Self-Hatred is an economic necessity, a capitalistic, totalitarian, religious invention used to control the masses through the denial of the importance of a body language, which is replaced by a work ethic devised to establish a slavery of the mind burdened by that awful albatross – the body ... The soul struggling to become free ... the ultimate gift being death. Through the destruction and decay of the body one is rewarded with Heaven ... We’re in Heaven, and our hearts beat so that we can barely speak, and we now can find the happiness we seek, when we’re out together dancing cheek to cheek. Although sex may sell songs, and other products, it is generally considered bad news and dirty stuff. The pride, power, and pleasure of one’s own sexual being threaten cultural achievement, unless it can be made into a commodity that has economic and social utility. Generating a pornographic attitude towards sexuality creates a money market that promotes and supports financial success and a way of life for both men and women. To diffuse self-prejudice, women must take control of and have pride in the sensuality of their own bodies and create a sexuality in their own terms, without deferring to the concepts degenerated by culture. To be the artist as well as the model for her own ideas, whether sexually positive or negative, she must also resist the coercion of a fascist feminism, which devolves on traditional politics and hierarchies in feminist guise rather than self-realization with respect to the physical superiority of woman as the life source. To get even is to diffuse the dangerous power of male separatist religious ideals; the virgin as superior being, the nun, the celibate priest, the bleeding Christ – a female fertility figure in disguise ... recognizing the marks, the wounds, the suffering, the pain, the guilt, the confusion, the ambiguity of emotions; to touch, to cry, to smile, to flirt, to state, to insist on the feelings of the flesh, its inspiration, its advice, its warning, its mystery, its necessity for the survival and regeneration of the universe.

Hannah Wilke, ‘Visual Prejudice’, *American Women Artists* [cat.] [São Paulo: Museu de Arte Contemporanea, 1980].

## Richard MISRACH Interview with Melissa Harris [1992]

*Richard Misrach* The ‘Desert Cantos’ project is built around the found metaphor. The discovery of the shot-up *Playboy* magazines fits in perfectly. South of Tonopah, near the northwest corner of the Nuclear Test Site in Nevada, lies a typical desert target range used by locals. The landscape is littered with the predictable detritus – spent shells, broken glass and pulverized cans. On one of my

visits, in 1988, I discovered the two magazines. One was propped against a shot-up television, the other was half-buried in the dirt. As usual, I photographed the scene as I found it. While I was manoeuvring for a good angle, a breeze blew open the magazine to a picture of Ray Charles singing for Memorex. His Memorex ecstasy was transformed into a scream by a bullet that had ripped through the magazine. I realized that the women on the covers of both magazines were the intended targets, but that in the bullet’s passage through the remaining pages, other symbols of our culture were randomly violated, too. The violence that was directed specifically at the women symbolically penetrated every layer of our society. (Somebody, I wish I could remember who, said, in effect, that *Playboy* magazine is the encyclopaedia of American culture.) Every aspect of our society – gender, race, class, the environment, even language itself – was riddled with violence.

I decided to take the magazines with me, and initially exhibited them in a gallery as found objects. Every few days, the gallery attendant opened the *Playboys* randomly to a new spread. For me, they were the pivotal pieces in an exhibition addressing cultural violence. Remarkably, the reviews and extensive exhibition catalogue didn’t even mention the magazines. I was stunned. It was then that I decided to rephotograph them – selecting individual pages and spreads – and to make large prints. The exaggerated scale and object quality released their metaphorical potency. Despite the fact that they were just pieces of paper, pictures with holes in them, the gashed representations elicited a powerful and uncanny visceral response [ ... ]

The very act of representation has been so thoroughly challenged in recent years by postmodern theories that it is impossible not to see the flaws everywhere, in any practice of photography. Traditional genres in particular – journalism, documentary studies, and fine-art photography – have become shells, or forms emptied of meaning. Victor Burgin underscored a significant point when he made the distinction between the ‘representation of politics’ and the ‘politics of representation’. Nonetheless, despite the limitations and problems inherent to photographic representation (and especially the representation of politics), it remains for me the most powerful and engaging medium today – one central to the development of cultural dialogue.

The ‘Desert Cantos’ project of the last decade has shifted somewhat in the nature of its representation. The earliest series, ‘The Terrain’, ‘The Event’, ‘The Flood’, and ‘The Fires’, for example, were more or less aesthetic metaphors. Recent cantos, however, have become more explicitly political. The ‘Bravo 20’ project points a finger directly at military abuse of the environment. I think the three cantos in *Violent Legacies* hover between the two.

*Melissa Harris* Richard, your photographs are visually very seductive. Yet your subjects are death, contamination and violence. Are you perhaps aestheticizing the horrific, and thus exploiting it?

*Misrach* Probably the strongest criticism levelled at my work is that I’m making ‘poetry of the holocaust’. But I’ve come to believe that beauty can be a very powerful



conveyor of difficult ideas. It engages people when they might otherwise look away.

Recent theory has been critical of the distancing effect of artistic expression – ‘Create solutions, not art’. But the impact of art may be more complex and far-reaching than theory is capable of assessing. To me, the work I do is a means of interpreting unsettling truths, of bearing witness, and of sounding an alarm. The beauty of formal representation both carries an affirmation of life and subversively brings us face to face with news from our besieged world.

Richard Misrach, interview with Melissa Harris, in Richard Misrach, *Violent Legacies: Three Cantos* [Manchester: Cornerhouse Publications, 1992].

## Sophie RISTELHUEBER

### On My Work *Fait* [1992]

I went to Kuwait six months after the Gulf war, inspired by a magazine photograph showing the impact of bombs like wounds in the desert. I was obsessed by the notion of a desert which had ceased to be a desert. And all the forms I had expected to see turned out to be in very much the same mould as the work I had done earlier on ‘Cicatrised Territories’.

By shifting from the air to the ground, I sought to destroy any notion of scale, as in Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp’s *Elevage de Poussiere* [*Dust Breeding*, 1920]. It’s a picture which fascinates me, and which I kept in my mind throughout the time I was working out there. The constant shift between the infinitely big and the infinitely small may disorientate the spectator. But it’s a good illustration of our relationship with the world: we have at our disposal modern techniques for seeing everything, apprehending everything, yet in fact we see nothing. Although some pictures seem to have been taken through a microscope, I didn’t want the play on effects of scale to become completely abstract either. So I tramped about a lot, photographing innumerable objects that had been abandoned in the desert – shoes, teapots, television sets, office furniture, and so on.

And then there was the ‘stuff’ of war: shells, rocket-launchers, tanks, and all sorts of mines. I found a collection of shaving brushes, razors, and little mirrors that must have formed part of the soldiers’ kits. There were personal diaries and tartan blankets like those of my childhood. I got the feeling that I could sense physically the soldiers’ crazed flight northwards. I was deeply disturbed by that twofold abandon of both man and object. Such ‘still lifes’ highlight the prosaic side of warfare. At the same time, once divorced from their purpose, objects too become abstractions.

Reality and collective emotion are an area which should not be left to reporters, editors and photographers alone. Studio work alone does not satisfy me. The essential thing, in my view, is to go and confront reality physically. In Kuwait, I wanted to become one with the territory, even though it was bristling with mines. It was also a way of formulating the problem of representation

and, in the end, the problem of art. Since the advent of the crisis, artistic milieux have begun to realize that they must pick up the threads of reality again. It’s almost subversive nowadays to say: It’s a very simple picture – a fact / *le fait*.

Sophie Ristelhueber, ‘On My Work *Fait*’, extract from article first published in *Le Monde*, 27–28 September, 1992; reprinted in *The Guardian Weekly*, 1 November, 1992, 62–64.

## Régis DURAND

### Event, Trace, Intensity [1993]

Why is it that so many photographers today are driven to catalogue the traces or signs of what is supposed to appear or happen in the world? How can we explain this mania for the real, for things that, after all, simply exist? Is it ‘Realism’? Or is it the remnant of an old Romantic vision, the dream of an absolute respect for and transparence of the object? It has to be a little of both, in so far as photography is still a child of the early nineteenth century, which is when the birth of this miraculous instrument came to fulfill so many expectations and give visible form to so many small ephiphanies. The astonishing thing is that this miracle endures, so long after the epoch and sensibility to which it seemed to respond have vanished.

The uses of photography have, of course, grown exponentially, especially in the sense of inventing forms and worlds that no longer owe anything to the real, and in the sense of a photographer’s individual *expression*. Still, the fact remains that in a great majority of cases, photographs continue to draw us irresistibly towards a meditation on the presence or absence of a being or real object. And it seems as vain to want to deny this insistent presence of the referent as to let oneself be fascinated by it. Photography, in effect, is like a gaze: a perception and instant grasping of a sensory reality. It is never empty – except in the case of a serious pathology. It is also like thought, ‘an instant of visual thought’, as Jean-Claude Lemagny would say. Thought is not conceived without an object either. But unlike thought or looking, which can drift and be distracted, photography doesn’t easily let itself go, nor does it forget what it is doing. We have all had the experience of those incredible photographs that we didn’t take (but wish we had); perhaps, then, it is the mark of a great photographer to know when not to shoot, or at least to defer the moment of exposure until the photograph is in some sense already there, completely constituted in the real. But even in the absence of any concrete image, photography possesses a strong visual and mental existence. It gives an immediate memory to thought, including and perhaps especially in cases where a photo hasn’t been taken.

This memory is then only partly linked to the creation of an image. It is first of all an act of attention, a simple look at the world. And this is perhaps what radically distinguishes photography from painting, as Pierre de Fenoyl has emphasized: ‘If he obeys his finger and eye, the photographer does not touch what he sees, while the painter, whose hands are bound to his gaze, “constructs” an image. The photographer does not create, but gazes at

Creation ... which is Time’ (n.p.) [For this reference and those that follow, see Works Cited at end of text].

We will revisit this distinction between painting and photography as it relates to the question of touch, and look in particular at what certain photographs also owe to a tactile mode of perception. For now, Fenoyl’s remark serves to characterise one of two opposed positions. The other says in essence that far from having to contemplate and collect what is, photography must struggle against the insistence and oppressiveness of images of the world, against the tyranny of analogy. In this view, the only alternative is to guide, arrange, even *construct* the appearance of objects, inventing the ‘real’ that the camera will then be charged to restore (while adding, as the case may be, a supplementary dimension of illusion). The history of photography oscillates endlessly between these two desires, these two scenarios of an impossible relation to the real. Historically, theories of photography have leaned now towards one pole, now towards the other, but always with the primacy that analogical discourse and vision seem to exercise over all other theories. This is how, despite some hesitations, the fable of photography as the pure emanation or deposit of the real gains credence.

The fable falls apart, however, as soon as we admit that the photographic imprint or trace can easily be that of affect or the imaginary. For in the end, the only ‘good’ realism is realism pure and simple. Outside its most literal meaning, strange things begin to happen. The referent seems to double itself from the beginning, and this doubling seems to contaminate the apparently most stable of objects, and the most ‘indexical’ of photographs. This is because the very condition of every image, the possibility of figuration of anything, presupposes an initial duplicity. Maurice Blanchot understood this quite precisely:

It is also difficult to speak with any rigour of the image. The image is the duplicity of revelation. It is the very thing that veils in revealing, the veil that reveals in re-veiling, in the ambiguous uncertainty of the world ‘reveal’. The image is image in this duplicity – not the double of the object, but the initial doubling that then permits a thing to be figured. (42)’

Thus, what some describe as an act of attention, of capture, or of collecting, would be nothing other than a form of this initial doubling, and thus no different at bottom from constructed images or *mises en scène* that have no direct relation to the real. For there is no direct, immediate relation to the real. Instead, there is always a detour through the symbolic, this back-and-forth of appearance/disappearance that is the source of all knowledge and all representation.

It is not by chance that Blanchot illustrates this movement with the metaphor of the veil. The veil, an image that embodies the duality of hiding/revealing, is itself double, or rather uncertain. It hesitates at the threshold of several fictions: that of the mask, that of religious mystery, and that of the theatre that perhaps subsumes them all, as ceremony or dance. As soon as there is an image, there is theatre, and, once again, doubling.

There is theatre, as Blanchot says, because there is an



initial uncertainty or ambiguity. Many photographs, in fact, give the impression that the image is superimposed on the thing itself, or more often still, on another, initial image.<sup>2</sup> This must be why certain photos seem to possess both an extraordinary density, like matter from an unknown planet, and a spectral character, a shudder, a levitation – so long as the photographer exploits the absolute coincidence between object and image, as if to cancel the doubling, or plays off the inscription of the physical or temporal gap between the two. Photographs of the real are permeated by this relation to the original time of the image. For all relations to the real are already *mise-en-scène*, based on the choice of a certain distance, field of vision, speed of looking, and ‘exposure’. All photographic descriptions or demonstrations contain the germ of representation, by the very nature of framing and freezing something, and according to a particular rhythm. A very long exposure, for example, yields a greater presence of the object, whose materiality seems reinforced by the duration of the ‘deposit’ (what often tempts Dieter Appelt). Lack of focus or blur, on the contrary, say something about the object’s mobility, its belonging to the living and the flux of time. The interior theatre of photography is thus constituted through such choices, down to the seemingly most technical and innocent.

But besides this, there is also theatre from the moment there is an image by virtue of the implicit or at least suggested presence of a spectator. ‘The theatre,’ writes Roland Barthes, ‘or the place where things are *seen*’. Photography would then be the presence of things seen. From the beginning, the photographic apparatus is theatrical. The perspectivist box is an exact analogue of Italian-style theatre; the radical break between the space of the stage and the space of the spectator finds an equivalent in the physical and temporal distance that photography introduces in relation to the represented object. The convergence and diversity of gazes focused on a single object underpins the richness of meaning and seduction that marks both.

Barthes also draws a very direct relation between photography and theatre in the form of the *tableau vivant*:

Yet it is not (it seems to me) by Painting that Photography touches art, but by Theater... [H]owever ‘lifelike’ we strive to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be our mythic denial of an apprehension of death), Photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead. (31–32)

Here as well it seems that photography is fond of closely imitating an aspect of theatre’s internal functioning. In a number of ‘*mise-en-scène*’ photographs, one can easily see, in fact, a primitive theatricality of the sort Barthes describes – for example, in the work of Ralph Eugene Meatyard and Jan Saudek. But just as an ‘initial duplicity’ affects the seemingly most referential of images, theatricality (or a form of it) affects the seemingly least posed, least constructed photographs.

Theatricality also resides in this famous doubling, the distance the photographic object maintains with itself, a distance that brings out the double and, through it, the idea of death. Photography is in this sense like the theatre

of the late Tadeusz Kantor, a theatre of death. But unlike the theatre shrouded deliberately in the imagery associated with him, photography veils and re-veils this knowledge relentlessly. It also exhibits its relation to death, of course, whenever it parades it as commemoration: memory, monuments to the disappeared, *Imagine*, the death mask. But its principal mode of functioning is that of denial – of making things come alive, more alive than life, seizing the most minute variations and contortions, working increasingly and cumulatively, even hysterically against what it is important not to see, not to want to know.

At the heart of this theatre of denial is the question of truth and lying, which is also central to the photographic apparatus. Pascal Bonitzer observes that in the cinema, the lie (or the possibility of lying) is linked to the existence of an off-screen space. This leads him to a quite interesting differentiation of genres:

There is at bottom no place for lying in the theatre, simply because there lying is only the rhetorical mode of being of a character who can be the liar or the imposter. Conversely, lying in the novel and the cinema belongs to no one – it is everywhere, and it is truth-telling that is on the contrary the most difficult, the most unusual, the absolute rarest thing, reserved for the crucial moments that make us weep. (*Décadrages* 39)

What does the photograph have to do with lying? We should note right away that unlike theatre, photography is not an art of immediate presence. And there is indeed a photographic off-screen space that is the preserve of all impostures. We know that photography is quite capable of tricks and perverse effects through re-framing or de-contextualization. It would thus seem to be closer to the situation of the novel or the film, that of lying or a generalized, diffuse illusion with no precise attribution, where the feeling of truth is only the effect of particular circumstances, rare and irrefutable moments of convergence.

Despite all suspicion, however, photography is still *also* a witness of truth. In a certain way, as in the theatre, everything is true and false at the same time; and what photographic theatricality there is exists perhaps in the absolute achievement of the denial that belongs to theatre. I *know very well* that there is off-screen space and manipulation in the photograph, but I want to believe *anyway* that there is also truth. I know all the illusions that framing, lighting, scale, the printing process, etc., can produce. But the truth I believe in is in any case not that of representations, no more than I believe the lies of a character on stage. I believe (perhaps) in the look or design of whatever agency thought them up and brought them to my attention, in this place and this moment, as I believe in this play that unfolds before me, the illusion of illusion to be sure, but *present* and actual. Like the theatre, photography puts me in the presence of my living temporality, of my being in time. The cinema and the novel immerse me in a state of reverie or hypnosis – with occasional moments of condensation where everything seems to break off and come alive before me with a remarkable intensity. Photographs plunge me into a direct time, which is not always that of revelation, epiphany or ecstasy. It can be much duller, the time of waiting or

boredom. But it always retains the edge of an encounter, a presence.

True photographic theatre is surely to be found in the fact that *we behold someone’s look at the world, and not the world itself*. And I don’t think we can say, as Bonitzer does in another essay, that in photography ‘the one who takes the pictures is effaced as subject of enunciation ... the opposite of what happens in painting, where the look of the painter is palpable’. To say of the photographer that ‘he is only an eye’, which is to say a surface of perception and inscription, leads to a brilliant but reductionist reification of the photographic object. It is, if you like, the equivalent of an old concept of theatre, well defended in its time, that claims there is no central enunciation, since each character takes direct charge of his/her own enunciation. But we know this is not the case, and that only a formalist and slightly hallucinatory vision of the theatre sees characters as autonomous beings. The photograph then becomes in Bonitzer’s text ‘a space where a response is unbelievably lacking, where the object cries out in a way in the desert ... The specificity of the photograph is this: that what I call the cry of the object appears as a possible response from the good side, that of the lens. Photography is a call without response’ (‘La surimage’ 32).

Bonitzer’s remarks concern for the most part news photography, photojournalism, which can certainly produce, out of context, the effect of a cry in the desert, as an ‘obscene touch of the real’. But this is only one possible version of photographic dramaturgy, a pathetic and somewhat grandiloquent one. It depends on a strange short-circuiting of the photographer him/herself, of the *operator*, who is deprived *a priori* of all possibility of personal ‘enunciation’. But we know that even the crudest news photos are taken in an easily identifiable enunciative chain (so long as one looks at more than one of them and resists the fascination of an isolated photograph; but this demand of the series is perhaps common to all forms of photography). We are dealing here with a *mélange* of Barthesian hallucination and ‘semiotic’ desire for critical distance. The desire is, on the one hand, ‘to connect one’s voice with the cry of the photographic object, this lively and inarticulate *énoncé*’. It is, on the other, to scratch out or ‘erase’ the consistency and false transparency of the news image, as if to deny this denial itself of enunciation, of a photographic ‘*parole*’. The contradiction recalls certain of Walter Benjamin’s positions. But its extreme theatricality (due doubtless to a polemical context) gives it more the character of a symptom, of a significant gesturing before an interrogation of the photographic image.

Is this interrogation specific to photography? Is it not different, for example, in painting? Indeed it is, for painting presupposes a gesture of construction or extraction, while the photograph (in one view, at least) presupposes a simple reception, a contemplation. It is an art of the *déjà vu*, showing the already-seen, and as such it plunges us into a state close to the dream or hallucination. This is not, as in the cinema, a state of hypnosis where the idea of time is confused; on the contrary, it is as if, in front of a photograph, the meaning of time were heightened.



The nature of this time that we experience so directly is not historical or narrative time. Rather, it is like an incessant back-and-forth between a before and an after, a hesitation on both sides of a threshold that would be, depending on the case, that of event, appearance, or image. In their study on ‘Fantasme originaire, fantasmes des origines, origines du fantasme’, Laplanche and Pontalis note that the question of time is at the heart of the theory of sexuality in Freud. And the way they describe the dialectic of repression and trauma that is linked to this temporality illuminates very well the phenomenon of ‘primitive temporality’ that I am trying to describe in photography:

With Freud we are dealing with the first and only effort to establish an intrinsic relation between repression and sexuality. He finds the strength of this relation not in a ‘content’ but in the temporal character of human sexuality, which makes a privileged field of a dialectic between the too much and the too little of excitation, the too soon and the too late of event ... Hence the de-composition of ‘trauma’ into two times: psychic trauma is only conceivable as coming from an already-there, the memory of the primal scene. (27)

This ‘already-there’ is in fact an *après-coup*, a reconstruction. But it is necessary to postulate its existence in order for the back-and-forth of temporality, its differential, to situate itself. The same is true of photography. The already-there of the photographed object that amateurs find so fascinating is a *trompe l’oeil*; only a déjà vu exists. For the spectator, it is the look of the photographer upon the object. For the photographer, it is the look directed not at an object but at the *image* of an object, the initial doubling referred to earlier. Something has already been, has already taken place, and it is this gap, this anteriority, that is at the foundation of the photographic relation. All positions proceed from this – denial (that is, simultaneous negation and affirmation) on the part of those who cultivate the myth and analogy of reportage; subjective appropriation of this temporality, which becomes a moment of its own autobiography; and the theatricality, on the contrary, of temporal digression, which is put *en abîme*, redoubled to infinity, travestied in a thousand ways. Too soon, too late: photography from this point of view is an art of approximation, by successive trial and error – an art of moving around the model, as in classical sculpture, only here the material worked on is not volume or space but an uncertain temporality, a game of intensities and detours where time invents itself.

These are some of the various threads that intertwine once we venture away from the ‘content’ of the photographic image. It is thus hardly surprising that many prefer to stick to the imaginary stability of a photograph anchored solidly in its referent (or its substitutes – the impression, trace, index, etc.), or that they refuse to call it an ‘image’, which, as we have seen, entails a great deal of uncertainty.

1 The verb ‘reveler’ can mean both ‘to reveal’ and ‘to develop’ [photographs], while the verb ‘voiler’ can mean both ‘to veil’ and ‘to fog’ [a photograph, during development]. Ourand doubtless intends for these meanings to be active in his citation of Blanchot.

[Translator]

2 Philippe Leroux emphasizes that the photograph is not first an image of a thing, but an image of an image: ‘We see in photographs what we could see if we saw in images.’ He calls this vision *iconic*, in opposition to *mundane* vision [which itself engenders a discourse on the trace, the imprint, etc.] Compare ‘L’irréel photographique’, *La recherche photographique*, 2 [Spring 1987].

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# Chris BURDEN Interview with Jon Bewley [1993]

*Jon Bewley* I would like to begin by our discussing the early works, the difference between the context of notoriety in which they were read then, as live events, and the context in which we read them now, where we are more aware of the importance of the documentation which was always integral to making the work.

*Chris Burden* I think more than anything the written part of the documentation was the most important aspect, and also the fact that I used photographic stills. I was very careful not to use film or video to record most of the performances, because I think most people, then, were not sophisticated enough to look at a video or film and necessarily understand that they were not seeing the real thing, so there was a built-in misunderstanding and you could go away from the film with a misrepresentation. Still photographs have been around for longer so people understand that they’re only a symbol of what was there, they are more easily able to separate the stills from the reality of the actual event and see them only as symbols or indicators of what went on.

The combination of the dispassionate, dry written statement with the still image, like a police documentation, was really important. There would be no explanation as to why these things had happened, or what it meant.

*Bewley* Were you expecting the notoriety?

*Burden* I knew I was doing a different kind of art that would eventually catch up with me in that sense. I remember when I did the *Shoot* piece, it took about two years for that information to filter up to the national media, and once it did there was an article in *Esquire* magazine and then basically all hell broke loose, because the media feeds on itself, very rarely does it go from an original source. So once something like that happens, they’re like piranhas, they all attack, and basically distort it. They’re interested in selling newspapers, I’m interested in telling the truth.

*Bewley* When was the change?

*Burden* Well, once the publicity from *Shoot* started happening, there was a whole avalanche of publicity from commercial venues.

*Audience* Can you describe *Shoot*?

*Burden* Yes, basically, I had a friend shoot me in the arm with a rifle. He was standing about fifteen feet away. The title of it was *Shoot*, so it was sort of a ...

*Audience* Can I ask which arm?

*Burden* Yes, left arm.

*Audience* Do you still have the scars?

*Burden* Yes, I do actually.

*Audience* What kind of audience was there?

*Burden* Maybe ten people that I knew came over and saw it. I really was not interested in having NBC there. I have some still photographs from it; they’re real crude, they look kind of grainy and gory [ ... ]

Chris Burden, ‘Chris Burden in conversation with Jon Bewley’, in Adrian Searle [ed.], *Talking Art* [London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1993] 15-27.

# Anthony HERNANDEZ and Lewis BALTZ Forever Homeless: a Dialogue [1995]

*The words of Anthony Hernandez appear in italics.*

Anthony Hernandez isn’t, can’t be, and doesn’t pretend to be the voice of the homeless; nor does he spectacularize their condition. His work offers an index of those conditions, or, more exactly, of those conditions that can be seen and photographed. The conditions of shelter to degree zero. *The photographs don’t give you the sound of the freeway, the smell of rotten food, and defaecation. Yeah, what is this place? The freeway system of L.A. A ribbon of life for the real city but a wasteland for the forgotten. And the idea that poverty is a private affair.* Privatization at degree zero.

One might imagine that in an art discourse absorbed with identity politics such an investigation would be received with great interest, but this has been true, so far, only in a limited sense. Hernandez is not generally perceived as an activist artist, which is a mistake, as it presumes a rather narrow definition of action. A more useful definition can be drawn from the military model,



which regards reconnaissance both as an action, *per se*, and as an essential component of further actions. *Nobody else was looking. And that's why people will see what I've seen ... that's what I forced them to do with these pictures. I remember when I first started this work that [I thought] it would take people longer to see them, to get them. Because they weren't pictures of the homeless themselves. I thought it would take a long time for this work to be shown, published, etc., and it's worked out exactly that way. They weren't easy pictures to make ... in terms of me and information gathering, that sort of reconnaissance and what I have seen ... The hardest pictures I've ever made were the homeless pictures. I wasn't in a war zone but it was as if I were.*

The received wisdom is that Atget photographed Paris as though it were a crime scene. (Did he really? Yes, I believe so.) *Hard pictures to make. Could we say that about Atget's pictures? Was Paris worth photographing? Could I look at my own pictures and say 'was it worth photographing?' The answer is yes, because nobody else was looking.*

Like many other desert flora Los Angeles is mostly sharp edges, and Hernandez has worked along a lot of them. In some ways formed by war, Anthony Hernandez photographed America's undeclared civil war as though it was always/already Vietnam, or Beirut, or Bosnia. Usually he witnessed the defeated (they are, after all, the majority) waiting, walking, waiting more, taking very, very humble recreations. One time he gathered evidence about the winners, the lumpen rich, enjoying the spoils of their victory on Rodeo Drive. And here, now, this time, the casualties, the already triaged. *The evicted.*

Homelessness grew exponentially in the United States with the general hardening of attitudes that followed the 1960s: what Thomas Pynchon described as 'the re-institution of Fascism in America'. The idiopathic malaise that followed America's Pyrrhic Cold War victory globalized the contradiction of third-world poverty existing as a systemic, intractable component of first-world economies. What have I seen with my own eyes? This year I've seen old women in St Petersburg standing in ankle-deep snow begging. Each day I've seen dozens of guys hawking *Macadam* in the Paris Metro, and on the Kirchberg Plateau above Luxembourg City I've seen the international banks build their Versailles of... what? Speculation? Thrift? Venality? Whatever. Globally, we now have 55 million homeless, and rising: one England, one France, or two Californias. I missed the war, but I saw the peace and, inscribed in it, a few traces of the future.

*In this country it's hard to reconcile the larger segment of society, which is so ordinary and which would just like the homeless to disappear, with the greatness of the country. They're reminded that however 'great' this country is, the homeless stand for the failure to face the future. Maybe forever homeless is the future. Maybe. Talis sum qualis eris.*

At this moment, Los Angeles offers the most dramatic instance of the unbridgable abyss between America's classes, cultures, races, and individuals, between its Utopian fantasy and its dystopic reality. Hobbes' prophesy played out in blinding sunlight and rendered starker by its

ephemerality: the tyranny of the new. Bukowski understood something about L.A. and so did James Ellroy; Joan Didion got it right in her own way, Gore Vidal in his and later Mike Davis made it look interesting. Anthony Hernandez understood L.A. I never did, really: I always believed that God would destroy L.A. for its sins. Finally I realized that He had already destroyed it, and then left it around as a warning.

*Blade Runner* concludes with an act of grace: the sparing of a human life by a replicant who has never truly lived and will soon die. His action was an act of reverence towards all life, even the life of an adversary. *And that action could only happen because of all the death, the waste. Thinking about the homeless I think of, and see, all the waste. And when I say waste I mean a real tragedy. There was a term in the army – you might have heard it – but it said everything and nothing and it was constantly used. In Vietnam it was the attitude. The expression was: fuck it. And it applies here in L.A. It's L.A. now. And L.A.'s the future.* L.A., or America will probably never attain even the fictive grace of *Blade Runner*. Fuck it.

Anthony Hernandez, Lewis Baltz, 'Forever Homeless: a Dialogue' [Chalis, Idaho, 1995]. Anthony Hernandez, *Landscapes for the Homeless* [Hannover: Sprengel Museum, 1995] 12–15.

# Ralph RUGOFF

## On Forensic Photography

[1995]

Photography makes living subjects appear lifeless – frozen, struck dumb, yanked out of time – yet in photography the dead come alive. It's a paradox I first encountered in Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip*, a documentary venture into the 'historical actuality' of 1890s Wisconsin. Pairing period newspaper stories and archival images, Lesy's book (recently reissued by Doubleday) includes several photos of babies in coffins: bedecked with white lace and floral wreaths, they appear uncannily re-animated, as if bodies struck down by epidemics could be resurrected on strips of celluloid.

Since every subject of a photograph shares a certain cadaverous stiffness, the line can blur between the lifeless and the living. How then do you shoot a corpse so it appears truly dead? With this question in mind, I paid a visit to James Njavro, the sanguine chief of forensic photography at the LA County coroner's office.

Njavro's department is responsible for preserving a visual record of every cadaver handled by county coroners. Because there's no statute of limitations on murder cases, his office has negatives on file dating back to 1937. Eight full-time staff members, most of whom come from mortuary backgrounds and all of whom have been trained as autopsy technicians, photograph an average of 45 'cases' a day. Last year, they photographed close to 2,500 murder victims as well as 6,000 autopsies, producing approximately 150,000 colour prints. Strangely enough, the bureaucratic conditions under which these pictures

are taken don't mitigate their power; in fact, they enhance it.

Njavro isn't allowed to show me the department's archive, so I have to wait until he's called out of his office to examine a group of photos on his desk. Hidden among various images of bullet wounds (known as 'locator' shots) is a full-figure photograph of a young black man laid out on a specimen table like a languorous male odalisque. Thick Frankenstein stitches bisect his torso, evidence of a futile effort in an emergency room. Miraculously, despite having been stripped, cut open, sewn up and laid out like a piece of beef, the corpse maintains a resilient human dignity.

Though the average TV viewer takes in 13,000 dramatized killings by age eighteen, few if any of those images bear the least resemblance to this photograph. Nothing in the picture moralizes over why this man was killed. There is no hint of judgement, though the cadaver's naked vulnerability invokes the innocence of a defenceless victim. The property of a public agency, it's essentially a private image, meant for exhibition only in court, and my looking at it is an intrusion, a rupture of its limited intentions. Since I'm not seeing it through bureaucratic filters, it hits me with a power it was never meant to have.

It probably doesn't make sense to speak of honesty in a photograph, but the impersonal archival image – 'objective' in that it excludes any individual stylistic trace – seems to give the dead subject its due. The distanced format accidentally produces results far more intimate and respectful than most photographs of the naked body found the art history file. Rather than perusing colour prints, I feel like I'm handling a dead man's belongings.

While the photos boast a technical hygiene, aspects of forensic photography are a dirty job. At the coroner's office, a room with an unsterilized cadaver is sometimes referred to as a 'contaminated room', and each corpse is approached as if HIV-infected. Both photographer and supervising physician wear surgical masks while in the photography studio, which, except for the mounted strobe lights, looks more like a low-budget operating room. When Njavro gives me a brief tour, the corpse of a tiny black boy is being washed down by a member of his department. The corpse will eventually be photographed head to toe on a specimen table, lying propped on its side and supported from behind by a triangular metal stand (this allows photographers to capture a full frontal portrait without having to shoot down from a ladder).

From across the room, the cadaver almost looks like a sleeping infant, and my pulse is suddenly flying. I've never shared space with a naked corpse of any age and looking at photographs hasn't prepared me for the shock. Evidence of death is pretty much banished from our daily life, its management entrusted to specialists, and the physical presence of this tiny body seems like a violent intrusion from a foreign reality. I keep staring, eyes locked like magnets, in the foolish hope that if I look long and hard enough, it will begin to seem familiar, and no more threatening than a snapshot.

In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag complains that 'the camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness ...'



Yet the invention of photography didn't recreate this way of seeing so much as it reflected an ethos already in place – particularly the idea that subject and object are distinct entities, rather than part of a continuum. It's a notion first canonized by Descartes, but as cultural historian Morris Berman points out, its roots reach back to Plato and the Judaic concept of a transcendent God who creates the world yet stands apart from it as a separate consciousness.

But as an agent of this world view, the camera ends up structuring many of our cultural rituals, from family reunions to photo opportunities and striptease shows. In *Sexual Personae*, Camille Paglia insists that striptease is a sacred dance of pagan origins, whose 'profound meaning' lies in the fact that 'a nude woman carries off the stage a final concealment, that chthonian darkness from which we come'. But the routines at Live Nude Dancing, a generic strip club near LAX, seem to be influenced less by biology than by a fairly recent photographic convention: hardcore pornography.

In contrast to classical striptease, where the dancer's accessories – fishnet stockings, gloves, feathers – set up her eventual nakedness as nothing more than a final theatrical prop, the dancing here is strictly clinical. There is no hint of narrative, no series of progressive revelations; instead, after removing her bikini, the performer runs through a series of gynaecological poses, holding each one as if modelling for a medical photographer. A mini-spotlight illuminates her (usually shaved) vagina, reproducing the closeup frame of porno magazines. Only the blaring music, the last vestige of the burlesque tradition, provides a non-photographic reference.

The thing we most cherish about photographic reality may be precisely its aura of detachment; at Live Nude, that disassociation, mirrored in the dancers' air of professional indifference, is part of the turn-on. Basically, the performers are presented as moving magazine pictures. Their photo-op smiles, indicating that they've emotionally vacated the premises, are emblems of our separation of image, mind and body. Yet in a sex show where the dancers neither sing nor speak but remain silent as centrefolds, the distance between subject and object is presumably part of the appeal.

These thoughts bring to mind a story related by a friend who once posed for Helmut Newton, our photographic voyeur par excellence. Helmut had asked to shoot her, and during their first session together, she felt confident that she was giving him her charismatic best as a model. But Helmut had photographed her with little enthusiasm. The session dragged on in dispirited fashion, until finally, tired and frustrated, she found herself thinking how contemptible he really was, how troll-like and utterly pathetic. When she looked up, Helmut was suddenly snapping away with great excitement. He'd found something – disdain – which his camera could relate to.

Taking photographs, as every holiday season reminds us, can also be a social performance where the end product is largely superfluous. (It's hard to imagine anything more monotonous than party pictures.) We bring out our cameras mainly to confirm that an event is special, deserving of a lasting record. It's part of a bonding rite as

well: to accommodate the camera, we huddle closely together, and for a moment become an intimate group.

Implicit in the picture-taking ritual is an assumption that our cameras will somehow capture an aspect of our personal point of view. A lot of Angelenos I know took snapshots during the riots this past April, usually of nearby fires or burned-out buildings; their intent wasn't simply to document these scenes (since the mass media were providing saturation coverage), but to capture their own experience of the events. Their pictures, however, generally share the same distanced quality: the subjects look too far away, and the image's neat frame undercuts the drama of a moment when boundaries were broken.

At the time, though, the act of shooting pictures might have been a means of penetrating, or at least drawing closer, to something frightening and unpredictable. In a certain respect, it may have been a ritual not unlike the superstitious actions of obsessive compulsives, a gesture repeated over and over again in the unconscious hope of warding off future calamity. Whether we're looking through the lens of a digital camera, a videocam or an old-fashioned 35mm, there's comfort in seeing the world shrunk to viewfinder size, and feeling for a moment that we can hold its tumult in our hands.

Ralph Rugoff, On Forensic Photography [1992], *Circus Americanus* [London and New York: Verso, 1995] 183–86.

## Rut Blees LUXEMBURG Interview with David Campany [2000]

*Rut Blees Luxemburg discussed images from two bodies of work: London: A Modern Project (1997) and Liebeslied (2000). The conversation took place while walking the city at night, revisiting the locations of some of her photographs.*

*David Campany* There is often a tension in your work between what is there and what is not there.

*Rut Blees Luxemburg* Yes, that is certainly an experience that guides my image making.

*Campany* This seems partly a technical matter to do with long exposure – some things are rendered crisp, others disappear – but it is also connected with how people see at night, or don't see. The long exposure is a long look at something but it is also a look at what is usually passed over by people in the city at night.

*Luxemburg* For me that is the pleasure within my practice, that the camera allows what you called a transformation. Something other than what you see in your mundane, everyday experience of the city can emerge. Something which is there but perhaps which can be sensed better than it can be seen. The camera allows this to be unveiled, or shown.

*Campany* Do you always make 35 mm studies first before moving to a large format camera?

*Luxemburg* Yes, not always but mostly.

*Campany* This is quite interesting in the sense of your relation to the site or location. It means that when you

actually come to make the final image, it's already a return to the site. You are going back.

*Luxemburg* I don't think of it as a return. The moment of making the study is more of a pre-moment and the real moment comes when I make the large scale exposure.

*Campany* We are at the foot of Waterloo Bridge, looking at a flight of steps you photographed in 1997. It's changed since then. The text that appears on the wall in your image, a text that looks like a poem that that been crossed out or covered over, has almost disappeared. What first drew you to this site?

*Luxemburg* *Liebeslied* has become the overall title for a body of work and for my second book. For me the Liebeslied [love poem] was this elusive writing on the wall which seemed always more than just graffiti or some quick communication. Even when I first saw it, it was indecipherable. I think that the writer tried to eradicate it, just after he or she had written it. And now it has become a stain or trace, adding to all the other stains on the surface of the city. I like the curves; they are so baroque that they suggest something much more palatial, or sacred, instead of a cold, outdoor space.

*Campany* It looks like a very private form of communication, the opposite of most graffiti or street writing, which might tend to be a disenfranchised citizen announcing something to the world in general. The idea of it being a poem seems like one soul speaking to another soul but within a public place.

*Luxemburg* Yes, that's why for me it became a Liebeslied. It is very considered. The scale is intimate. It is writing at the scale of the body.

*Campany* Or a page.

*Luxemburg* So I came and photographed it. It seems private. I'm attracted to the *heimlichkeit* [secretness/clandestine quality] of this space which is public – a space that allows for a moment of repose.

*Campany* Do you think that repose comes from the places or from your images?

*Luxemburg* From the places, most definitely. It is hard for me to photograph places where I don't have that feeling or relation. The images then try to trace that sensibility.

*Campany* I think of your work as almost the opposite of street photography, which we associate with bright daylight, people, grabbed chance instants and rapidity. Here we have long duration, emptiness, a shell that becomes a content. In street photography people become generalised ciphers of the masses. In your work the population is either moving through or coming, or going.

*Luxemburg* Well, the 5 x 4 camera is the opposite of what the street photographer would use. It requires slowness and concentration and the exposures are long. Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. So it's another kind of street photography. Or maybe 'street' isn't even important. 'Public' photography is better.

*Campany* We're now at the site of a picture called *Nach Innen*, or *In Deeper*. The title seems to refer back to a quote by Roland Barthes that Michael Bracewell used in the introduction to your first book, if I recall.

*Luxemburg* Yes, yes: 'To get out, go in deeper.' It became the motto for this newer work, in a way. Deeper, closer to the ground.



*Campany* You can't get much closer to the ground than the water, or sea level.

*Luxemburg* Well, the interesting thing about the sea level is that it moves, that it changes within a couple of hours.

*Campany* This suggests interesting questions of duration and long exposure and the subtleties of changes. I'm reminded of a short essay by Jeff Wall called 'Photography and Liquid Intelligence'. He's talking mainly of how the instantaneous picture can show forms that are unavailable to human vision, but I think the long exposure of moving water does something equally specific to photography. This soupy, syrupy quality.

*Luxemburg* And here a very golden quality to water as it is lit. This image is also very much about absence. You see the footsteps on the mud? They are expressive of something that runs right through the *Liebeslied* series, which became about a possible poet who is wandering the city in a way that is in contrast to the *flâneur* made famous by Baudelaire. The *flâneur's* relation to the city is very much about a pleasure or diversion. The poet's wandering is more about an encounter.

*Campany* I remember in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, James Stewart asks if he can accompany the wandering Kim Novak. She replies that only one person can wander; two are always going somewhere.

*Luxemburg* I think that's true. I do walk alone, although occasionally when I come to shoot on large format I'll take an assistant, but by that stage the wandering has been done.

*Campany* There has been much recent discussion about the *flâneur* and the contemporary city, partly as a response to new forms of spectacle, and partly, for political reasons to open up the city and break the alienated, uncreative habits into which city dwellers fall. But the wandering of the poet is far more contemplative, it seems. Perhaps more difficult or painful.

*Luxemburg* I wouldn't call it difficult. Its a different daring. To dare to have this encounter, which might be an encounter with the self, or with what goes beyond the experience or appearances. It looks deeper to levels of experience beneath. In that way it can be much more political than the *flâneur* whose distraction fits in so well with the city's diversions.

*Campany* The American photographer Robert Adams once said, 'Still photographs often differ from life more by their silence than by the immobility of their subjects. Landscape pictures tend to converge with life, however, on summer nights, when the sounds outside, after we call the children in and close the garage doors, are the small whirl of moths and the snap of a stick.' Obviously there's a sort of American rural romanticism in there, but the idea of a picture taken of a silent world is perhaps far more realistic than a photograph that shuts off noise. The silence of photography is consonant with a silent world.

*Luxemburg* I'm not sure. That's debatable. But within my work of course it's all taken at night, which has a very different level of silence or noise.

*Campany* It's a John Cage-like idea that the quieter things are the more significant sound. This would run counter to Adams. Do you want to say something about the significance of the river coming up again and again in this

new work?

*Luxemburg* Hölderlin had some interesting ideas about the river. The river is this wonderful moving entity which combines places and joins them up together and brings them to the sea. Hölderlin understood the river in a relationship to the sky, through the reflection of the sky in the water joining the two different elements together. For him the river was almost a receptacle of the gods. Do the gods come down through reflection and the rain?

*Campany* Water at night is a very powerful image.

*Luxemburg* Here, I am interested in the sensation of immersion. Of course the river reflects ... so it has this curious relation to photography.

*Campany* Let's return to this idea of the walking poet in contrast to the *flâneur*. For Hölderlin, or the poet, walking involves responding to the world around them while being wrapped up in, or preoccupied, with other thoughts.

*Luxemburg* In a way the motion of walking induces a certain state of mind. It's not dreamlike, but it is almost meditative.

*Campany* Questions about the medium of photography and other technical questions have surfaced already in our conversation. Now, I have this sense that the serious amateur, in coming to grips with the medium, encounters the long exposure as probably the first 'trick', the first magical bit of photography, where the camera itself is helping to produce an estranging effect. It's giving a kind of duration that is longer than the snap and producing its own forms in the image. And on that level there is something about all long exposure night photography that contains something of the fascination that the serious amateur has with the camera itself.

*Luxemburg* Well, for me it's not so much a fascination with photography but a fascination with the possibilities of the large format camera and the long exposure which allows me to let chance enter the work. The long exposure leaves space for unexpected things to happen while the shutter is open. So contingency is a big part of my way of taking images, of letting in that which is outside of my control.

*Campany* This is an interesting way to use a large format camera which we usually associate with the height of control and premeditation.

*Luxemburg* The serious amateur would be horrified by certain results I get, in terms of colour balances and uncorrected perspectives.

*Campany* There is always something in your work about on the one hand being very controlled but on the other letting chance happen within that control. This is somehow quite similar to your overall strategy of walking through the city at night and then seeing what happens. It is a framework in which new possibilities can arise.

*Luxemburg* I set my own constraints but they are open for whatever can happen.

*Campany* Street photographers, who we mentioned earlier, have historically shot an awful lot of images, and probably a lot of awful images, to get what they want. You don't work this way.

*Luxemburg* No, I edit before I shoot, which means I take a very deliberate number of photographs. The consideration and the chance come before taking the image and during

the image but not afterwards. I'm slightly concerned by this flood of images which surrounds us. It is a complete over-excitement. For me it is much more interesting to concentrate on less, and perhaps in one image enough happens to keep you engaged for a longer period, instead of moving on to other images.

*Campany* That means you have an output that parallels a painter more than a photographer. And you also make preliminary studies, which is quite a painterly activity, as a way of preparing or pre-editing before committing to the time and expense of a large image. Are there many images that don't make it to the final stage?

*Luxemburg* Yes, not many but there are a few. But sometimes I go back to them and think about them again.

*Campany* Could you talk a little about the titles of your photographs?

*Luxemburg* The titles open up the work for another reading. These other readings are often literary, or mythical or allegorical.

*Campany* This plays against how mass culture puts image and text together to clarify, to contain what Allan Sekula once called the 'fragmentary, incomplete utterance' of the photograph.

*Luxemburg* Yes, but my titling is not an obscure act. It is something that opens up something else [ ... ]

1 Robert Adams, quotation reprinted alongside images from his *Summer Nights* portfolio, *Aperture*, 98, Spring, 1985, 37.

Rut Blees Luxemburg, 'A conversation between Rut Blees Luxemburg and David Campany', commissioned for *Critical Dictionary*, 2002 [www.criticaldictionary.net]; revised for this publication, 2003.



# THE URBAN AND THE EVERYDAY

The late 1960s saw the ending of ‘street photography’ as a discrete genre, together with a critique of simplistic documentary and a wholesale transformation in the character of Western cities. This opened up new demands and possibilities for a photography of the everyday. Jeff Wall and Ken Lum discuss their different strategies of constructed staging, while Thomas Struth discusses with Benjamin Buchloh the contemporary possibilities of portraiture and the photography of urban architecture. Artists’ statements by Douglas Huebler and Krzysztof Wodiczko point to urban space as a territory of intervention, while Arthur C. Danto discusses new modes of photographic display, capable of expressing the complexities of contemporary life.

## Douglas HUEBLER Statement [1977]

As the essential function of its capacity to spatialize phenomena ‘time’ produces *history* and *scale*, thereby establishing man’s existential connection with everything else: love lasts ‘forever’, stars are a ‘million light years away’, and the last touchdown appears again in ‘instant replay’, etc.

Less friendly are the inferences we draw from our perception that our own mortality is included in time’s extensiveness: at the worst *terror*, at the least, *anxiety*. Albert Camus says that we may bear the knowledge of our fate by transcending the mortal ‘self’, by objectifying it through various modes of creative form – repeated again, and again, and again.

In agreement with that view I propose to amplify it by suggesting that the most compelling images produced by ‘modern art’ are those which are *timefilled* – rather than ‘timeless’ – and, are existentially transcendent in that each constitutes an *objectification of time* through its synthesis of conceptual and existential events: Cezanne, Cubism and Jackson Pollock’s over-all drip canvases are foremost examples.

Such paintings are like a growing field of grain: images alive, and whole at every instant of time during which they are perceived. No part aspires to greater signification than another nor is the percipient meant to know the linearity of the sequence of events which altogether, formed the image: it exists as fact in the historically ‘present’ moment.

In works of mine which use ‘time’ as a structural component I intend the same kind of reading. However, if photographs are used, two, or more, taken of the same subject are *naturally* sequential. If presented in that way, they give to the *sign*, which they produce, ‘literature’ and that, in turn, is easily appropriated by myth. Therefore, in order to prevent the image from becoming mythicized I scramble the order in which I finally present the photographs. Time is objectified; phenomenological fact becomes wholly present, *in history*, rather than *about history*.

In some circumstances I have designed a work’s destiny to remain ‘in process’ for years – in some, beyond the life expectancy of an owner – in order to demand that the real production of the ‘art’ be the responsibility of ownership, and to suspend the consumption of art-as-object.

*Within* each work a ‘statement’ functions to describe the continuum within which a balance of ‘constants’ and ‘variables’ give to it its specific form; conceptually reconstituted by its percipient that information joins with whatever is represented as ‘visual’: the image, which is the ‘work’ is produced by the percipient as an event in his or her time.

Douglas Huebler, Statement from the catalogue *Time*, Philadelphia College of Art, 1977; reprinted in *Artist and Camera*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980.

## Krzysztof WODICZKO Strategies of Public Address: Which Media, Which Publics? [1987]

Before I attempt to characterize briefly the strategies of public art today in light of public practices of the avant-garde of the past, I must express my critical detachment from what is generally called ‘art in public places’. This bureaucratic-aesthetic form of public legitimation may allude to the idea of public art as a social practice but in fact has very little to do with it. Such a ‘movement’ wants first to protect the autonomy of art (bureaucratic aestheticism), isolating artistic practice from critical public issues, and then to impose this purified practice on the public domain (bureaucratic exhibitionism) as proof of its accountability. Such work functions at best as liberal urban decoration.

To believe that the city can be affected by open-air public art galleries or enriched by outdoor curatorial adventures (through state and corporate purchases, lendings and displays) is to commit an ultimate philosophical and political error. For, since the eighteenth century at least, the city has operated as a grand aesthetic curatorial project, a monstrous public art gallery for massive exhibitions, permanent and temporary, of environmental architectural ‘installations’; monumental ‘sculpture gardens’; official and unofficial murals and graffiti; gigantic ‘media shows’; street, underground and



interior ‘performances’; spectacular social and political ‘happenings’; state and real-estate ‘land art projects’; economic events, actions and evictions (the newest form of exhibited art); etc., etc. To attempt to ‘enrich’ this powerful, dynamic art gallery (the city public domain) with ‘artistic art’ collections or commissions – all in the name of the public – is to decorate the city with a pseudocreativity irrelevant to urban space and experience alike; it is also to contaminate this space and experience with the most pretentious and patronizing bureaucratic-aesthetic environmental pollution. Such beautification is uglification; such humanization provokes alienation; and the noble idea of public access is likely to be received as private excess.

The aim of critical public art is neither a happy self-exhibition nor a passive collaboration with the grand gallery of the city, its ideological theatre and architectural-social system. Rather, it is an engagement in strategic challenges to the city structures and mediums that mediate our everyday perception of the world: an engagement through aesthetic-critical interruptions, infiltrations and appropriations that question the symbolic, psychopolitical and economic operations of the city.

Krzysztof Wodiczko, ‘Strategies of Public Address: Which Media, Which Publics?’, in Hal Foster [ed.], *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, No. 1, Dia Arts Foundation, New York; Bay Press, Seattle, 1987, 41–42.

## Jeff WALL My Photographic Production [1989]

I see [photography] as a kind of untheorisable medium, a kind of polymorphic, multivocal and multivalent construction. Jean-François Chevrier and I had a discussion about this in which the term ‘interspace’ came up: that is, photography was a kind of medium that constituted an interspace by nature in between other things and could not ever be defined in a kind of singularized way. So I thought this is more and more how I think about the technical and the technological, which is also a social character of photography and, it seems, as an interspace; and as I thought about that, it reminded me of Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of the novel and its relationship to other literary forms. He says that the novel exposes the closed and finished-off, historically but maybe also formally completed, quality of other literary forms and methods.

What he is talking about is a continuous struggle for building certain kinds of social literacy which are adequate to the experiences, the life experiences of people living in modernity, and doing so as against a kind of hardening of visions in culture, which appear to be artistic forms, whether it’s lyric poetry, symbolist poetry, opera or whatever; which appear to be that, but in Bakhtin’s terms are social divisions between people. It seems to me that this concept of novelization is similar to

the relation between photography and other, previous or maybe even subsequent types of representation. So I think it’s possible to talk in relation to photography, not only about a novelization of literary forms, but a novelization of pictorial forms as well and of course, there are mediations that we might have to get into to conceptualize that, but I want to pass over them for the moment and simply raise this parallel.

Of course, this idea of a story-telling, philosophical art has a very problematic relationship to other things inside of modern art or modernist art. For example, it has a difficult relationship to reductionist, abstract, critical art, which I suppose finds its most salient expression in the monochrome, coming maybe from the monochromes of the Soviet artists, because photography is more open and representational than abstract art. It’s less linguistically closed-off than abstract art. So pictorial, philosophical, story-telling art is opposed to that. It’s also opposed to experimental, environmental, activist, situationist, radical art like arte povera, happenings and such because it’s more closed, more like picture-making, more representational, than they are. But, nevertheless, this novelistic form I’m describing has very deep inner relationships to those things, even though it develops in a kind of antagonism or at least a critical relationship to them. In other words, it’s part of the field of experimental art and I mention this because I think that in the 1970s and 1980s, it became orthodox to suggest that either the severely reductive or the severely open experimental forms were the economical forms in which artistic work could develop in this time and that the art of representation was excluded from the field.

But we could also say that, if the story is an interspace and if the novelistic construction is parallel to photography, then there are forms of writing inside of photography or types of image-making inside of photography which are also synthesized as a kind of interspace and the paradigm, for open, multi-generic, story-telling is of course the cinema as a concept.

I think it is also the case that the fixed character of photography, that is, its character as a still image, is something that was really only brought up to consciousness, in a way, or made significant by the phenomenon of cinema. This is a historical perspective that I am interested in and which suggests that photography was certainly an art form and a philosophical problem as an art form at its origins. Our ability to comprehend and even to perceive it as a philosophical problem had to await the explosion of the cinema in order for that to become clear.

It interests me that the cinema’s ability to appear to move is based upon something organic in the human eye, the phenomenon of the persistence of vision which is a kind of a compulsion for things to exist in movement, a compulsion away from stasis, a compulsion away from seeing a film for what it really is, which is a series of still photographs flashed on the screen one after the other, a compulsion in the organism to see that as motion which we know is not. Paradoxically the very phenomenon of the persistence of vision has its opposite which is that the eye (and the optic nerve and the brain) clings a little bit to

each still image, clings just long enough to keep seeing it when it has already passed and been replaced with the next one. I always see that as a strange, organic situation in which the eye is both compelled into movement away from stasis, away from different things that are static, and yet also compelled to preserve the moment of reception of static image. That contradiction is mysterious, is part of the organism, and is what allows the cinema to exist. You could say then that, in the light of film, the still quality of photography is revealed to us as the kind of problem that it really is. In fact, I think that the better word to use for photography is not ‘still images’, but ‘arrested images’, ‘stopped images’ and in that case, in the light of cinema, the stillness or the arrestedness of photography has a kind of intensified character. It’s not any longer just a static image.

Arrestedness, if you want to call it that, this peculiar stillness of photography, is the new form of static pictorial art or still, motionless pictorial art which was created by photography. Before photography, all pictures were static – so much so that it was never really an issue or hardly an issue. But the arrestedness of photography as opposed to its historical stillness, its continuity with what preceded it, I think, is a dialectical product of the sweeping over of photography by the cinema between 1890 and whenever. I mean the cinema swept photography up into something new and yet the cinema did its sweeping by means of photography. So we would have something like this: the new stillness of photography was something historically created, that probably is – this is simply speculation – that people saw the stillness of a photograph differently than they would have seen the stillness of an etching, for example; that is the experience people had in front of early portrait photography. So already photography created a new stillness, historically, for perception. Cinema comes along later and sets that into motion by the means I’ve rudimentarily described here. And in the light of that motion, the sweeping up of the photograph into movement, our perception, our ability to comprehend or perceive a still picture was altered once again historically. What we are working in, including me, is what I would call that second stillness or that arrestedness of photography. It’s a phenomenology that in a way derives from the motion picture and in some ways it is a phenomenology of our historical experience of the motion picture; I don’t think it’s possible to see photographic works or other things that I don’t think it’s very interesting to see them except as a kind of phenomenology of their own capacity for motion.

It is important to me that the project of depiction has something continuous about it. There is this interest in the human body as the omega. This term means to me culture-building and literacy-building, which I take as being those objectives of art to which I am attached. It’s by this human body of omega by which those kinds of objectives might be obtained: to show how cultures are built, how they mutate, how they collapse, how they are transformed, what’s happening to them and therefore, of course, how people come to be the way they are. I think of Gauguin’s painting *Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?* as being a typical, romantic,



nineteenth-century expression of a question I would pose differently, namely, ‘Why are we like we are?’ That is how I would pose that question today. The notion of the body as the basic point suggests the course of the gestures and configurations of the body that have been articulated through the history of Western art, mostly in painting and sculpture, certainly in opera, theatre or novel. I have used the term micro-gesture in the past to suggest what happens to gesture in the modern world: The loss of culture in which the ceremonial gestures that appear in earlier artworks can be made believable. I see many painters and photographers who have taken literally from Caravaggio or Poussin – gestures that they are very moved by – and reproduce them in modern dress. That is extremely difficult to make convincing, because the cultures have changed. What is happening today is another kind of gesture, which I call micro-gesture: little things that happen which are compelling, which in fact only the optical, magnifying media that we are now in possession of have made visible to us.

Many critics have made a typology of what I am doing as a kind of social art or social commentary or political art. This is absolutely true except that I don’t see it as being the fundamental term under which what I am doing is articulated. I think there is a social art aspect to all art, but what also has to be raised is the fact that these movements that I am depicting, the conditions that I’m articulating here are not, strictly speaking, bonded to any direct attitude towards social art, except in one sense: to be interested in the typologies of transformation may imply commitment to a philosophy of progress. That is possible, but I put that out for discussion.

Jeff Wall, ‘My Photographic Production’, *Symposium Die Photographie In Der Zeitgenossischen Kunst. Eine Veranstaltung Der Akademie Schloss Solitude 6/7 Dezember 1989* [Edition Cantz, 1990].

## Martha ROSLER

### Interview with Steve Edwards [1989]

*Steve Edwards* The media that you use – video, photography, the postcard, and so on – are all cultural forms that are directed towards popular intervention and yet, at the same time, they always end up in the gallery space. Do you regard that as a contradiction?

*Martha Rosler* Yes, I do. But I think the art world is made up of contradictions. On the other hand, the work doesn’t only appear in galleries. It would be nice if the audience for my work were a combination of activists, artists and ordinary people, but there’s probably no such thing, at least not in my country, and probably not in yours. You have to build an audience, and you can also use the gallery space as a platform, to accomplish a number of things – not the least of which is to present a divergent view of art. I don’t think, though, that one gives up on putting one’s work elsewhere.

*Edwards* How do you see your use of these ‘impure’ and

‘de-aestheticized’ forms like postcards or video?

*Rosler* I see them as thumbing their noses at what is fashionable. I don’t mind covering my work – and, I suppose, myself – with the mud of commonness, if that’s what is required.

*Edwards* Would you say something about your teaching, which is obviously an important part of your work?

Recently, you talked about the rejection of documentary by your students.

*Rosler* Teaching means exploring with future artists and others what the possibilities are for ‘art’ in the widest sense. Teaching means that you have to go over the significance of various practices, their origins and interconnectedness, their relation to the larger culture. I learn a tremendous amount from students about how people see the world, how they respond to our culture. I use that knowledge in developing teaching strategies, but it also tells me a great deal about what life appears to be about, which I guess is what lies behind my work.

It’s interesting that although the broader culture does still have room for documentary, it is becoming less transparent, less a matter of advocacy, and more sensationalized or surrealistic, a kind of masquerade. I find that students have little interest in the concept of documentary as a moment of revelation in which real ocial relations are pictured; that’s totally flattened for them. They see the world as being made up of a vast sameness of interactions, basically rooted in the cash nexus.

I always begin my course on the documentary tradition by asking the students to define or explain documentary. In the past, students led with the ideas of reportage and objectivity, the effort to communicate to readers or viewers something that happened ‘out there’. Eventually someone in the class was likely to challenge that conception, but not until it had been presented in some depth. In the past few years, though, students have consistently led with a negative: ‘Of course, there’s nothing without a point of view; everything has a bias.’

I won’t suggest they are wrong, but their attitude, its cynicism, does define a loss. They are in no mood to be convinced about much outside their own lives – not that they are totally selfish; they are perfectly capable of empathy and of anger at injustice. They just feel powerless to affect very much. Many of the Rutgers students have to worry about where their tuition or photo supplies are going to come from, and that seems to dampen their enthusiasm for what they perceive as other people’s battles.

*Edwards* Your work *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, which problematizes the conventional representation of the ‘down and out’, has been seen as an attack on the documentary form. Is that how you conceived it?

*Rosler* I saw it as being about inadequate representation. When I did that work – and later wrote the essay ‘In, Around, and Afterthoughts: On Documentary Photography’ to accompany it – documentary was reductive because it wasn’t socially embedded in the milieu of its representations. It had become a frozen practice, ritualized; a series of images and perhaps some

isolated texts. It had had its birth in a different historical moment, when it was a highly invested social practice, but had been transformed into mean sort of décor, a coffee-table form, used to confirm the bourgeois viewer in his or her superiority. In other words, it was social complacency masquerading as investment in change. It was anti-militant, it was dispiriting. Photography and its viewers were ultimately complicit in their support of no-change.

That doesn’t mean that photography and, in particular, documentary, can’t work in a project of social change, only that photography’s role has to be rethought. Just going out on a foray to assemble a collection of street trophies about this or that running social sore can’t be effective – and never was. This vision of documentary is easy to reject [ ... ]

Martha Rosler, ‘Secrets from the Street and Other Stories. Martha Rosler, American Artist and Writer, Talks to Steve Edwards’, *Ten8*, 35, 1989, 37-43.

## Thomas STRUTH

### Interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh [1990]

*Benjamin H.D. Buchloh* [ ... ] If one were to study the problems of portrait painting, for example, it would immediately be evident that the tradition of representation of the individual subject is obsolete. There is practically no credible portrait painting any more, except for Warhol’s portraits which are of course a total perversion of the idea.

Somehow it is still possible to produce portraits with photography, but the problem of the subject exists for photography in the same way as it does for painting.

*Thomas Struth* I believe that is a question of one’s attitude with regard to history. I could make it easy for myself and accept the fact that portraits are apparently impossible.

*Buchloh* The ‘great’ portrait photographers like Avedon, Penn or Karsh have made it evident why portrait photography has become really unbearable, and they prove that portraying individuals at best generates publicity for the photographer and the reification of individuality.

*Struth* The goal of these photographers was never portraiture, so your examples are problematic. If indeed these photographers failed, there is no reason why I and others cannot succeed with photographs, behind which a particular world view operates, that says more about the people and their society. Thomas Ruff’s portraits are for me an example of an attitude which basically rides with the stream of history and accepts it as such. Whereas I would describe myself as someone who attempts to photograph against these tendencies, to give pause, or move to investigative viewing, connected with a vision or a call to interact [ ... ]

*Buchloh* In your photographs the family is presented as a relatively stable group. These images seem to suggest



that the family is the last social space in which human relations and stability exist. To make this a bit more polemical, one could see your photos as a continuation of the famous exhibition ‘Family of Man’, where the family was represented as an ideological Leitmotiv, in order to prove, through the medium of photography, that the nuclear family is still the guarantee of social well-being and stability in every corner of the world.

**Struth** I don’t think this danger exists. For the most part, the contradictions and inconsistencies of these families are well represented in my photographs.

**Buchloh** The protective space of the private home and the protective space of the family become a space where your portrait photography may settle, just as in the deserted streets before. What makes it possible or impossible to depict the individual subject in your work?

**Struth** It could have to do with the way that photography is concerned with arresting time, with a process of occasionally halting history. Whereas with a snapshot, for example, one doesn’t adopt photography’s essence and attempt to deny it.

**Buchloh** What, in your understanding, is the essence of photography?

**Struth** It is a communicative and analytical medium. Today!

**Buchloh** Not a voyeuristic and fetishizing medium?

**Struth** No, not for me.

**Buchloh** But as a social convention it is first and foremost a voyeuristic medium. And you have to dissociate yourself from that, more or less consciously. Isn’t that another reason why it’s not possible to adopt certain photographic practices?

**Struth** For me, making a photograph is mostly an intellectual process of understanding people or cities and their historical and phenomenological connections. At that point the photo is almost made, and all that remains is the mechanical process. I could also write a text, but as I don’t write, I use the language of photographs. Seeing the circumstances, understanding and interpreting them is the interesting part for me.

**Buchloh** Why does your work refrain from captions? To take up the suggestion of Brecht, that photography is only readable and can only fulfil its function within a text-construction, must still concern and challenge you as well.

**Struth** With me that’s not really necessary anymore, as I think that through the decades of continued life with photographs and film images, the vocabulary of these images has expanded with such complexity and is known so well by everybody that we are now concerned with sorting the already existing pictures.

**Buchloh** When you say ‘pictures’ (*Bilder*) do you mean photographic conventions and conventions of seeing them, or actually existing photographs?

**Struth** I mean all of that.

**Buchloh** It seems that you do not accept easily an argument that attempts to construct a photographic tradition for your work, from Atget to Sander and the Bechers, since you really think that you have nothing to do with them and are far more preoccupied with contemporary artistic practices. The same could probably

be said for your portrait photography, that it has precious little, if anything at all, to do with the history of photography; rather, it is concerned with questions which lie outside of that history.

**Struth** I would like to turn the tables and say that aspects of the history of photography interest me in so far as they represent an attitude towards people and their history. I am uninterested in whether it’s painting, literature, photography, film or some other medium. I do know that comparisons will be made according to the history of media, but I don’t see that it had to be restricted to that. I don’t even find the question very interesting. I see that a connection does exist between works by Atget, Hilla and Bernd Becher, Sergej Eisenstein, Flaubert, Freud and my work. I don’t just work with the history of photography, my work refers to the phenomena of the world in which I live now.

**Buchloh** That’s a credible assertion, which is of course somewhat weakened if we ask: how is the world in which you now live mediated? Isn’t it mediated through technical and rhetorical conventions of representation, linguistically and ideologically? Under this condition it’s unavoidable to reflect on the possibility or impossibility of photographic conventions; the more you assert that this reflection is beside the point, the more you will unconsciously fall victim to the conventionality of the practice.

**Struth** The objects photographed by Hilla and Bernd Becher depict a vocabulary of forms which can still be connected with the activity of working, such that a derrick has the effect of a signal or is a symbolic representation of ‘climbing into the earth’. This is something which has changed, since the great industrial constructions one sees today no longer indicate from the outside what gets distributed, produced, sorted, stored or hidden.

**Buchloh** This is a good example to demonstrate the way photographic possibilities are contingent on historical and social conditions. You could never portray a nuclear reactor in the way that derricks were portrayed by the Bechers, and it’s logical that they couldn’t portray a nuclear reactor.

**Struth** Ten years ago, as I was making the first photos of streets of 1950s buildings in Germany, I thought: this is basically like Atget or Hilla and Bernd Becher – it’s always at that time when important phenomena disappear ... therein lies the task of the photographer, practically like a surgeon, to reveal and to preserve the essential structure and type of these historical phenomena.

**Buchloh** That is, you would in principle agree if one said that certain forms of photography always register the moment a loss is directly immanent? Applying this to your photos of family groups, does this mean that for you, these are the last pictures of actually existing social interaction, when real social interaction is increasingly understood as disappearing?

**Struth** Sure, that much is clear. Just the other day someone told me that in America today, or in ten or fifteen years, half of all the children will grow up without a family. This was surprising news which I never suspected. What interests me is that this act of remembrance also involves looking forward [ ... ]

**Buchloh** Portrait photos unavoidably produce a hierarchy, a process of individual selection and of pictorial differentiation. It is the inner dialectic and difficulty of portrait photography that in selection, separation and exhibition, they present constructions of the subject which claim in some way to justify that process of selection. That’s why the genre of the portrait photograph is always allied with hierarchical thinking, and I believe this is the difficulty I come across now when I pose to you the question of how and under what circumstances you can justify the reinstating of portrait photography in your work.

For me your architectural photographs pose among others the question of public space and to what extent it can still be experienced. At the moment the factors are: that there can be no more hierarchization of society that would be credible, that is, at that moment when all actually participate in the production process, there are no important or unimportant ones, that is, there are no portrayable and no non-portrayable persons.

At that time, the category of portrait will have become invalid as a portrayal of the historical agent, because all people in society have become historical agents.

That’s why portrait photography has become invalid. There are other criteria and other determinants, which ...

**Struth** Yes, that is indeed wonderful!

Now for the first time it may be decided to photograph the processes that actually determine the people ... Didn’t we already determine that the family photographs are primarily a reflection of the relations of the portrayed persons?

**Buchloh** No, I said, in the portraits and the urban images, the architectural photos, the actual realms of social interaction outside the private cannot be portrayed, i.e. social processes of production, processes of consumption, the actual social processes that transcend the private are absent in your photographs, in the portraits as well as in the city photographs.

**Struth** That’s not true. I find that these processes represent themselves indeed in the city photographs. Urban space is a result of social interaction and one can see it in the street and in my photos.

**Buchloh** In the architecture?

**Struth** Yes, clearly.

**Buchloh** I agree, but they represent themselves under the condition of the absence of people.

**Struth** Yes, that’s true.

**Buchloh** Otherwise they wouldn’t be readable, paradoxically. When I say that on the one hand, collective participation in the production process made it impossible to sort out the historical agents, one could say that on the other hand, the constant and constantly increasing fetishization of subjectivity in fashion and celebrity photography has totally ruined the credibility of subjectivity in photography.

That is the other side of the historical condition which made portrait photography impossible, i.e. that in every instance where subjectivity is represented, product propaganda is simultaneously present.

That’s why your work generates such ambiguities – on the one hand, you are opposed to the total erosion of



subjectivity as celebrated by Warhol, and on the other hand, you take an apparently restorative position of wanting to conserve or reconstitute the portrait itself.

This restorative quality in your work, which at first seems rather suspect, actually turns out to be a form of resistance.

**Struth** Yes, I think ‘form of resistance’ is a good word for it.

To whom does one abandon the public ground? To those persons who have been dispossessed of their subjectivity? The celebrities and people, who are portrayed as celebrities, i.e. those people who dress like the putative stars or who accept their behavioural mechanisms into their private realm? People you can see every day on the street. Do you want to be an active or a passive member of society, of your community?

For my part, as an artist, I don’t want to abandon the field of representation to people who stand for a political availability of background figures. As for Warhol I can say that his work is indicative of a process; he anticipates what is increasingly happening in Europe too, but for me this process leads to isolation and boredom, which is particularly deadening; it leads to a statistical existence and not to life – it leads closer to death, I would say. There’s perhaps a particular personal or societal necrophilia at play.

This morning I thought again about that quote from Brecht [on image and text, cited by Buchloh on previous page]. When I make a portrait of a family, I intervene at the moment when these persons have most often been photographed, have themselves photographed and have already had experiences with photography.

The image we’ve already been living with, advertisements, music videos, etc. comprise a kind of extensive, diffuse mass which is always present for us. This way the limits of all possible images are extended so far that, as I said before, now the problem is actually to select and to more precisely formulate already existing images. How can I pull out the ones I find most interesting and repeat them once more in terms of my themes. To develop a communicable language is my concern. If I know photographs of buildings, of people, portraits that already existed, that I’ve seen in Nadar, Evans, Sander and Rodchenko, I know all these languages and could use them as my vocabulary. But I use maybe only a part of it, in order to apply it to today’s society or to individual life-circumstances or my view of life – as a more precise development.

So the family portraits, seen with distance, have as their basis rather all of the everyday family portraits, the ones already to be found in every drawer and box of every family. As Ingo Hartmann put it, after viewing the street photos, one has to go back to one’s own street and reconsider it, whether one wants to or not.

With the family photographs, too, you’re ultimately confronted with your own experiences.

**Buchloh** In the last analysis, the conventions of amateur family photography are more important to you than those of portrait photography?

**Struth** Yes, precisely.

**Buchloh** And that’s why my question about your

relationship to the history of portrait photography hasn’t been answered, because for you a reflection on the history of portrait photography doesn’t play any essential role?

**Struth** Yes, just about.

In effect, this level is often undoubtedly more important, more interesting and exciting than a relationship to the history of famous portrait photographers. I find that rather static and boring [ ... ]

This morning I was thinking once again about the common features of the street- and the portrait photos. There is for each a level which appears to be the most important: first the space in which I move once I’ve left my private space, the process through which this (public) space came about, how I encounter it and how I am supposed to behave towards it – and the other side of it is the private space with its development and the question of its determining factors. These are naturally questions which are inseparable.

**Buchloh** In the meantime, there is a third group which follows upon the portrait photographs, a series of photos that were taken in museums, where private and public spheres are institutionally mediated; photos where not architectural or urban space, so-called public space is depicted, and not the private interior, but a rather private activity in a public space. How do you see the relationship between the museum photos and the portrait on the one hand and the street photos on the other?

**Struth** Perhaps it’s a bit early to schematise it like that. The interest in the museum photos came through the portraits, which then led to my occupation with portrait painting, principally with that of the Renaissance. The trick was, which will seem strange to you as a historian, to regard portrait painting as I would look at photographs, to understand the original act of portrait painting like this: as an interpretation of the world executed with the means which were common and appropriate at that time. From there arose the idea to bring these two things, with the medium of reproduction, the currently appropriate medium, to the same level; to make a reproduction of a painted image and at the same time produce a new image in which real persons of today are shown. That’s why for example in the museum photos you would see exclusively figurative paintings, no abstract works and a few sculptures.

**Buchloh** When you situated the museum photos in relation to the history of portrait painting, I was quite astonished, because I had seen the museum photos, again, in a quite different manner. They were first of all an attempt at a synthesis of private and public space, a reflection on institutionally mediated private space. Furthermore, I thought that the museum photos were strangely tautological, in that the viewers, in viewing the picture, see their activity directly reflected in the photos of the viewers of pictures. Beyond that, though, the museum photos are naturally also testimony to a very strange shift in the public sphere of the institution of art. They document a tendency that has grown uncannily in the last ten years and continues to grow: the fantastic desperation with which the public throws itself to the museum and exhibition of art history.

**Struth** I felt a need to make these museum photos, because many works of art, which were created out of particular historical circumstances, have now become mere fetishes, like athletes or celebrities, whereby the original inspiration for these works is fully obliterated. What I wanted to achieve with this series, which will be limited to maybe thirty photographs, is to make a statement about the original process of representing people leading to my act of making a new picture, which is in a certain way a very similar mechanism: the viewer of the works seen in the photo is an instance which finds itself in a space to which I, too, belong when I stand in front of the photo. The photos illuminate the connection and should lead the viewers away from regarding the works as mere fetish-objects and initiate their own understanding or intervention in historical relationships.

**Buchloh** It seems then that the first public social situation in your work where space and private subject are mediated, where architectural and portrait photographs are integrated, is the space of the institution of art.

**Struth** Today museums are no longer the same institutions they were fifteen years ago; they have become an institution which due to its significance or its popularity is comparable to, not exactly the shopping mall, but to the sports field or to religion – churches today are probably emptier than museums. That’s why it is a place which is essentially non-private. It’s not for nothing that many people compare modern museums with train stations. That’s a statement which is heard very often: about for example the Museum Ludwig or the Louvre; it’s like a train station there, many people pass through and you never know what they’re doing or why they’re there – because of the art works or for entertainment?

**Buchloh** Although this scepticism does not seem to be communicated like that in your museum photos. They seem to take a far more positive position towards the viewers.

**Struth** That is the resistance! I got the first ideas in the Louvre around Christmas time; it was very crowded and I thought that the world of visitors in the Louvre, people of the most diverse ages and ethnicities, were incredibly similar to the themes in the paintings. And the other conclusion was that I wondered: why are the people there, what are they getting out of it, is any change occurring in their personal lives because of it, in their public lives, in their activity, in their family, with their friends?

Is any change through this museum visit even possible, or is it an entertainment, like watching music videos or like the way one needs some visual refreshment, to keep from getting bored.

**Buchloh** It’s quite clear from the museum photos on hand until now that the viewers are not portrayed as a scattered mass in a train station or as victims of the spectacle culture, but rather that you consciously seek out viewers in contemplative situations, in situations of relative concentration, in groups, in obvious involvement with the pictures, not in mere passage, but in real situations of preoccupation with the exhibited objects.



**Struth** Earlier we talked about how the family portraits as well as the architectural and museum photos convey a sense of arrested time. That happens already even during the production of the photos due to the long exposure time. Especially in the museum photos – although the scenery is constantly moving, the minimum exposure time is a quarter second, a half or even a full second. It could be said that showing situations of an intensity of viewing is more preferable to me, that it should constitute a kind of counter example.

I can participate and take action in this process on a broader level. That’s how I understand my museum photos, when I do exhibit a few of these works at an exhibition like Aperto in Venice. Where the mechanisms of spectacle, of the contemporary museum-business are staged, my photographs can offer a reflection about the very situation.

I observed people when they went into the exhibition and how they reacted in amazement.

Therein lies a moment of pause or of questioning. Because the viewers are reflected in their activity, they have to wonder what they themselves are doing at that moment [ ... ]

Thomas Struth, ‘Interview between Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Thomas Struth, Paris, 30, rue Vieille du Temple, 30 June and 1 July 1990’, trans. Sara Ogger, *Portraits – Thomas Struth* [New York: Marian Goodman Gallery, 1990] 29–40.

## Ken LUM

### Interview with Alan Woods

#### [1994]

**Alan Woods** *Hello, How Are You?* (1994) is different from the other works, in that one of the problems it seems to suggest is the struggle to get a sense of meaning into language, a struggle from outside to get inside, whereas in the others there is a sense of language shedding meaning.

**Ken Lum** I do believe in this notion of *genius loci*, and so here there is a man who is obviously an immigrant, he has to find his place now, and his identity is actually restricted. Two things: his identity is actually determined by his lack of facility with English, his lack of knowledge of a certain language, yet at the same time his identity is made all the more apparent because of his lack of that language. He is known as an immigrant, but at the same time it becomes existential, in that he has to find or build a kind of structure and enter into the world he finds himself in.

**Woods** Image and text are formally separated in the work; image on one side, text on the other. They are incommensurate, but they inflect one another and are bound to one another. Why do you favour a formal separation? Why doesn’t the text intrude into the image?

**Lum** Well, first of all, they are two different systems. Even when you overlay them on top of one another, they are always two different systems, and I think that even

when you see an ad in which you have a line of text and right below it a picture of something, there is always a kind of difference in terms of your regard. You look at the image, you look at the text; you look at the text, you look at the image. It’s never like you look at it all at once. Or very rarely: I don’t know if it ever exists, whereby you look at them as a unit, together. But the other thing, one of Modernism’s great characteristics, was its attention to the reflexive, that something calls attention to itself. By separating them formally the text calls attention to the limitation of the picture and the picture calls attention to the limitation of the text, so that you are never locked into the picture, so to speak, completely, because there’s always some text which takes you outside the picture, but interestingly enough, in my work, I wanted the text to lead back into the picture and vice versa, and so it was a kind of double reflexivity that I was after.

**Woods** I want to ask about the minimalist/formalist ‘template’. The actual presentation, the strict diptych form with the photograph raised just above the plane, which emphasizes the physical objectness of the work.

**Lum** This relates to something I just said about reflexivity. The reductiveness in terms of modernist strategies was also the quest for literalness, literalness in terms of how a work came to be, literalness in terms of the processes which a work undergoes and so on. And so, the picture mounted on to this painted aluminium box is essentially collage, and collage is always quite explicit in terms of ‘this is this part and this is that part’. And so that is a kind of literalness as far as the components are concerned.

**Woods** I wondered also if this is part of endowing the photograph with a kind of physicality, which maybe the photograph tends to lack; we tend to read the photograph as pure image, in a way. So it binds it to a sort of facticity. So although tactility is minimal, physical presence is strong.

**Lum** I’m very interested in avant-garde discourses which emanated in the 1960s, particularly that phase in late Pop, Minimalism and conceptualism. And certainly we’re revisiting that period now, and why? Because those issues are still very, very important. Those issues of modernity, communications, identity, what constitutes an object of art, the commodification process. Not just commodification, but also all the processes of acculturation, or to put it more bluntly, how high art is always threatened by low art, by the whole of mass culture and so on. What is the relationship of art to consumer society? Those questions were asked and were central to conceptual art. That was a kind of apogee, perhaps the last moment when those questions were asked. Now it seems that those questions have been somewhat diffused. And of course they weren’t just central to 1960s underground art but were central to the whole modern movement dating back to the nineteenth century, or even earlier if you want, the late eighteenth century [ ... ]

Ken Lum, interview with Alan Woods, *transcript: a journal of visual culture*, 2:1, 1994, 25–36.

## Arthur C. DANTO

### Beat Streuli’s

#### *Gesamtkunstwerk* [1998]

Beat Streuli’s *Oxford Street* is a para-cinematic, non-narrative depiction of a crowd, coursing rather than surging along the London thoroughfare famous for its stores. It is para-cinematic because motion is an inference the viewer makes from the sequence of somewhat discontinuous frames. The artist uses various masking devices to enhance the feeling of motion – fading one individual into another, for example – which cinema would have no need of, since it shows motion directly. There is no sound track.

The individuals who compose the crowd are shown frontally, and from above, at perhaps a 33 degree angle. The angle defines the position of the camera, and hence the photographer, outside and above the crowd. Through the angle the artist is at every moment present to us, though he is outside the river of humanity he registers, as from a bridge. Perhaps people in the crowd could, if they looked up, see themselves being photographed. They do not, however, look anywhere but within.

The individuals in the crowd seem uniformly preoccupied, and as oblivious to one another as to the artist. Everyone in the crowd is moving in the same direction as everyone else – toward, and then beneath us who share the photographer’s perspective. But they do not appear to have a common destination. It is very much what Sartre designated a *groupe-en-série*, as distinguished from a *groupe-en-fusion*. Sartre’s example of a *groupe-en-série* is a number of persons forming a queue at a bus stop, each there for his or her own reasons. A crowd moving towards the Bastille, with the spontaneous common goal of tearing down the hated edifice, is his illustration of a *groupe-en-fusion*. A fused group is a rarity in social reality, but we are so used to being part of serial groups, especially if we live in great cities, that we would feel uncanny walking alone in Oxford Street, or on Fifth Avenue, with no one else in sight. We need the constant presence of others whom we have no wish to acknowledge as individuals. We are only interested in their being-there, to use another expression of Sartre’s. We are not there in Oxford Street. We are as little part of the crowd as the photographer is, on his metaphoric bridge.

There is no ‘where’ with which we can answer ‘Where are they going?’. The crowd forms spontaneously and is in a steady state of replenishment. We see nothing as definite as a bus stop to ascribe a common, if unshared purpose to its members. It is unlikely that they are heading towards the same department store or restaurant. They have a heaviness, an expression of constant apprehension, a look so internal that they seem like sleepwalkers. There is little animation. Everyone looks as if the workday is ended rather than about to begin, and they walk only as fast as the fact that they are in a crowd allows, towards the conveyances which will

bear them home. If only the overuse of ‘alienation’ had not alienated us from using it any longer, the crowd would be a walking definition of its meaning [ ... ]

A problem narrative painters used to face concerned how many figures must be drawn in order to achieve the effect of a crowd. Ten? Twelve? Or could five do the trick? One could count the individuals in one of the frames of *Oxford Street*, but there is a sense of numerousness with no specific number, as if everyone were part of a common human substance, illustrating some metaphysical thesis of Asiatic philosophies. Sometimes the crowd thins and opens, but mostly there is an impression of constancy, a kind of steady state. It is possible to imagine background music which defines the cadences of persons moving as one. It would be cruel to use a march. The movement does not, however, need music. It is, itself, the ‘still sad music of humanity’.

What we hear in fact is the clacking, whirring sounds of slide replacing slide in projectors above our heads. These sounds are essential to the experience. They underscore the truth that we are looking at pictures, as well as people. Music would drown out the noises the apparatus makes. So would the sound of shuffling feet. Silence in the image is required if we are to be aware of the reality of its being projected.

With each whirl, something happens on the wall. One figure is superimposed upon and, in effect, swallows another. Sometimes neither figure is sufficiently defined that we can make out what it is – male or female, young or old, white or black or asian. We do not feel, however, that the replaced figure is undone by the one that replaces it. We know the fading out is not part of the scene, but part of the work. It reminds us, like the sounds, of what we are experiencing. Sometimes, too, a figure is picked out from the crowd and featured. We might see the same or nearly the same head, repeated three or four times with a single frame, until, slowly, it gives way to another cross-section of the crowd. These singling-outs and iterations also draw us back to the materiality of the medium. The artist is present not simply as a photographer, above the crowd, but as a manipulator of the images, as in montage. The work is at once photography and what I will call ‘photographism’. ‘Photographism’ exploits the material of photography to non-photographic ends.

The interventions – these self-referential deflections back onto the medium – signal an effort by the photographer to find his way into the image he has created. He does not, however, succeed in overcoming the gap between himself and those who are his subjects. I suppose that might serve as a metaphor of the relationship between the artist and the flow of human life he or she addresses from without. We, however, are not at that same distance, even if we are not part of that crowd. That crowd is too powerful, too fascinating an entity to allow us to linger over the material truths of slides, dissolves, projection, angles, surface. The subject of the work is a modality of being human in the cities of the world.

Arthur C. Oanto, ‘Beat Streuli’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*’, *Parkett*, 54, 1998/99, 126–27.

# Olivier RICHON

## Image and Discourse [2000]

In a photographic work by Gillian Wearing, *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say*, an urban professional man holds a large piece of paper which reads: ‘I am desperate’. This photographic work appears effortless and straightforward, yet this apparent simplicity and clarity should encourage us to find a semantic complexity and ambivalence. What interests me here is the link between image and discourse. Discourse, to follow Benveniste, comprises what is said and who says it. With Wearing’s work ‘I am desperate’ what we have is the photograph of a subject and a subject of a written sentence. An existential subject is holding himself as a grammatical subject. The grammatical subject has an attribute – he is desperate; whereas the existential subject does not show signs of despair. In short, the subject of the enunciation and the enounced subject don’t match. Benveniste distinguishes between two forms of subjectivity; the subject of language and the subject using language. The existential subject and the grammatical subject are made visible in this photographic work, as is the gap between them, which is the gap between being and meaning.

It is well known that the pronoun ‘I’ interests linguists because it is not a nominal sign which has a fixed referent. Every ‘I’ has its own reference; this personal pronoun is used by everyone, it is promiscuous. Each time it is written or spoken it refers to a situation in discourse. The pronoun ‘I’ guarantees my linguistic existence. It makes me signify in a situation of speech, it makes me visible; to some extent I become a speaking image. Wearing’s ‘I am desperate’ produces situations in discourse where the function of discourse is made apparent; it produces subjectivity and spectatorship: a question is asked in order to prompt a response. Also, Wearing is well aware that her procedure highlights her own act of enunciation (asking a question, taking a photograph), a situation traditional photo-documentary would avoid.

Olivier Richon, ‘Image and Discourse’, Yve Lomax [ed.], *Images of Thought*, Vol. 1 [London: Salvo, 2000] 23–35.



# THE STUDIO IMAGE

The splicing of photography into the

vanguard art of the 1970s brought together the practices of performance art and portraiture. Together these opened up ways to use the privacy of the studio to investigate and remake public representations. The exploration of identity and social subjectivity is discussed by Jo Spence, Rotimi Fani-Kayode and John Coplans, very different practitioners who have all taken up the studio as an arena of personal and political expression. As a space of craft and manipulation, the studio has also lent itself to the possibilities of theatrical construction. Interviews with the fabricators James Casebere and Vik Muniz point to the ways in which the studio has also become an arena of alternative realities, of simulation and artifice.

## Roland BARTHES Camera Lucida [1980]

[...] Pornography ordinarily represents the sexual organs, making them into a motionless object (a fetish), flattered like an idol that does not leave its niche: for me, there is no *punctum* in the pornographic image; at most it amuses me (and even then, boredom follows quickly). The erotic photograph, on the contrary (and this is its very condition), does not make the sexual organs into a central object; it may very well not show them at all; it takes the spectator outside its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph [Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self-Portrait*, 1975] and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see: not only towards ‘the rest’ of the nakedness, not only towards the fantasy of a *praxis*, but towards the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together. This boy with his arm outstretched, his radiant smile, though his beauty is in no way classical or academic, and though he is half out of the photograph, shifted to the extreme left of the frame, incarnates a kind of blissful eroticism; the photograph leads me to distinguish the ‘heavy’ desire of pornography from the ‘light’ (good) desire of eroticism; after all, perhaps this is a question of ‘luck’: the photographer has caught the boy’s hand (the boy is Mapplethorpe himself, I believe) at just the right degree of openness, the right density of abandonment: a few millimetres more or less and the divined body would no longer have been offered with benevolence (the pornographic body shows itself, it does not give itself, there is no generosity in it): the photographer has found the *right moment*, the *kairos* of desire [...]

1 [Reproduced on page 137.]

Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire* [Paris, 1980]; trans. R. Howard, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1980] 57–59.

## Jo SPENCE Interview with John Roberts [1990]

*John Roberts* The work on health though is not simply about making the abuses around the treatment of cancer visible but in showing and celebrating the female body in process. There is a purposeful and shameless display of your ‘wound’. In Renaissance devotional painting this display of wounds was called *ostentatio vulnerum* (the showing forth of wounds). There are echoes of this in your work. The wound becomes the mark of redemption. However in this instance of course, the wound does not mark the proof of Christ’s corporeality – a reiteration of the Word, of Holy Scripture – but serves as a subversion of dominant texts around the female body: women with a mastectomy have no right to a visible sexuality; the passivity of the female cancer patient under orthodox medicine; the ‘good’ feminine self-portrait. This is a very compelling work because it addresses both female and male simultaneously, in so far as it is an image of female triumph, and a provocative transgression of capitalism’s infantilization of the female body. Would you agree with this?

*Jo Spence* I can only answer this by saying I have no religion. However I have read Audre Lorde’s *The Cancer Journals* where she talks about wearing our scars with

pride – and I thought ‘what crap’ when I read it. I don’t have any pride in my scars at all. I actually wanted to show what had been done to me, plus the crossover between sexual availability and sexual glamour and the impossibility of that for an ageing, mutilated woman.

Secondly it was a validation of not disavowing what had been done to me, because the only way I can begin to come to terms with it and take control of my own life was being able to look at what *had been done to me*. And the prosthesis syndrome is a complete denial for women of what has been done to them. That image has been used a lot on its own and I’m not too sure whether it says I’m a victim or not. The effect was to liken cancer treatment to warfare; it was based more on a notion of our culture as systematically trying to root out and destroy what it sees as the ‘trouble’ or the ‘dissenter’ rather than go to the complex causes of something. As for the question of redemption: redemption implies that I have committed a crime; on the contrary, I feel as if a crime has been committed on me. I am beginning to see the way the medical profession treats women’s bodies as tantamount to war crimes. I would say all my work has been concerned to subvert dominant images of women; however, the real problem for me has been how to represent the class connotations of this, which is why I am entering the sphere of debates around power. It becomes easier to discuss things metaphorically in those terms rather than being class based. Talking about power relations gives you a wider canvas in a sense because you can begin with the mother and child, or father and child, relationship as one of the main structures of all authority relations. Class, and of course race, would then enter according to the socialization of the child. And certainly in the work Rosy and I are doing now (Rosy and I are two working-class kids-made-good, so to speak) this is something which is

14. Jo Spence



central. As soon as you start unpacking the bland universalized images of the school child; and working within a tradition of oral history into phototherapy, the questions of class begin to come up immediately. You can begin to make your own experience visible to yourself in a way that you can't if you are working with a universalized icon of femininity and gendering, because they are all classless in any real sense. They are coded so that class doesn't cross your mind. Women's magazines are about 'how to leave the class you belong to'. My politics are informed by Marxism but I am finding it increasingly difficult to know how to talk about class in relation to images of women. Which is why in using myself as subject matter, and going back historically, at last I have been able to draw upon what I know rather than being stuck with the agendas of higher education which endlessly deconstruct images that are not about class, in the sense that they are a displacement of class. Anything from Hollywood which addresses sexuality only is a complete displacement of class, but unless you say it is a displacement of class it is not going to cross your mind. Worrying about androgyny at the height of the greatest economic and unemployment problems yet seen by the world might seem a very strange proposal from somebody with my background. But as a feminist who is interested in people rather than gendering, androgyny, the idea that we can all choose to manifest a range of masculine and feminine aspects, is very important. Within my family I can dredge up and replay images of parents that are totally androgynous: e.g. my mother went out to work in trousers all the time; my father looked after me as a child. Those things are not addressed in mainstream discussions on deconstruction. In fact as soon as you move into your own history many people would be able to see a different spectrum of images in their own past, and a range of identities emerge distinct and separate from the mere deconstruction of dominant images. The question of class for me is becoming more and more foregrounded; I feel I have been pulled sideways by a great gust of wind by going into higher education in which the main credibility is going to people doing work on masculinity and femininity, whereas other artists doing work on class have been relegated. It is the crossover between gender and class that I'm interested in, because the dominant myth is that as a woman who has no real power, you can *pass* as middle class. That is the myth that is handed out to women, not the myth of the madonna. The myth of the madonna obscures the realities of being a parent. I have a very practical approach to images really. I spent so much time in 'lower' education where you are dealing with adults who haven't had a so-called education, that in my own work I've been forced to find ways to address both the realm of the universalized image and the realm of the self and one's own experience. And that is why I'm very pleased with the helmet shot as an icon but only in the context of the whole work, which is about power relations. The fact is that by virtue of their anatomy – their reproductive ability – women spend far more time in the hands of doctors than men do. In that sense health is a much bigger question for women – in terms of an ongoing process – than for men. Men have more industrial diseases, but they tend to be towards the end of their

working life. Then they are as equally infantilized as women; they just hand their bodies over to the medical profession [...]

Jo Spence, 'Interview with John Roberts' [1990], John Roberts, *Selected Errors: Writings on Art and Politics 1981-90* [London, Pluto Press, 1992] 139-56

## Rotimi FANI-KAYODE

### Traces of Ecstasy [1992]

On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality; in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for. Such a position gives me a feeling of having very little to lose. It produces a sense of personal freedom from the hegemony of convention. For one who has managed to hang on to his own creativity through the crises of adolescence and in spite of the pressures to conform, it has a liberating effect. It opens up areas of creative enquiry which might otherwise have remained forbidden. At the same time, traces of the former values remain, making it possible to take new readings on to them from an unusual vantage point. The results are bound to be disorientating.

In African traditional art, the mask does not represent a material reality: rather, the artist strives to approach a spiritual reality in it through an image suggested by human and animal forms. I think photography can aspire to the same imaginative interpretations of life.

My reality is not the same as that which is often presented to us in western photographs. As an African working in a western medium, I try to bring out the spiritual dimension in my pictures so that concepts of *reality* become ambiguous and are opened to reinterpretation. This requires what Yoruba priests and artists call a *technique of ecstasy*.

Both aesthetically and ethically, I seek to translate my rage and my desire into new images which will undermine conventional perceptions and which may reveal hidden worlds. Many of the images are seen as sexually explicit – or more precisely, homosexually explicit. I make my pictures homosexual on purpose. Black men from the Third World have not previously revealed either to their own peoples or to the West a certain shocking fact: they can desire each other.

Some Western photographers have shown that they can desire Black males (albeit rather neurotically). But the exploitative mythologizing of Black virility on behalf of the homosexual bourgeoisie is ultimately no different from the vulgar objectification of Africa which we know at one extreme from the work of Leni Riefenstahl and, at the other from the *victim* images which appear constantly in the media. It is now time for us to reappropriate such images and to transform them ritualistically into images of our own creation. For me, this involves an imaginative investigation of Blackness, maleness and sexuality, rather than more straightforward reportage.

However, this is more easily said than done. Working in a Western context, the African artist inevitably encounters

racism. And since I have concentrated much of my work on male eroticism, I have also had homophobic reactions to it, both from the white and Black communities. Although this is disappointing on a purely human level, perhaps it also produces a kind of essential conflict through which to struggle to new visions. It is a conflict, however, between unequal partners and is, in that sense, one in which I remain at a disadvantage.

For this reason, I have been active in various groups which are organized around issues of race and sexuality. For the individual, such joint activity can provide confidence and insight. For artists, it can transform and extend one's Westernized ideas – for instance, that art is a product of individual inspiration or that it must conform to certain aesthetic principles of taste, style and content. It can also have the very concrete effect of providing the means for otherwise isolated and powerless artists to show their work and to insist on being taken seriously.

An awareness of history has been of fundamental importance in the development of my creativity. The history of Africa and of the Black race has been constantly distorted. Even in Africa, my education was given in English in Christian schools, as though the language and culture of my own people, the Yoruba, were inadequate or in some way unsuitable for the healthy development of young minds. In exploring Yoruba history and civilization, I have rediscovered and revalidated areas of my experience and understanding of the world. I see parallels now between my own work and that of the Osogbo artists in Yorubaland who themselves have resisted the cultural subversions of neo-colonialism and who celebrate the rich, secret world of our ancestors.

It remains true, however, that the great Yoruba civilizations of the past, like so many other non-European cultures, are still consigned by the West to the museums of *primitive* art and culture.

The Yoruba cosmology, comparable in its complexities and subtleties to Greek and Oriental philosophical myth, is treated as no more than a bizarre superstition which, as if by miracle, happened to inspire the creation of some of the most sensitive and delicate artefacts in the history of art.

Modern Yoruba art (amongst which I situate my own contributions) may now sometimes fetch high prices in the galleries of New York and Paris. It is prized for its exotic appeal. Similarly, the modern versions of Yoruba beliefs carried by the slaves to the New World have become, in their carnival form, tourist attractions. In Brazil, Haiti and other parts of the Caribbean, the earth reverberates with old Yoruba rhythms which are now much appreciated by those jaded Western ears which are still sensitive enough to catch the spirit of the old rites. In other words, the Europeans, faced with the dogged survival of alien cultures, and as mercantile as ever they were in the days of the Trade, are now trying to sell our culture as a consumer product. I am inevitably caught up in this.

Another aspect of history – that of sexuality – has also affected me deeply. Official history has always denied the validity of erotic relationships and experiences between members of the same sex. As in the fields of politics and economics, the historians of social and sexual relations



have been readily assisted in their fabrications by the Church. But in spite of all attempts by Church and state to suppress homosexuality, it is clear that enriching sexual relationships between members of the same sex have always existed. They are part of the human condition, even if the concept of sexual identity is a more recent notion.

There is a grim chapter of European history which was not drummed into me at school. I only discovered much later that the Nazis had developed the most extreme form of homophobia to have existed in modern times, and attempted to exterminate homosexuals in the concentration camps. It came not so much as a surprise but as yet another example of the long-standing European tradition of the violent suppression of otherness. It touches me just as closely as the knowledge that millions of my ancestors were killed or enslaved in order to ensure European political, economic and cultural hegemony of the world.

I see in the current attitudes of the British Government towards Black people, women, homosexuals – in short, anyone who represents otherness – a move back in the direction of the fascistic values which for a brief period in the 1960s and 1970s ceased to dominate our lives. For this reason I feel it is essential to resist all attempts that discourage the expression of one's identity. In my case, my identity has been constructed from my own sense of otherness, whether cultural, racial or sexual. The three aspects are not separate within me. Photography is the tool by which I feel most confident in expressing myself. It is photography, therefore – Black, African, homosexual photography – which I must use not just as an instrument, but as a weapon if I am to resist attacks on my integrity and indeed, my existence on my own terms.

It is no surprise to find that one's work is shunned or actively discouraged by the Establishment. The homosexual bourgeoisie has been more supportive – not because it is especially noted for its championing of Black artists, but because Black ass sells almost as well as Black dick. As a result of homosexual interest I have had various portfolios printed in the gay press, and in February a book of nudes will be published by GMP. There has also been some attention given to my erotic work by the sort of straight galleries which receive funding from more progressive local authorities [...]

As for Africa itself, if I ever managed to get an exhibition in, say, Lagos, I suspect riots would break out. I would certainly be charged with being a purveyor of corrupt and decadent Western values.

However, sometimes I think that if I took my work into the rural areas, where life is still vigorously in touch with itself and its roots, the reception might be more constructive. Perhaps they would recognize my smallpox Gods, my transsexual priests, my images of desirable Black men in a state of sexual frenzy, or the tranquillity of communion with the spirit world. Perhaps they have far less fear of encountering the darkest of Africa's dark secrets by which some of us seek to gain access to the soul.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode, 'Traces of Ecstasy', *Ten8*, 2:3, Spring, 1992, 64–70.

## John COPLANS Interview with Robert Berlind [1994]

*Robert Berlind* To what extent is age an explicit part of your content? Every sufficiently close-up view of flesh speaks of gravity and the consequences of ageing.

*John Coplans* The principal thing is the question of how our culture views age: that old is ugly. Take a photographer like Mapplethorpe. Every single photograph of his is about classical notions of beauty, of young beautiful black men, young beautiful women, and he selects subjects who are essentially interesting and good-looking and extremely physical. I can't stand them. They grate on my teeth. He almost never, unlike Rodin, does an old person. Just think of Rodin, how he dealt with people of all ages. I have the feeling that I'm alive, I have a body. I'm seventy years old, and generally bodies of seventy-year-old men look somewhat like my body. It's a neglected subject matter. If I accept the cultural situation, I'm a dead man. So I'm using my body and saying, even though it's a seventy-year-old body, I can make it extremely interesting. That keeps me alive and gives me vitality. It's a kind of process of energizing myself by my belief that the classical tradition of art that we've inherited from the Greeks is a load of bullshit.

*Berlind* And yet there is an emphatic formality in your work.

*Coplans* It's to do with painting, modern American painting in the 1940s, fifties and sixties: frontality, edge, tension, scale, size – and the relationship of these to the spectator, as against book photography. I'm often not sure what I'm doing, you see. I worry desperately. I have the deepest depression and anxieties at times about what I'm involving myself in and where it will lead me [...]

John Coplans, interview with Robert Berlind, *Art Journal*, 53:1, Spring, 1994, 33–34.

## James CASEBERE Interview with Steven Jenkins [1996]

*Steven Jenkins* [...] Freedom, or its lack, has been a recurring theme in your work, particularly with the prison images made during the last few years. Architecture as an emblem of social structure and control has always been one of your primary concerns, and the prison is the ultimate authoritarian structure created by our culture. The prison images seem to signify the apex of your thematic concerns thus far. How did these images originate?

*James Casebere* I was working on a set of pictures that dealt with the relationship between architecture and the development of different cultural institutions in Europe during the Enlightenment. As architecture, prisons are

relatively camouflaged, hidden from the public, the same way that prisoners themselves are kept out of sight. I decided to study and depict the social history of prisons through their architecture, and I researched the development of different types from the eighteenth century to the present. I discovered about nine basic prison types. In the United States, the two main models are the radial prison – for example, the Eastern Pennsylvania State Penitentiary in Philadelphia – and the Auburn/Sing Sing plan. The radial plan is based on isolation and solitary confinement. Prisoners eat alone and have private exercise rooms. They are supposed to commune only with God. Taking punishment out of the public arena was a Quaker reform. Confinement was connected to the idea of redemption, but a lot of prisoners in places like Philadelphia – who were Italian Catholics, coming from crowded tenements and large, extended families – didn't have that kind of religious background, so for them the idea of isolation was extremely disorienting. In contrast, the Auburn plan was based on the idea of social interaction, so prisoners would work, eat and exercise together.

The prison images also present a distillation of what I have been trying to do all along. My intention with this series was in part to critique the notion of the artist as an isolated individual, separated from society. I've always been somewhat ambivalent about this, because I value the idea of individual research and diligence. The jail-cell images are a critique of my artistic process but they also celebrate the idea of solitude.

*Jenkins* Have you come to any conclusions about secluding yourself as an artist, spending time alone creating these images, and adhering to or challenging the myth of the artist as existing outside mainstream culture?  
*Casebere* I'm not sure what my conclusions would be. I look at making art as a process of social dialogue. Now I'm trying to reduce the images to their bare essentials. The interior rooms are not only a reflection of my studio but also a reflection of the mechanisms of photography. The cell is a little box, like the camera, and the window is an aperture that lets in light. The room is a camera obscura.  
*Jenkins* I see a similar corollary between the camera and the panopticon, the model by which all areas of the prison can be seen from one vantage point. Just as the guard scans the prison from his viewpoint in the panopticon, the photographer has been thought of as capable of observing reality through the all-seeing camera lens. There's more scepticism of this notion during the past two decades, yet a certain blind belief in the photographic and the visual persists, as if to see all – through the camera lens or from the prison panopticon – is to know all.

*Casebere* I see what you're saying. I'm sceptical about the visual. Falsehood was a given when I started this work. Every so often a new truth is concocted to serve new political needs. The novels by Latin American magic realists showed how history is rewritten by each successive military dictatorship. I look at photography the same way: as a fiction, as a representation of a particular point of view. Today, we too readily accept what we read or see on the news as true. Seventy or eighty years ago, people were not as likely to take information for granted. A



city like New York had a hundred different newspapers, each with a different viewpoint, and you could choose the one you like or read conflicting views and debate their merits. There is not so much debate today. I try to address the limits of subjectivity — how it’s constructed and how we are locked into our own narrow vision.

*Jenkins* How do we get out?

*Casebere* I don’t know that I can answer that. Right now, I’m tempted to reshoot the same jail cell for the rest of my life.

*Jenkins* In order continually to rewrite the same fiction, or to arrive at some ultimate truth?

*Casebere* There’s no ultimate truth I’m trying to get at.

*Jenkins* Your impulse continually to rework the same jail cell reminds me of something you mentioned in conversation with Gregory Crewdson in 1993 about the cultural legacy of Minimalism, and about its ideological function to suppress emotion and pleasure. Your desire to strip away all but the essentials in your photographs adheres to Minimalist stylistics, yet you’re able to use the look of Minimalism to usurp what is considered the movement’s anti-emotional content. I think your images can be very emotional.

*Casebere* The prison images address the idea of denial and the absence of pleasure as it is related to my own ethnic heritage. The Protestant ethic, which values labour over pleasure, is something I felt very ambivalent about early on, and I fought with it. I’ve brought the issue to the foreground in my work by exaggerating the labour-intensive act of building the models [ ... ]

James Casebere, ‘A Conversation with James Casebere’, interview with Steven Jenkins, *Model Culture: James Casebere. Photographs 1975-1996* [San Francisco: The Friends of Photography, 1996] 80–87.

# Vik MUNIZ

## Interview with Charles Ashley Stainback [1997]

*Charles Ashley Stainback* Your first use of the camera is similar to the intentions of artists in the 1960s who simply began making photographs to document happenings, earthworks, or performances.

*Vik Muniz* That’s pretty accurate. I have always admired that kind of art for all the wrong reasons. My first reaction to finding Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in a book was, ‘Wow, what a great photograph!’ I could not believe someone had gone to so much trouble just to end up with a picture. I find quite paradoxical the fact that most of the art of the 1960s has a ‘what you see is what you get’ attitude, and because so much emphasis was placed on the physicality and evanescence of a work, most of what we’re left with is documentation. Well, documentation can be art. Pictures of Mont Blanc taken by the Bisson brothers in the nineteenth century were records of a performance, but the performance was executed entirely with the record in mind. I am pretty sure artists like Smithson or Matta-Clark felt that a piece was complete only after a

photograph had been taken of it. As for Happenings, I have been to a few performances and I confess that I get very embarrassed and rarely enjoy them. Photographs of such events, however, are always fascinating. I am very interested in the ways a performance gets recorded and the way in which the record affects the performance [ ... ]  
*Stainback* Do you consider yourself a conceptual artist? Loosely defined, of course, since we know that the true conceptual artist never really produces anything.

*Muniz* It is hard not to be conceptual. The term ‘conceptual art’ always bothered me because it’s impossible for me to imagine an art form without a concept. I think art becomes ‘political’, ‘conceptual’, or ‘spiritual’ only by subtraction. Basically what the so-called conceptual artist is saying is that he does not dance, sing, carve wood, draw nudes, or practice easel painting: he thinks ideas without form. If you find an idea without form, please let me know because I would love to take a picture of it. ‘Conceptual art’ only emphasizes the concept of an art object by the systematic impoverishing of its aesthetic value. I am an artist, and I think a real artist could not stand the sacrifice of beauty for the sake of smartness. You don’t have to do that! Take people like Courbet or Manet, for example. You can’t get more conceptual than that. You don’t need a neon sign to proclaim your intellectual intentions, all you need is a good story to give them form. Leonardo is always quoted for saying that art is a mental thing. I think what he really meant is that art is mental without exception. Marcel Broodthaers is a conceptual artist. So is Grandma Moses. On this subject, de Kooning had the final word when he said that in art, one idea is just as good as another [ ... ]

*Stainback* In the *Pictures of Chocolate* series, you use chocolate syrup. Maybe I’m stretching the point, but in photography and film chocolate syrup is often associated with death. In old black-and-white B-movies, chocolate syrup is substituted for blood. And to take one example from photography, Les Krims used chocolate syrup for a series of photographs in the early 1970s entitled *The Incredible Case of the Stack-o-Wheats Murders*.

*Muniz* Alfred Hitchcock used Bosco for the famous shower scene in *Psycho*. Apparently, real blood does not look bloody enough on screen. There is a major difference between the ‘real’ and the ‘realistic’, and sometimes the real thing does not make a persuasive representation of itself. I chose to work with chocolate because it had something to do with the feeling of painting. Chocolate inspires a multitude of psychological phenomena: it has to do with scatology, desire, sex, addiction, luxury, romance, etc. I have never met anyone who doesn’t like chocolate. Freud could probably explain why everybody loves chocolate. That’s why he was my first subject. I also wanted to make a drawing that challenged me in time. It usually takes an hour before the chocolate starts to dry and only a few minutes for it to melt under the hot lamps. I have to run a lot and the studio can get messy at times [ ... ]

Vik Muniz, interview with Charles Ashley Stainback, *Seeing Is Believing* [Arena Editions, 1997] 14, 15, 35, 43.



# THE ARTS OF REPRODUCTION

Much of the discussion of art and reproduction has been informed by Walter Benjamin's writings of the inter-war years. André Malraux's analysis of the artwork's transformation by the museum and the camera has also had a significant impact. As postmodern artists took up strategies of reproduction within their work critic Craig Owens posited the return of allegory to contemporary art in an influential argument that drew on Benjamin's theories. Richard Prince discusses the place of reproduction in his appropriative 'rephotography', while Yve Lomax has developed an allegorical art of the fragment that informs her writing as much as her visual practice. In interviews Gerhard Richter outlines the impact of photography on the social role of role of painting and Jeff Wall discusses the influence of painting on his photography.

## Walter BENJAMIN The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction [1936]

II

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.<sup>1</sup> The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility.<sup>2</sup> Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the

original preserved all its authority; not so *vis à vis* technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. This holds not only for the artwork but also, for instance, for a landscape which passes in review before the spectator in a film. In the case of the art object, a most sensitive nucleus – namely, its authenticity – is interfered with whereas no natural object is vulnerable on that score. The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardised by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter.

And what is really jeopardised when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.<sup>3</sup>

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term 'aura' and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalise by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements [ ... ]

III

[ ... ] The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. It makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the temporary decay of the aura. It rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the



increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent towards overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.<sup>4</sup> Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the images seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose ‘sense’ of the universal equality of things’ has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception [ ... ]

VI

In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value. To have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them. They stir the viewer; he feels challenged by them in a new way. At the same time picture magazines begin to put up signposts for him, right ones or wrong ones, no matter. For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.

VII

The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of painting and photography today seems so remote, and confused. This does not diminish its importance,

however; if anything, it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of the film [ ... ]

- 1 Of course, the history of a work of art encompasses more than this. The history of the ‘Mona Lisa’, for instance, encompasses the kind and number of its copies made in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- 2 Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain [mechanical] processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity. To develop such differentiations was an important function of the trade in works of art. The invention of the woodcut may be said to have struck at the root of the quality of authenticity even before its late flowering. To be sure, at the time of its origin a mediaeval picture of the Madonna could not yet be said to be ‘authentic’. It became ‘authentic’ only during the succeeding centuries and perhaps most strikingly so during the last one.
- 3 The poorest provincial staging of Faust is superior to a Faust film in that, ideally, it competes with the first performance at Weimar. Before the screen it is unprofitable to remember traditional contents which might come to mind before the stage – for instance, that Goethe’s friend Johann Heinrich Merck is hidden in Mephisto, and the like.
- 4 To satisfy the human interest of the masses may mean to have one’s social function removed from the field of vision. Nothing guarantees that a portraitist of today, when painting a famous surgeon at the breakfast table in the midst of his family, depicts his social function more precisely than a painter of the seventeenth century who portrayed his medical doctors as representing this profession, like Rembrandt in his ‘Anatomy Lesson’.

Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ [1936]; reprinted in *Illuminationeh*, ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn, *Illuminations* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968]; Schocken Books paperback edition [New York: Random House, Inc.] 220–21, 222–23, 226–27.

# André MALRAUX

## Museum without Walls [1956]

II

Photography, which started in a humble way as a means of making known acknowledged masterpieces to those who could not buy engravings, seemed destined merely to perpetuate established values. But actually an ever greater range of works is being reproduced, in ever greater numbers, while the technical conditions of reproduction are influencing the choice of the works selected. Also, their

diffusion is furthered by an ever subtler and more comprehensive outlook, whose effect is often to substitute for the obvious masterpiece the significant work, and for the mere pleasure of the eye the surer one of knowledge. An earlier generation thrived on Michelangelo; now we are given photographs of lesser masters, likewise of folk paintings and arts hitherto ignored: in fact everything that comes into line with what we call a style is now being photographed.

For while photography is bringing a profusion of masterpieces to the artists, these latter have been revising their notion of what it is that makes the masterpiece.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century the masterpiece was a work that existed ‘in itself’, an absolute. There was an accepted canon preconizing a mythical yet fairly well-defined beauty, based on what was thought to be the legacy of Greece. The work of art constantly aspired towards an ideal portrayal; thus, for Raphael, a masterpiece was a work on which the imagination could not possibly improve. there was little question of comparing such a work with others by the same artist. Nor was it given a place in Time; its place was determined by its success in approximating to the ideal work it adumbrated.

True, this aesthetic was steadily losing ground between the Roman sixteenth and the European nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, until the Romantic movement, it was assumed that the great work of art was something unique, the product of unconditioned genius. History and antecedents counted for nothing; the test was its *success*. This notion, narrow if profound, this Arcadian setting in which man, sole arbiter of history and his sensibility, repudiated (all the more effectively for his unawareness of it) the struggle of each successive age to work out its own perfection – this notion lost its cogency once men’s sensibility became attuned to different types of art, whose affinities they glimpsed, though without being able to reconcile them with each other [ ... ]

Photographic reproduction was to aid in changing the tenor of this debate; by suggesting, then imposing, a new hierarchy [ ... ]

Just as, formerly, the masterpiece that made good in the conflict with the myth it conjured up of its own perfection, and, thereafter the masterpiece acclaimed as such in the company of the Immortals, was joined and sometimes replaced by the most *telling* work of the artist in question, so now another class of work is coming to the fore: the most significant or accomplished work of every *style*. By presenting some two hundred works of sculpture, an album of Polynesian art brings out the quality of some; the mere act of grouping together many works of the same style creates its masterpieces and forces us to grasp its import [ ... ] the Museum without Walls, thanks to the mass of works it sets before us, frees us from the necessity of this tentative approach to the past; by revealing a style in its entirety – just as it displays an artist’s work in its entirety – it forces both to become *positive*, actively significant. To the question, ‘What is a masterpiece?’ neither museums nor reproductions give any definitive answer, but they raise the question clearly; and, provisionally, they define the masterpiece not so much by comparison with its rivals as with reference to the ‘family’



to which it belongs. Also, since reproduction, though not the cause of the intellectualisation of art, is its chief instrument, the devices of modern photography (and some chance factors) tend to press this intellectualisation still farther.

Thus the angle from which a work of sculpture is photographed, the focusing and, above all, skilfully adjusted lighting may strongly accentuate something the sculptor merely hinted at. Then, again, photography imparts a family likeness to objects that have actually but slight affinity. With the result that such different objects as a miniature, a piece of tapestry, a statue and a mediaeval stained-glass window, when reproduced on the same page, may seem members of the same family. They have lost their colours, texture and relative dimensions (the statue has also lost something of its volume); each, in short, has practically lost what was specific to it – but their common style is by so much the gainer.

There is another, more insidious, effect of reproduction. In an album or art book the illustrations tend to be of much the same size. Thus works of art lose their relative proportions; a miniature bulks as large as a full-size picture, a tapestry or a stained-glass window. The art of the Steppes was a highly specialised art; yet, if a bronze or gold plaque from the Steppes be shown above a Romanesque bas-relief, in the same format, it becomes a bas-relief. In this way reproduction frees a style from the limitations which made it appear to be a minor art.

Indeed reproduction (like the art of fiction, which subdues reality to the imagination) has created what might be called ‘fictitious’ arts, by systematically falsifying the scale of objects; by presenting oriental seals the same size as the decorative reliefs on pillars, and amulets like statues. As a result, the imperfect finish of the smaller work, due to its limited dimensions, produces in enlargement the effect of a bold style in the modern idiom. Romanesque goldsmiths’ work links up with the sculpture of the period, and reveals its true significance in sequences of photographs in which reliquaries and statues are given equal dimensions. True, these photographs figure solely in specialist reviews. But these reviews are made by artists, for fellow artists – and do not fail to take effect. Sometimes the reproductions of minor works suggest to us great styles which have passed away – or which ‘might have been’ [...]

Reproduction has disclosed the world’s sculpture. It has multiplied accepted masterpieces, promoted other works to their due rank and launched some minor styles – in some cases, one might say, invented them. It is introducing the language of colour into art history; in our Museum without Walls picture, fresco, miniature and stained-glass window seem of one and the same family. For all alike – miniatures, frecoes, stained glass, tapestries, Scythian plaques, pictures, Greek vase paintings, ‘details’ and even statuary – have become ‘colour plates’. In the process they have lost their properties as *objects*; but, by the same token, they have gained something: the utmost significance as to *style* that they can possibly acquire. It is hard for us clearly to realize the gulf between the performance of an Aeschylean tragedy, with the instant Persian threat and Salamis

looming across the Bay, and the effect we get from reading it; yet, dimly albeit, we feel the difference. It is the same with figures that in reproduction lose both their original significance as objects and their function (religious or other); we see them only as works of art and they bring home to us only their makers’ talent. We might almost call them not ‘works’ but ‘moments’ of art. Yet diverse as they are, all these objects (with the exception of those few whose outstanding genius sets them outside the historic stream) speak for the same endeavour; it is as though an unseen presence, the spirit of art, were urging all on the same quest, from miniature to picture, from fresco to stained-glass window, and then, at certain moments, it abruptly indicated a new line of advance, parallel or abruptly divergent. Thus it is that, thanks to the rather specious unity imposed by photographic reproduction on a multiplicity of objects, ranging from the statue to the bas-relief, from bas-reliefs to seal-impressions, and from these to the plaques of the nomads, a ‘Babylonian style’ seems to emerge as a real entity, not a mere classification – as something resembling, rather, the life story of a great creator. Nothing conveys more vividly and compellingly the notion of a destiny shaping human ends than do the great styles, whose evolutions and transformations seem like long scars that Fate has left, in passing, on the face of the earth.

Galleries, too, which exhibit replicas and plaster casts bring together widely dispersed works. They have more freedom of choice than other art galleries, since they need not acquire the originals, and in them the seeming antagonism of the originals is reconciled in their manifestation of a vital continuity, emphasized by the chronological sequence in which such galleries usually display the replicas. They are immune from that virus of the art book which inevitably features style at the expense of originality, owing to the absence of volume and, in many cases, to the reduced size of the reproductions; and, above all, to their proximity and unbroken sequence – which brings a style to life, much as an accelerated film makes a plant live before our eyes. Thus it is that these imaginary super-artists we call styles, each of which has an obscure birth, an adventurous life, including both triumphs and surrenders to the lure of the gaudy or the meretricious, a death-agony and a resurrection, come into being. Alongside the museum a new field of art experience, vaster than any so far known (and standing in the same relation to the art museum as does the reading of a play to its performance, or hearing a phonograph record to a concert audition), is now, thanks to reproduction, being intellectualised as our stock-taking and its diffusion proceeds and methods of reproduction come nearer to fidelity – is for the first time the common heritage of mankind [...]

André Malraux, ‘Museum Without Walls’, *Les Voix du silence* [Paris, 1951], trans. Stuart Gilbert, *The Voices of Silence* [New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc, 1953; London: Secker & Warburg, 1956]; reprinted 1978 [Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series XXIV A] 17, 21–24, 46.

## Robert SMITHSON

### Art through the Camera’s Eye [c. 1971]

There is something abominable about cameras, because they possess the power to invent many worlds. As an artist who has been lost in this wilderness of mechanical reproduction for many years, I do not know which world to start with. I have seen fellow artists driven to the point of frenzy by photography. Visits to the cults of Underground filmmakers offer no relief. In the dark chamber of the Film Archives, my eyes have searched in vain for the perfect film. I have disputed arcane and esoteric uses of the camera in murky bars, and listened to vindications of the Structural Film, the Uncontrolled Film, the Hollywood Film, the Political Film, and Auteur Film, the Cosmic Film, the Happy Film, the Sad Film, and the Ordinary Film. I have even made a film. But the wilderness of Cameraland thickens.

Artists suffering from a sense of unreality suspect the camera’s eye. ‘There are enough shadows in my life’, declares Carl Andre in a discussion on photography. ‘I have looked at so many photographs, I cannot see them anymore’, says Michael Heizer. ‘I would like to make an abstract film’, says Andy Warhol. As long as cameras are around no artist will be free from bewilderment [...]

Robert Smithson, ‘Art through the Camera’s Eye’ [c.1971], Jack Flam [ed.], *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* [Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996]. 371–375.

## Craig OWENS

### The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism [1980]

[...] In order to recognize allegory in its contemporary manifestations, we first require a general idea of what it in fact is, or rather what it *represents*, since allegory is an attitude as well as a technique, a perception as well as a procedure. Let us say for the moment that allegory occurs whenever one text is doubled by another; the Old Testament, for example, becomes allegorical when it is read as a prefiguration of the New. This provisional description – which is not a definition – accounts for both allegory’s origin in commentary and exegesis, as well as its continued affinity with them: as Northrop Frye indicates, the allegorical work tends to prescribe the direction of its own commentary. It is this metatextual aspect that is invoked whenever allegory is attacked as interpretation merely appended *post facto* to a work, a rhetorical ornament or flourish. Still, as Frye contends, ‘genuine allegory is a structural element in literature; it has to be there, and cannot be added by critical interpretation



alone'.<sup>1</sup> In allegorical structure, then, one text is *read through* another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest. (It is from here that a reading of Borges' allegorism might be launched, with 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*' or several of the *Chronicles of Bustos Domecq*, where the text is posited by its own commentary.)

Conceived in this way, allegory becomes the model of all commentary, all critique, insofar as these are involved in rewriting a primary text in terms of its figural meaning. I am interested, however, in what occurs when this relationship takes place *within* works of art, when it describes their structure. Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter. And in his hands the image becomes something other (*allos* = other + *agoreuei* = to speak). He does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured: allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image. If he adds, however, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. This is why allegory is condemned, but it is also the source of its theoretical significance.

The first link between allegory and contemporary art may now be made: with the appropriation of images that occurs in the works of Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo ... — artists who generate images through the reproduction of other images. The appropriated image may be a film still, a photograph, a drawing: it is often itself already a reproduction. However, the manipulations to which these artists subject such images work to empty them of their resonance, their significance, their authoritative claim to meaning. Through Brauntuch's enlargements, for example, Hitler's drawings, or those of concentration camp victims, exhibited without captions, become resolutely opaque:

Every operation to which Brauntuch subjects these pictures represents the duration of a fascinated, perplexed gaze, whose desire is that they disclose their secrets; but the result is only to make the pictures all the more picturelike, to fix forever in an elegant object our *distance from the history* that produced these images. *That distance is all these pictures signify.*<sup>2</sup>

Brauntuch's is thus that melancholy gaze which Benjamin identified with the allegorical temperament:

'If the object becomes allegorical under the gaze of melancholy, if melancholy causes life to flow out of it and it remains behind dead, but eternally secure, then it is exposed to the allegorist, it is unconditionally in his power. That is to say it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own; such significance as it has, it acquires from the allegorist. He places it within it, and stands behind it; not in a psychological but in an ontological sense.'<sup>3</sup>

Brauntuch's images simultaneously proffer and defer a promise of meaning; they both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to its signification. As a result, they appear strangely incomplete — fragments or runes which must be *deciphered*.

Allegory is consistently attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete — an affinity which finds its most comprehensive expression in the ruin, which Benjamin identified as the allegorical emblem par excellence. Here the works of man are reabsorbed into the landscape; ruins thus stand for history as an irreversible process of dissolution and decay, a progressive distancing from origin:

'In allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, had been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face — or rather in a death's head. And although such a thing lacks all 'symbolic' freedom of expression, all classical proportion, all humanity — nevertheless, this is the form in which man's subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise to not only the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing ...'<sup>4</sup>

With the allegorical cult of the ruin, a second link between allegory and contemporary art emerges: in site specificity, the work which appears to have merged physically into its setting, to be embedded in the place where we encounter it. The site-specific work often aspires to a prehistoric monumentality; Stonehenge and the Nazca lines are taken as prototypes. Its 'content' is frequently mythical, as that of the *Spiral Jetty*, whose form was derived from a local myth of a whirlpool at the bottom of the Great Salt Lake; in this way Smithson exemplifies the tendency to engage in a *reading* of the site, in terms not only of its topographical specifics but also of its psychological resonances. Work and site thus stand in a dialectical relationship. (When the site-specific work is conceived in terms of land reclamation, and installed in an abandoned mine or quarry, then its 'defensively recuperative' motive becomes self-evident.)

Site-specific works are impermanent, installed in particular locations for a limited duration, their impermanence providing the measure of their circumstantiality. Yet they are rarely dismantled but simply abandoned to nature; Smithson consistently acknowledged as part of his works the forces which erode and eventually reclaim them for nature. In this, the site-specific work becomes an emblem of transience, the ephemerality of all phenomena; it is the memento mori of the twentieth century. Because of its impermanence, moreover, the work is frequently preserved only in photographs. This fact is crucial, for it suggests the allegorical potential of photography. 'An appreciation of the transience of things, and the concern to rescue them for eternity, is one of the strongest impulses in allegory.'<sup>5</sup> And photography, we might add. As an allegorical art, then, photography would represent our desire to fix the transitory, the ephemeral, in a stable and stabilizing image. In the photographs of Atget and Walker Evans, insofar as they self-consciously preserve that which threatens to disappear, that desire becomes the *subject* of the image. If their photographs are allegorical, however, it is because what they offer is only a fragment, and thus

affirms its own arbitrariness and contingency.<sup>6</sup>

We should therefore also be prepared to encounter an allegorical motive in photomontage, for it is the 'common practice' of allegory 'to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal'.<sup>7</sup> This method of construction led Angus Fletcher to liken allegorical structure to obsessional neurosis;<sup>8</sup> and the obsessiveness of the works of Sol LeWitt, say, or Hanne Darboven suggests that they too may fall within the compass of the allegorical. Here we encounter yet a third link between allegory and contemporary art: in strategies of accumulation, the paratactic work composed by the simple placement of 'one thing after another' — Carl Andre's *Lever* or Trisha Brown's *Primary Accumulation*. One paradigm for the allegorical work is the mathematical progression:

'If a mathematician sees the numbers 1, 3, 6, 11, 20, he would recognize that the 'meaning' of this progression can be recast into the algebraic language of the formula: X plus 2x, with certain restrictions on X. What would be a random sequence to an inexperienced person appears to the mathematician a meaningful sequence. Notice that the progression can go on ad infinitum. This parallels the situation in almost all allegories. They have no inherent 'organic' limit of magnitude. Many are unfinished like *The Castle* and *The Trial* of Kafka.'<sup>9</sup>

Allegory concerns itself, then, with the projection — either spatial or temporal or both — of structure as sequence; the result, however, is not dynamic, but static, ritualistic, repetitive. It is thus the epitome of counter-narrative, for it arrests narrative in place, substituting a principle of syntagmatic disjunction for one of dietic combination. In this way allegory superinduces a vertical or paradigmatic reading of correspondences upon a horizontal or syntagmatic chain of events. The work of Andre, Brown, LeWitt, Darboven, and others, involved as it is with the externalization of logical procedure, its projection as a spatiotemporal experience, also solicits treatment in terms of allegory.

This projection of structure as sequence recalls the fact that, in rhetoric, allegory is traditionally defined as a single metaphor introduced in continuous series. If this definition is recast in structuralist terms, then allegory is revealed to be the projection of a metaphoric axis of language onto its metonymic dimension. Roman Jakobson defined this projection of metaphor onto metonymy as the 'poetic function', and he went on to associate metaphor with poetry and romanticism, and metonymy with prose and realism. Allegory, however, implicates *both* metaphor and metonymy; it therefore tends to 'cut across and subtend all such stylistic categorizations, being equally possible in either verse or prose, and quite capable of transforming the most objective naturalism into the most subjective expressionism, or the most determined realism into the most surrealistically ornamental baroque'.<sup>10</sup> This blatant disregard for aesthetic categories is nowhere more apparent than in the reciprocity, which allegory proposes between the visual and the verbal: words are often treated as purely visual phenomena, while visual images are offered as script to be deciphered [ ... ]

This confusion of the verbal and the visual is however



but one aspect of allegory's hopeless confusion of all aesthetic mediums and stylistic categories (hopeless, that is, according to any partitioning of the aesthetic field on essentialist grounds). The allegorical work is synthetic; it crosses aesthetic boundaries. This confusion of genre, anticipated by Duchamp, reappears today in hybridization, in eclectic works which ostentatiously combine previously distinct art mediums.

Appropriation, site specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridization – these diverse strategies characterize much of the art of the present and distinguish it from its modernist predecessors. They also form a whole when seen in relation to allegory, suggesting that postmodernist art may in fact be identified by a single, coherent impulse, and that criticism will remain incapable of accounting for that impulse as long as it continues to think of allegory as aesthetic error. We are therefore obliged to return to our initial questions: When was allegory first proscribed, and for what reasons?

The critical suppression of allegory is one legacy of romantic art theory that was inherited uncritically by Modernism. Twentieth-century allegories – Kafka's, for example, or Borges' own – are rarely *called* allegories, but parables or fables; by the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Poe – who was not himself immune to allegory – could already accuse Hawthorne of 'allegorizing', of appending moral tags to otherwise innocent tales. The history of modernist painting is begun with Manet and not Courbet, who persisted in painting 'real allegories'. Even the most supportive of Courbet's contemporaries (Prudhon and Champfleury) were perplexed by his allegorical bent; one was either a realist or an allegorist, they insisted, meaning that one was either modernist or historicist.

In the visual arts, it was in large measure allegory's association with history painting that prepared for its demise. From the Revolution on, it had been enlisted in the service of historicism to produce image upon image of the present *in terms* of the classical past. This relationship was expressed not only superficially, in details of costume and physiognomy, but also structurally, through a radical condensation of narrative into a single, emblematic instant – significantly, Barthes calls it a hieroglyph<sup>11</sup> – in which the past, present and future, that is, the *historical* meaning, of the depicted action might be read. This is of course the doctrine of the most pregnant moment, and it dominated artistic practice during the first half of the nineteenth century. Syntagmatic or narrative associations were compressed in order to compel a vertical reading of (allegorical) correspondences. Events were thus lifted out of a continuum; as a result, history could be recovered only through what Benjamin has called 'a tiger's leap into the past':

Thus to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past.<sup>12</sup>

Although for Baudelaire this allegorical interpen-

etration of modernity and classical antiquity possessed no small theoretical significance, the attitude of the avant-garde which emerged at mid-century into an atmosphere rife with historicism was succinctly expressed by Prudhon, writing of David's *Leonidas at Thermopylae*:

'Shall one say ... that it is neither Leonidas and the Spartans, nor the Greeks and Persians who one should see in this great composition; that it is the enthusiasm of '92 which the painter had in view and Republican France saved from the Coalition? But why this allegory? What need to pass through Thermopylae and go backward twenty-three centuries to reach the heart of Frenchmen? Had we no heroes, no victories of our own?'

So that by the time Courbet attempted to rescue allegory for modernity, the line which separated them had been clearly drawn, and allegory, conceived as antithetical to the modernist credo *Il faut être de son temps*, was condemned, along with history painting, to a marginal, purely historical existence.

Baudelaire, however, with whom that motto is most closely associated, never condemned allegory; in his first published work, the *Salon of 1845*, he defended it against the 'pundits of the press': 'How could one hope ... to make them understand that allegory is one of the noblest branches of art?'<sup>14</sup> The poet's endorsement of allegory is only apparently paradoxical, for it was the relationship of antiquity to modernity that provided the basis for his theory of modern art, and allegory that provided its form. Jules Lemaître, writing in 1895, described the 'specifically Baudelairean' as the 'constant combination of two opposite modes of reaction ... a past and a present mode'; Claudel observed that the poet combined the style of Racine with that of a Second Empire journalist.<sup>15</sup> We are offered a glimpse into the theoretical and underpinnings of this amalgamation of the present and the past in the chapter 'On the Heroism of Modern Life' from the *Salon of 1846*, and again in 'The Painter of Modern Life', where modernity is defined as 'the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable.'<sup>16</sup> If the modern artist was exhorted to concentrate on the ephemeral, however, it was *because* it was ephemeral, that is, it threatened to disappear without a trace. Baudelaire conceived modern art at least in part as the rescuing of modernity for eternity.

In 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', Benjamin emphasizes this aspect of Baudelaire's project, linking it with Maxime Du Camp's monumental study, *Paris, ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle* (significantly, Du Camp is best known today for his photographs of ruins):

'It suddenly occurred to the man who had travelled widely in the Orient, who was acquainted with the deserts whose sand is the dust of the dead, that this city, too, whose bustle was all around him, would have to die some day, the way so many capitals had died. It occurred to him how extraordinarily interesting an accurate description of Athens at the time of Pericles, Carthage at the time of Barca, Alexandria at the time of the Ptolemies, and Rome at the time of the Caesars would be to us today ... In a flash of inspiration, of the kind that occasionally brings one an extraordinary subject, he resolved to write the kind of book

about Paris that the historians of antiquity failed to write about their cities.'

For Benjamin, Baudelaire is motivated by an identical impulse, which explains his attraction to Charles Meyron's allegorical engravings of Paris, which 'brought out the ancient face of the city without abandoning one cobblestone'.<sup>18</sup> In Meyron's views, the antique and the modern were superimposed, and from the will to preserve the traces of something that was dead, or about to die, emerged allegory: in a caption the renovated Pont Neuf, for example, is transformed into a memento mori.<sup>19</sup>

Benjamin's primary insight – 'Baudelaire's genius, which drew its nourishment from melancholy, was an allegorical one'<sup>20</sup> – effectively situates an allegorical impulse at the origin of Modernism in the arts and thus suggests the previously foreclosed possibility of an alternate reading of modernist works, a reading in which their allegorical dimension would be fully acknowledged. Manet's manipulation of historical sources, for example, is inconceivable without allegory; was it not a supremely allegorical gesture to reproduce in 1871 the *Dead Toreador* as a wounded Communard, or to transpose the firing squad from the *Execution of Maximillian* to the Paris barricades? And does not collage, or the manipulation and consequent transformation of highly significant fragments, also exploit the atomizing, disjunctive principle which lies at the heart of allegory? These examples suggest that, in practice at least, Modernism and allegory are *not* antithetical, that it is in theory alone that the allegorical impulse has been repressed. It is thus to theory that we must turn if we are to grasp the full implications of allegory's recent return.

## II

Near the beginning of 'The Origin of the Work of Art', Heidegger introduces two terms which define the 'conceptual frame' within which the work of art is conventionally located by aesthetic thought:

The art work is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than the mere thing itself is, *allo agoreuei*. The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring together is, in Greek, *sumballein*. The work is a symbol.<sup>21</sup>

By imputing an allegorical dimension to every work of art, the philosopher appears to repeat the error, regularly lamented by commentators, of generalizing the term *allegory* to such an extent that it becomes meaningless. Yet in this passage Heidegger is only reciting the litanies of philosophical aesthetics in order to prepare for their dissolution. The point is ironic, and it should be remembered that irony itself is regularly enlisted as a variant of the allegorical; that words can be used to signify their opposites is in itself a fundamentally allegorical perception [ ... ]

If allegory is identified as a supplement, then it is also aligned with writing, insofar as writing is conceived as supplementary to speech. It is of course within the same philosophic tradition which subordinates writing to speech that allegory is subordinated to the symbol.



It might be demonstrated, from another perspective, that the suppression of allegory is identical with the suppression of writing. For allegory, whether visual or verbal, is essentially a form of script – this is the basis for Walter Benjamin’s treatment of it in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*: ‘At one stroke the profound vision of allegory transforms things and works into stirring writing.’<sup>22</sup>

Benjamin’s theory of allegory, which proceeds from the perception that ‘any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else’,<sup>23</sup> defies summary. Given its centrality to this essay, however, a few words concerning it are in order. Within Benjamin’s oeuvre, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, composed in 1924–25 and published in 1928, stands as a seminal work; in it are assembled the themes that will preoccupy him throughout his career: progress as the eternal return of the catastrophe; criticism as redemptive intervention into the past; the theoretical value of the concrete, the disparate, the discontinuous; his treatment of phenomena as script to be deciphered. This book thus reads like a prospectus for all of Benjamin’s subsequent critical activity. As Anson Rabinbach observes in his introduction to the recent issue of *New German Critique* devoted to Benjamin, ‘His writing forces us to think in correspondences, to proceed through allegorical images rather than through expository prose.’<sup>24</sup> The book on baroque tragedy thus throws into relief the essentially allegorical nature of all of Benjamin’s work – the ‘Paris Arcades’ project, for example, where the urban landscape was to be treated as a sedimentation in depth of layers of meaning which would gradually be unearthed. For Benjamin, *interpretation is disinterment*.

*The Origin of German Tragic Drama* is a treatise on critical method; it traces not only the origin of baroque tragedy, but also of the critical disapprobation to which it has been subject. Benjamin examines in detail the romantic theory of the symbol; by exposing its theoretical origins, he prepares for its supersedure:

‘The unity of the material and the transcidental object, which constitutes the paradox of the theological symbol, is distorted into a relationship between appearance and essence. The introduction of this distorted conception of the symbol into aesthetics was a romantic and destructive extravagance which preceded the desolation of modern art criticism. As a symbolic construct it is supposed to merge with the divine in an unbroken whole. The idea of the unlimited immanence of the moral world in the world of beauty is derived from the theosophical aesthetics of the romantics. But the foundations of this idea were laid long before.’<sup>25</sup>

In its stead, Benjamin places the (graphic) sign, which represents the distance between an object and its significance, the progressive erosion of meaning, the absence of transcendence from within. Through this critical maneuver he is able to penetrate the veil which had obscured the achievement of the baroque, to appreciate fully its theoretical significance. But it also enables him to liberate writing from its traditional dependency on speech. In allegory, then, ‘written language and sound confront each other in tense polarity ... The division between signifying written language and intoxicating spoken

language opens up a gulf in the solid massif of verbal meaning and forces the gaze into the depths of language.’<sup>26</sup> [...]

1 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* [New York: Atheneum, 1969] 54.

2 Douglas Crimp, ‘Pictures’, *October*, 8 [Spring, 1979] 85, italics added.

3 Walter Benjamin, *Drigin of German Tragic Drama*, 183–84.

4 Ibid., 666.

5 Ibid., 223.

6 ‘Neither Evans nor Atget presumes to put us in touch with a pure reality, a thing in itself; their cropping always affirms its own arbitrariness and contingency. And the world they characteristically picture is a world *already made over into a meaning* that precedes the photograph; a meaning inscribed by work, by use, as inhabitation, as artefact. Their pictures are *signs representing signs*, integers in implicit chains of signification that come to rest only in major systems of social meaning: codes of households, streets, public places.’ Alan Trachtenberg, ‘Walker Evans’ *Message from the Interior*: A Reading’, *October*, 11 [Winter, 1979] 12, italics added.

7 Walter Benjamin, *Drigin of German Tragic Drama*, 178.

8 Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964] 279–303.

9 Ibid., 174.

10 Fineman, ‘Structure of Allegorical Oesire’, 51. ‘Thus there are allegories that are primarily perpendicular, concerned more with structure than with temporal extension ... On the other hand, there is allegory that is primarily horizontal ... Finally, of course, there are allegories that blend both axes together in relatively equal proportions ... Whatever the prevailing orientation of any particular allegory, however – up and down through the declensions of structure, or laterally developed through narrative time – it will be successful as allegory only to the extent that it can suggest the authenticity with which the two coordinating poles bespeak each other, with structure plausibly unfolded in time, and narrative persuasively upholding the distinctions and equivalences described by structure’ [50].

11 Roland Barthes, ‘Oiderot, Brecht, Eisenstein’, *Image–Music–Text*, trans. Stephen Heath [New York: Hill and Wang, .1977] 73.

12 Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn [New York: Schocken Books, 1969] 255.

13 Quoted in George Boas, ‘Courbet and His Critics’, in *Courbet in Perspective*, ed. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu [Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977] 48.

14 Charles Baudelaire, ‘Salon of 1845’, in *Art in Paris 1845–1862*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne [London: Phaidon, 1965] 14.

15 Cited in Walter Benjamin, ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’, in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn [London: New Left Books, 1973] 100. Lemaître’s remark appears on page 94 of the same text.

16 Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Painter of Modern Life’, in *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P. E.

Charven [Baltimore: Penguin, 1972] 403.

17 Paul Bourget, ‘Oiscours académique du 13 juin 1895. Succession à Maxime Du Camp’, in *L’anthologie de l’Académie française*. Quoted in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, B6.

18 Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, B7.

19 Benjamin quotes the caption; in translation it reads: ‘Here lies the exact likeness of the old Pont Neuf, all recaulked like new in accordance with a recent ordinance. O learned physicians and skillful surgeons, why not do with us as was done with this stone bridge’ [*Charles Baudelaire*, 88].

20 Walter Benjamin, ‘Paris – the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’, in *Charles Baudelaire*, 170.

21 Martin Heidegger, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter [New York: Harper & Row, 1971] 19–20.

22 Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 176.

23 Ibid., 175.

24 Anson Rabinbach, ‘Critique and Commentary: Alchemy and Chemistry’, *New German Critique*, 17 [Spring, 1979] 3.

25 Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 160.

26 Ibid., 201.

Craig Owens, ‘The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism’, *October*, 12 [Spring, 1980] 607–86; reprinted in Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture* [ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman and Jane Weinstock] [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992].

# Richard PRINCE

## Interview with Peter Halley

### [1984]

*Peter Halley* You were amongst the first to rephotograph an image and you’ve exclusively rephotographed advertising images; you’ve always been talked about in terms of having a criticality towards those images. Is this interreaction another voice, a new voice I’m hearing?

*Richard Prince* First let me say rephotography was always a technique to make the image again and to make it look as natural looking as it did when it first appeared. It never had the trailer of an ideology. It never attempted to produce a copy ... a resemblance yes, but never a copy. It’s not a mechanical technique. It’s a technological one. It’s also a physical activity that locates the author behind the camera, not in front of it, not beside and not away from it. There’s a whole lot of authorship going on. What the technique involves is a way to manage an image and produce simply a photograph from a reproduction. Second, as far as the criticality is concerned, the picture that I take, that I steal ... happens to be an image that appears in the advertising section of a magazine. I’ve always had the ability to misread these images and again, disassociate them from their original intentions. I happen to like these images and see them in much the same way I see moving pictures in a movie.

*Halley* How has this happened?



*Prince* Something to do with extended adolescence.

These pictures have the chances of looking real without any specific chances of being real. It's a question of satisfaction. I find these images unpredictably reassuring.

*Halley* So what you're saying is that you treat the unreal as real.

*Prince* What's unreal for most is an official fiction for me. It's pretty much what chimneys were to the industrial revolution. They were familiar but still, they looked unreal. They had very little history to them. Someone like Giorgio de Chirico recognized this and was able to add another reality onto them. The look of his chimneys ended up having a virtuoso real. So it's somewhat the same for me. I don't have many memories of earrings hanging on a tree or of three women looking to the left, or even of the Eiffel Tower next to the Empire State Building next to Taj Mahal! And if I do have any memories of these scenes, they come from other pictures.

*Halley* Like the detective in the movie *Bladerunner*.

*Prince* Yes.

*Halley* His girlfriend, the replicant. Her memory of her family was based entirely on photographs of her family or at least a photograph of a family.

*Prince* Yes. That's why I have to produce a photograph. I've always associated a photograph with the Perry Mason Show. You know something that can be used as admissible evidence. Something that can be believed. It's unimportant whether it's true. It's only that its truth be possible. That's what the virtuoso real is. The possibility.

*Halley* Your way of working. Collecting. Filing. Scanning. Is there something that shows up in all the different bodies of work you produce, something that's common?

*Prince* Generally speaking what shows up is the same within the difference. Specifically, I think if there's any one ingredient or effect that shows up in every photograph produced to date, it's a certain type of uncanniness. And that's always determined by the photograph's ability to project a sensation of normalcy.

*Halley* Like the *Untitled (Cowboys)* series?

*Prince* Yes. Normalcy as a special effect. I like to think that I make normal looking photographs. The *Untitled (Cowboys)* images looked like normal photographs to me. They were framed and matted like normal photographs and presented in a way in which most photographs are presented. In a gallery. On a wall. Under a spotlight [ ... ]

Richard Prince, 'Richard Prince interviewed by Peter Halley', *ZG*, 10, 1984, 5-6.

## Yve LOMAX

### Re-Visions [1985]

#### A FICTION CALLED RE-VISIONS

A fracture appears in the seemingly smooth and transparent surface of the photographic image. The fracture (or is it a cut?) draws my attention to the photographic surface; no longer can I look through the photograph as if it were a window, a pane of glass which unobstructively allows a view 'outside' to shine 'inside'; to be plainly and truly seen. To be seen, that is, as if what were

viewed were immediately present, positively gleaming, naturally so, self-evident, lacking nothing, obvious and whole: a scene where the window and the view appear to be on the same plane. There is a fracture, there is a crack: the window can no longer pass unnoticed. I notice that the window and the view 'outside' no longer appear as if they are both on the same plane.

1976, I write:

The photographic image offered as a document of life (as the way things are) maintains and thus perpetuates the illusion of the ideology of objectivity – the capturing of reality by the camera as the objective machine, the perfect eye. This ideology of objectivity leaves the method of representation unquestioned and thus conceals contradictions according to the empirical notion of truth and as such locates the viewing subject in a relation of ideological complicity.

1961, Roland Barthes writes:

(The) purely 'denotive' status of the photograph, the perfection and plenitude of its analogy, in short its 'objectivity', has every chance of being mythical (these are the characteristics that common sense attributes to the photograph).

I become aware of an interruption; I become aware of a break. I hesitate. I can no longer see the photographic process as a smooth and simple re-presentation of something, a process which innocently or obligingly allows the presence of an 'object' to be repeated as if it were returning present, the same again; a pure and simple denotation of reality, untouched by the means of representation or the workings, the manipulations, of rhetorical devices.

There is a break: no longer is there a moment of pure or brute vision where a true and certain, or literal, meaning is offered up by the visible appearance of the thing, the object seen.

There is a fracture: the question of rhetoric interrupts the smooth and transparent surface of the photographic image. A fracture. A break, a crack or perhaps a cut. I think to myself: the photographic image is not a literal representation of reality, the scene is more marked by metaphor than it would seem.

Rhetoric. Some would say, 'the art of fake speech'. Some would speak of artifice, of pretence, of acting and posing. Some would speak of the loss of authenticity.

1964, Roland Barthes writes:

Rhetoric ... the signifying aspect of ideology.

There is a fracture. I can no longer overlook the photographic surface. I become aware that the photographic process comes in between, that it intervenes, that it stands in the middle. In the middle ... the mediate ... the medium ... the signifier ... the means ... mediation. I become aware that the window, as it were, *frames*, constructs, the view seen. Quietly I ask myself: as the spectator am I also framed?

There is a gap. I can no longer be totally sure of my position as a viewing subject. I can no longer be sure that the image seen will allow me to go 'outside' of myself and return to

myself, as if I were looking in a mirror. A mirror which appears to return an image of my whole self. There is a fracture. I ask myself: is there a loss?

There is a gap. I become aware that the window and the view outside no longer appear to be upon the same plane. I become aware of a difference. I become aware of a separation, indeed, an absence. The photographic image appears to stand as a representation of something in its absence; it appears to stand in for, to stand in place of, to replace. The photographic image appears to *frame* the presence of a present in its absence.

1984, I write:

Believing that representation comes forward only in accordance with a certain absence, believing that it borders upon a 'minus' presence, we assume that representation forwards a frame and in so doing makes its appearance in front. Believing that representation presents a front, we assume that it establishes a limit, a frontier, as it were, *a line in the middle*. Moving along this line we assume that we are at the very edge of the frame: it is assumed that representation constitutes a surface beyond, behind or below which there is another level. We believe that the surface is not the same as this other level.

Assuming that the photographic image comes in between and presents a front, am I to believe that the photographic image forms a cover ... a mask or veil? Does the photographic surface cover over, conceal or hide something? That which mediates, does it mystify? Is the image 'a mask which perverts a basic reality ... an evil appearance? I am reminded of the Marxist line which says that appearance and reality are quite distinct things. I ask myself: does the appearance of the image mark the disappearance, the absence, of that which is essentially true or real?

1981, I write:

Hidden behind all the so-called appearances, all the images of the feminine, is there a body of truth which is concealed, a body of truth which has been pushed behind and so forced to remain a secret? Does montage have a secret to reveal? Does montage have a cutting edge?

The photograph no longer appears to be unquestionable, incontrovertible; many pressing questions pierce and cut it. I am reminded that in French montage means to edit. To edit ... I am reminded of the terms, the cutting room, the rough cut. I ask myself: is montage a tool which has a cutting edge, so to speak, which enables the image's surface appearance, its front, to be penetrated, to be cut through and broken? Indeed, is montage a weapon which enables me to battle through the image's front or mask and reveal truly what lies behind; to make visible, as it were, the invisible? Does montage enable the exposure of the device, the codes, the means of the image's framing?

1976, Victor Burgin writes:

The first requirements of a socialist art practice is that it should engage those codes and contents which are in the public domain. These present themselves, and thus ideology, as natural and whole; a socialist art practice aims to deconstruct these codes, to unpick the apparently seamless ideological surface they present.



My attention is turned towards the means of representation, towards that which mediates, frames. I think of a line in the middle. My attention is turned towards the question of ideology. Is the image's framing and forwarding of a front – or mask – a concern of the workings of ideology? Am I to say that ideology is a line in the middle which frames or narrates the world so that it is seen only in a particular way? Is ideology to do with surface appearance? Am I to assume that the real truth lies essentially outside of ideology's frame, beyond its front?

If ideology is a mask, then how come we accept it? I move along the following lines:

Ideology perpetuates itself by way of a frame up. A frame-up whereby I am taken in and seduced by appearances. In presenting a front the image creates such a spectacle of itself that it spell binds, enchants, captivates and overpowers the spectator. The spectacle, as it were, takes me in. I am, if you like, fooled. I am taken in because the spectacle appears to beckon or hail me as if there was a certain place or position waiting for me. I am made to feel special. As if I was the only one, the centre of the world.

There is a break, I hesitate. Am I to say that montage's cutting-edge does enable ideology's surface to be demystified and the truth to be unmasked? Yet, how am I to know if the truth, that which is said to be concealed, is being correctly, indeed, truthfully unmasked? Am I to assume that I can stand outside of and so remain free from, not taken in by, ideology's appearance, representation's frame?

1977, I write:

To pose the question, are we making the right, analytically correct reading, must not be construed as 'the objective problems for ideology' which presupposes an objective disinterested stance. How can language, or the means which are used in an attempt to evince the roots of ideology, be bleached of their ideological content? Ideology is not illusion ... false consciousness.

1975, John Stezaker writes:

Kant said that 'if appearances are thing-in-themselves, freedom cannot be saved' and generations of artists have hoped to assert this concept of freedom which constitutes bourgeois society by attempting to penetrate the realm of appearances, either by some objective grasp of reality or else to liberate their mode of expression from the shackles of socialized appearance in sublime formality.

I am no longer certain. I become troubled by the assumption that montage is a weapon or tool which enables secrets to be unmasked and surfaces to be penetrated. I ask myself: what is being taken for granted when it is said that the truth or the essential is concealed? Is the truth as true, as pure and free, as we believe it to be? Asking these questions, I ask myself: am I asking for trouble?

1979, I write:

As soon as woman appears on the scene there seems to be trouble. She is the riddle to be solved. The truth to be held. 'Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting us see her reasons.' Let me say for the moment that the notion of the 'enigmatic femininity of truth', 'truth as woman' says that woman is an outward sign of truth. A

sign which says that somewhere there is a hidden but as yet secret truth. An invisible truth and a visible secret. The status of truth is secured or defined by the ability, indeed, the power, to see a secret as signifying the presence of truth in its absence. The possession of truth, the penetration of that which is said to conceal, becomes charged as powerful and thus defines or justifies the authority of 'having' the truth: the authority of the one-who-is-supposed to know.

1982, I write:

For long enough she had heard it said that with her appearance the truth disappeared, that it was masked. The fabulous feminine is deemed as all to do with making an appearance. Appearance, so says the truth, is secondary, merely an outer-covering to that which lies essentially beyond. Appearance doesn't come first. It isn't primary ... Is it truth's brilliant idea to plan it all out so that it does appear masked or absent when she makes her appearance. Maybe truth plans it that way so that it may better itself, save itself and so come again.

I pick up a photographic image. I hold it with one hand, with the other hand I run my fingers around the edge. The border, the frame, appears complete. A perfect rectangle. I ask myself: if I tear this image or cut into and remove part of it, will its seeming completeness be broken? Indeed, will the frame's rule be broken, and broken, will this draw attention towards the way in which images and representations frame the world, frame us? Breaking the limit or line of the frame, will this enable opposition to ideology's position? Naming this breaking or rupture 'montage', am I to assume that montage stands in opposition to representation? A rupture? Does such a gesture carry with it a certain radicality? Am I to believe that ideology has a certain continuity? Am I to believe that montage is a 'radical practice'? Yet, I ask myself: is this to assume that opposition to a certain position is free from, outside of, that which is opposed? How can I take it for granted that there is a realm which is free from and untouched by framing?

1982, I write:

The problem I find of setting oneself up as an opposition is the belief that somehow you are different from, the opposite to and outside of, that which you oppose – it is believed that there is a frontier which can be transgressed. But it doesn't turn out like that, for you find that you are always affirming that which is opposed. There is no other side of the frontier which is free: both sides are posited in one and the same instance.

1982 I write:

She had had enough, but leaving it all behind, making an exit from that scene so that somewhere else a true entry could be made wasn't that straight forward. The journey has a twist. It has a double-edge. As it turns out the outside returns to the inside ... The freedom of the outside is a ruse of the inside. That she is trapped, repressed, by the frame, is this not a ruse? ... Who can say that beneath or beyond all the layers that have been put upon her, there is something essential-waiting to make its true and naked entry ... As if you can still expect to find the truth, clean and simple. And anyway, where would be the naked truth

without that which is said to cover it up? The 'mask' provides the means whereby the truth may represent itself. Which is to say, that the truth is already within the means of its representation. Nothing stands apart from its representation within representation.

1978, Michel Foucault writes:

Are prohibition, censorship and denial truly the terms through which power is exercised in a general way, if not in every society, most certainly our own? Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power but shares an original affinity with freedom: traditional themes in philosophy which a 'political history of truth' would have to overturn by showing the truth is not by nature free ... but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power.

There is a break ... I pause. I come to the question: is not truth's positive identity established by way of its negative, its other – fiction, fantasy, ideology?

Breaks appear. How am I to believe that there is a presence – be this called the essential, the truth or the real – which remains behind, albeit hidden, the image's front! How can I say that a realm exists which remains in the last instance outside of representation's frame. The outside of the frame is fictioned, which is to say, produced, by representation itself. Which is to say that the presence which representation is assumed to front is an 'effect' of representation itself ... Am I to speak of a fraudulent frontier which only stimulates a presence beyond?

1983, I write:

Although we may protest against the so-called façade which representation puts before us in framing the world, has it not been this very front which has allowed us to assume another side. Indeed, has it not been this front which has allowed us to assume that the real world is on another plane? ... it has been representation which has afforded us a presence beyond representation.

1978, Jacques Derrida writes:

It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated an invariable presence (essence, existence, substance) subject, transcendental, consciousness, God, man and so forth ... a central presence which has never been itself, has already been exiled from itself into its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being ... that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word.

I construct images. I cut-up images. I make assemblages. I make many cuts. As I cut, it is revealed that behind one image there is but another image. One representation but refers to another. The situation appears open ended. The



line in the middle, the mediate, the narrative, appears to continually break into another line and I never come to find that which can be called whole. As I cut it is revealed that there is no proper literal truth which has been masked by the image's front. Behind the photographic surface there isn't a sure and whole reality, a substantial depth.

1966, Jacques Lacan writes:

... the metonymy of the lack of being ...

There is a break. The issue of the mask, the front of the façade, of that which comes in between, becomes suspect. I ask myself: if the mask is removed and it is revealed that there is nothing behind or underneath, except perhaps for another mask, then surely the mask becomes questionable as a mask? Or, is the mask brought into play to cover up for the absence, the lack of, a basic reality – the absence of that presence which had been assumed to be behind, prior, to representation's front. Am I to lament a loss?

1983, Jean Baudrillard writes:

... the affair goes back to religion and the simulacrum of divinity: 'I forbid any simulacrum in the temples because the divinity that breathes life into nature cannot be represented'. Indeed it can ... The iconoclasts ... rage to destroy images arose precisely because they sensed (the) omnipotence of simulacra ... and the overwhelming, destructive truth they suggest: that ultimately there has never been any God, that only the simulacrum exists, indeed that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum ... One can live with the idea of a distorted truth. But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all ... the iconolaters ... they already enacted his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations (which they perhaps knew no longer represented anything, and that they were purely a game – knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them).

1983, Don Slater writes:

In the twentieth century representation is now not a way of knowing about objects in the world but a play of signs which ceaselessly creates, recreates and renews objects ... an explosion of signs without escape, without means of exit. Behind the photograph there is no real object, only another image (even if this image happens to be in the form of a commodity, or an unemployment figure or a Falklands war). We consume photographs of photographs of photographs.

1982, Victor Burgin writes:

There is absolutely no hope of a privileged position exterior to ideology from which we can view and correct it, and come up with our own, 'true' version.

A break appears in the photographic image. There is no original presence of which I can be sure; nothing is fixed for certain. I think of the absence of a presence which has never been ... the story never seems to end, on and on representation goes ... there is only the signifier, only the means, only that line in the middle which has no definite beginning or end, no subject or object. 'I am' only an 'effect' of representation. My being-present, being self-

present, being all and lacking nothing is a fiction, a fantasy; it is imaginary. I ask myself: does the image centre upon an abysmal lack, an essential absence? Am I to see absolutely nothing where there ought to be, at least some thing? I ask myself: do I fear that representation only simulates the presence of the represented? Do I fear a lack? Proper names, all that which was taken as designating a proper presence: are they frauds, only simulating a presence beyond.

... representation will be the death of me.

There is no essential presence yet is this to be swapped for an essential absence. What is the difference?

1983, I write:

I walk in the sun. I can say that the shadows before me, moving as I walk, represent or signify my presence. But only if there is representation will the presence be. My shadow exhibits the lack of 'my' presence and by way of that absence stands for 'my' presence. And then, I can only have the assurance of a presence if I fear the lack of that presence. (Think of the dread inspired by the existence of a shadow which refers to no-one, nothing). My god! How much longer will we allow ourselves to be tyrannized by the fear of the loss or lack of that which makes us a whole presence?

There is a break. There is a split. I can only be (even if this is only ever an imaginary being) if I also not-be. Am I doomed to be forever cut-off from, lacking the presence of that presence which has never been. Trying to grasp a shadow. As soon as it is seized it vaporizes. You are left holding nothing in your hand. How strange this story seems. It seems that we are caught up in a scenario where we fear the lack of absolutely nothing. I ask myself: if you say you're a woman, what have you to lose?

1966, Jacques Lacan writes:

... the metonymy of the lack of being ...

So, am I to say that images are substitutes which substitute for that which has never been? As substitutes are images something of the order of a fetish, that which is brought in to cover up an abysmal lack. Do I desire a presence because essentially it is lacking? Is desire dependant upon lack? Is 'the desire of presence born from the abyss of representation? Is all desire, then, desire for images, or even, images of images? Does the photograph depend upon an abysmal lack?

1984, I write:

Although there is no such thing as a whole and total self, no such presence, am I destined to be forever ringed and trapped by its lack. Is the lack a trap? A trap whereby I am to be caught in a vicious circle. That I am cut-off from something which would allow me to become a totality, that this subject is the object of (my) desire: is not all this a form of blackmail, a contemptuous trap?

Breaks appear. So many stories have been told. I have heard it said that the part which stands for the absence of the whole is that which marks the difference between the part and the whole. I ask myself: does difference depend upon a telling absence, indeed, a lack: I hear the words, 'is this all the difference there is?' Is there only *one* difference?

I think of the part which woman plays within scenes of representation and difference.

I question *the* difference.

I play upon the difference between the photo and the graphic. I play upon the difference between the surface and the depth. I play upon the difference between the photo and the text. I bring text and image together. I keep them apart. A 'correct' way can no longer be assumed. I experiment. I do not know in advance what the outcome will be. I find that I cannot speak with all certainty of *the* difference. I question the difference between the part and the whole: I question the notion of fragmentation.

1983, I write:

Assigned a lack, the representational part refers to something more and what could be more than the part but the whole. Withdrawn from the part creating a lack, the whole, in the name of its absence, totalises the parts and so forms a constellation of which it is not (a) part: There has never been anything wholly whole about the whole; it depends upon lack of completeness ... To assume fragmentation is to remain beholden to that deceptive absent whole.

1972, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write:

We know very well where lack, and its subjective correlative, come from. Lack is created, planned and organized in and through social production ... It is lack that infiltrates itself, creates empty spaces, and propagates itself in accordance with the organization of an already existing organization of production ... The signs themselves become signifying under the action of a despotic symbol that totalizes them in the name of its own absence or withdrawal ... There desire is necessarily referred to a missing term, whose very essence is to be lacking.

Who can ever have the last word on lack? There is no way that the story of lack can ever be completed. But was there only ever one story? Lack: is it not a fiction? An essential absence: is it not a fiction? Has not lack always been produced, which is to say, constructed? Has not lack been productions' growth? If there is no place where we may oppose or resist a position without being touched by that position, if there is nothing behind the mask, front or façade of the image, if one representational part breaks into another, then are we now completely and totally framed? Am I to say that all is now totally ideological ... nowhere to hide ... nowhere to run ... no means of escape ... no definite inside or outside ... no proper exit ...

1984, I write:

Just when it is thought that we have progressed to the zenith of our modern world, a sudden wind picks up at midday: the sound of the signifier becomes a howl, an endless reverberation; we fear that the world has become a hollow. We fear that there is no central core. There is no presence immediate unto itself, no thing-in-itself. Nothing comes before, everything comes after. We are living in a 'post' world. A world without a fixed reference point. A world without origin. It is the means which fiction the beginning and the end. The presence of a point of certainty has ceased to shine. We fear that all is now overrun with endless mediations. We fear that all has become one



dimensional. All has become flat. No mask to remove. No essence to reveal. No chance to transcend. No chance to play at God. No grand idea that can round up all the particulars. No totalizing theories which can sum up the world. No chance to play at the Newtonian observer, the Cartesian master-mind. Complete mediation, is that what we fear?

Many breaks appear. I ask myself: if both sides of the frame are posited in one and the same instance, if there is no beyond where things can present themselves ‘unframed’, where we can be ‘true’ subjects in what ever form that might take, then the frame begins to warp. Like wood, the frame, as it were, the line in the middle, begins to break up. It breaks into many partial lines. Yet this isn’t a question of a lost or unlocatable reality, nor is it a question of fragmentation, of a whole which has been shattered to bits; rather a question of the movement of lines which by way of their partiality continually break and make another line. Pragmatically speaking, it is a question of their bias, their slant ... If there are no two definite points, subject/object, which the so-called mediate comes between, then how can I speak of mediation. I ask myself: isn’t reality a fiction, which is to say, a line which is *made* and which can be *broken*.

1983, I write:  
If a representation ceases to have any reference to anything beyond representation ... doesn’t representation fall flat, spread out and become a question of the movement of parts? ... A question of the diverse parts with which the photograph connects ... Think of when the photographic image is no longer defined in terms of what it represents but rather by its power to affect and be affected. Think of parts moving/affecting/effecting other parts. A play between motion/emotion. Motion, moves, all sorts of strategies.

1979, Jean-Francois Lyotard writes:  
The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great danger, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements ... Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable ... Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative.

I can continue to bewail a loss. I can bemoan the loss of authenticity. I can say that there is no ‘point’. Yet, I can ask: what of a strategy of non-pessimism? There isn’t a final point – be this called truth, reality or myself – of which I can be certain, yet am I to fear this as a depressing lack? I think of montage working upon and moving with, as quantum physics would say, a principle of uncertainty.

1982, I write:  
I would say that the politics of montage concerns the way in which we take up with practices (literature, science, art ... sex) as assemblages, indeed, montages and not monolithic wholes, I would say that montage concerns the way in which we take up with heterogeneity ...

1972, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write:

The theory of proper names should be conceived in terms of representation; it refers instead to the class of ‘effects’: that are not dependent upon causes, but the occupation of a domain and the operation of a system of signs. This can be clearly seen in physics, where proper names designate such effects within fields of potentials: the Joule effect, the Seebeck effect, the Kelvin effect. History is like physics: a Joan of Arc effect – all the names of history, and not the name of the father. I am a fiction; many little narratives, many parts can be invented.

How can I speak of a wholly objective knowledge? The ‘objects’ of a discourse, be this photography or science, don’t exist objectively. The discourse plays an e/affective part, the ‘observer’ can’t stand apart, the observer plays a part. Science is never a matter of literal facts. Think of all its abstractions. Think of all its metaphors and rhetoric. Think of those particles which are fictioned, invented, by such names as ‘strangeness’, ‘charm’ and ‘beauty’. Reality is that which can be made, and broken. I can no longer assume that reality is out-there waiting to be seen, seized and possessed – to be captured. The positivist’s eyes can no longer lead the way.

1984, I write:  
We can no longer picture the world in the way that we thought we could. We can no longer contain space and time in the same. Is there one single image which can ‘picture’ the world? How am I to visualize spacetime? All those films, videos and photographs are not ‘windows on the world’ (even though they may play at being such windows); they don’t picture the world; they form involvements. Perhaps the world has no ‘image’, least of all as a ball. Yet this is not to assume that images have lost their link with reality. Far from it. Images play a crucial part. Images do have e/affects. Images to ‘change’ the world...

1977, John Ryan writes:  
To interpret the world, to perform the rhetorical exercise of naming things is, in a sense, already to transform it. Nietzsche teaches, if anything in *Ecce Homo*, the rhetorical nature of the world and the capacity of rhetoric to change it ... To debunk rhetoric because it is inauthentic, insincere, a pose and act, is to overlook the fact that the concept of authenticity is itself a rhetorical act. Every pose, even the pose of authenticity ... poses something. Every act acts, even if it is only to pose itself as an act. The actor always performs, although you may not know it until later, until after the sun has gone down.

Yve Lomax, ‘Re-Visions’, in *Re-visions: fringe interference in British Photography in the 1980s* [Cambridge: Cambridge Darkroom, 1985].

## Olivier RICHON Looking and Incorporating [1989]

Alain Abelhauser, in a short intervention in ORNICAR, tells us about the communicative abilities of lizards. At the rutting season, we are told that male lizards parade in front

of any other from the species, which happens to be passing. This other reptile may also engage in a ritualized parade. It can announce a fight between the two, where aggressiveness orchestrates a relation where the one is the mirror of the other. Alternatively, the second lizard may flee away from the first, which leads the parader to run after the paraded, to catch up with it and to mount it. The first case describes a meeting between two males of the species, the second a copulation between the two sexes.

One can be interested to note that the same behaviour – parading – can have two different meanings: either an aggressive threat or an amorous invitation. One can be pleased to notice that in both cases it is the receiver which confers meaning to the signs of the sender. It is the answer which carries meaning and which gives the value of a message to the interpellation of the sender; communication depends upon a lack of knowledge of the receiver’s sex. One may not be surprised to learn that this beautiful normative model of sexuality fails.

A female lizard may parade in front of a male one, choosing the issue of the fight instead of that of the amorous ending. It is also possible that some males will prefer to escape from a fight with a belligerent male, thus transforming the latter into an amorous pretender. Similarly, an enterprising female frightening a male lizard will be led by the logic of the species to mount him in a parody of copulation.

This brief story changes the traditional model of communication where a capital S for sender and a capital R for receiver are linked with an arrow pointing from the former to the latter. An arrow which has none of the transforming powers of those of Diana or Cupid; no turning of something into something else but a simple passage between an active sender and a passive receiver.

When applied to a text or an image, this reductive model positions the intentionality of the sender; the author is in charge. This model assumes as unproblematic that a sender may transmit messages without these being changed, altered and adulterated by the means of representation as much as by the receiver. Lizards obviously know better and their allegory may tell us about the pleasures of uncertain signs and the terror these engender in the mind of those who hang on to a normative model of communication. It does not mean that the spectator is in a position of free choice however, as a private consumer of messages. Instead, the spectator is a term within a structure which produces certain effects according to which place one occupies within it.

The relation of a spectator to an image and that of a reader to a text unavoidably privileges the eye as a mediating organ. The eye swallows everything, obliterating the difference between the written and the visual. Otto Fenichel, in ‘The Scopophilic Instinct of Identification’ (1935), is interested in the relation between seeing and devouring. He mentions Strachey’s work on reading: for the unconscious, to read would represent the idea that sentences, words and letters are objects to be devoured by the eye. The expression ‘a devouring eye’ reminds us of the oral dimension of visual experience. To read a text or to look at an image is a form of incorporation where objects are absorbed by the eye, an organ not unlike



the mouth. Eye and mouth are linked for the printer Fournier, as typography ‘paints speech and speaks to the eye’. Bodoni also celebrates the visual and fixed features of typography, which preserves the body of letters ‘with sharper outlines than the articulation of lips can give them’.

In ‘Histoires de L’Oeil’, Chaké Matossian offers a beautiful commentary on the orality of the scopie drive. In a note from Leonardo da Vinci, one reads that ‘The large room for the master and that for the family should have their kitchen between them and in both the food may be served through wide and low windows’. (Notebooks, ch. XXXVIII.) The window allows the passage of food from one space into another. The window is not only a frame, which transforms things into an image. It is also the site which enables the eye and the mouth to converge. For Matossian, Leonardo’s project about the architecture of the kitchen enables us to grasp that ‘desire, pleasure and power are only satisfied by the mediation of a window, which constantly makes us see, at the same time as it makes a separation, the chain which binds vision to the mouth and the word to the gaze’. Language orders the food, which passes from the space of production to that of consumption. The word brings the referent to the world and transforms it, by its passage through the window frame, into a sign.

The photographic image repeats certain features of this structure where vision, language and incorporation come into play. The effect of perspective proper to photography has been commented upon in terms of an identification with the point of view of the camera, as in Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’. Perspective can also be apprehended in term of a fetishistic structure: the photograph, a frozen moment, is a detachable object which acknowledges and disavows the difference between itself and what it represents, just as fetishism disavows the consequences of sexual difference. But also, the photograph can be seen as an emblem of a more archaic identification, as oral consumption. Speaking of the camera, Otto Fenichel remarks that ‘man’s mechanical ingenuity has actually created a devouring eye which looks and incorporates the external world and later projects it outwards again’.

Putting aside their historical significance, the still life and the *trompe l’oeil* are then emblematic genres within this way of thinking about the image. The still life offers objects which are allegorical as much as simple depictions. Books, food and other ornaments are offered to the gaze, and their staging is somehow displayed in homage to visual incorporation. The *trompe l’oeil* indicates an appetite for illusion and can be seen as another form of incorporation. It belongs to a rhetoric of irony: an emblem of the achievement of depth, the *trompe l’oeil* shows that there is no depth behind an image. The pleasures of profundity are nullified. It relies upon a negative use of perspective which absorbs and annihilates representation. The image announces itself as nothing more – but this is still enormous – than the presence of an absence. The fullness of the image is emptied of its imagined substance; the image becomes nothing and this

nothing is to be filled with other images. Like Saturn devouring his children, the *trompe l’oeil* swallows everything, repeatedly.

The camera obscura is not only a dark room where images are formed and deformed. It is also a dining room, a digestive process which absorbs the real to transform it into representations.

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## Gerhard RICHTER

### 18. Oktober 1977. Interview with Jan Thorn Prikker [1989]

*Jan Thorn Prikker* I’d like to ask you how the pictures originated. All of them were painted after photographs. Did you first come across the photos, or did you first think of the subject matter and then search for the photos?

**Gerhard Richter** It all ties in, the theme and the pictures that make it visible. I had some of these photos lying around for years, like so much unfinished business. I can’t really say why I became interested in them again towards the end of 1987. In any case, I obtained more photos and decided to paint them.

*Prikker* You went to great lengths to collect photos of terrorist attacks, wanted photos, any related material?

**Richter** Yes, everything. Even photos from the private lives of the Red Army Faction members, their ‘actions’, police files, anything I could lay my hands on.

*Prikker* A substantial part of your work, like research and planning the pictures, took place well before the actual step of painting.

**Richter** That part is quite important. But it’s actually nothing new. Painters have always done that since time immemorial. They went and studied landscapes and from the thousands of impressions selected one very particular, definite impression. I had a huge number of photos ... Things became narrowed down as my ideas became clearer. What really had to be painted, that is.

*Prikker* What criteria guided you in making your selection?

**Richter** This kind of thing is basically an unconscious procedure. That sounds old fashioned and certainly isn’t ‘in’ any more. Pictures are no longer painted, they are thought out. Well, the materials, all the photos, were sitting there for ages, to be looked at again and again, and then you just start somewhere, and the choice of photos that could be painted gets smaller and smaller.

*Prikker* Were you confident from the outset that the

‘terrorism’ theme was paintable?

**Richter** I wanted it to be paintable; it had to be possible. But there have been many themes where this wasn’t the case. When I was in my mid twenties I saw photographs of the concentration camps that shocked me. In my mid thirties I collected photos, photographed, and attempted to paint them. I had to give up on the idea. After that I rather cynically mounted the photos in my ‘picture album’ [Atlas, 1962–]

[...] The photograph itself is so utterly unrivalled; it has changed painting so much – you can’t even talk about it.

*Prikker* What do you mean by ‘unrivalled’? For me photos are unrivalled in their inhumanity. Anyone would turn away at once. They capture an impossible moment. They just register anything. Period. They’re totally impersonal. To be able to see such pictures you need a wall of glass in front of your eyes. You need this filter that is embodied by a lens, no one could take this scene in reality.

**Richter** Photos are practically nature. And we get them posted door to door, and nearly as undistorted as reality, only smaller. But we want to see these terrible small pictures. They save us a lot of public executions, perhaps even the death penalty. We have a craving for such things. Just imagine all the highway accidents, nothing short of fascinating. Can you explain that?

*Prikker* Because we survived; we came away without a scratch this time. Because as spectators we assume a privileged role. Because at that special moment we get a charge out of just what it means to be alive.

**Richter** That’s a great advantage. But we also see our own demise, which to my mind is also most important. Photographs have the same effect, which is why I never perceived them as inhuman. I don’t think they’re any worse than pictures, just different – more direct, more emotive, more intimate.

*Prikker* That really surprises me. Photos turn me to stone. Oil paintings I believe are on a higher level that admits mourning and sorrow. I think photos rule this out. They’re blind in their duplication.

**Richter** Can I get you a photo? What I gather here – the pity, that’s triggered so directly – the way this young woman is lying here, all these telling details ... that can never be portrayed so intimately in a painting; it’s much more powerful here [...]

*Prikker* You share the tiniest detail. Your paintings participate in this horror. And yet a painting is something entirely different from a police photo.

**Richter** It’s supposed to be different. Maybe I can put a name to it. Here, take this example. I would say this photo generates horror, whereas the picture of the same subject evokes sorrow. That would come very close to my intention.

*Prikker* Does this mean that death has a value that is not taken for granted any more? There’s a growing number of news articles that I collect under the heading ‘An undignified death’. The story might tell of someone who fell under a road sweeper or was accidentally locked in a freezer. or vertical burials due to lack of space at Berlin cemeteries, and so on. I often ask myself whether journalists realize how they are refining our relationship to



death. Such news clippings are a sign of our times. Do you try to share the truth of this horror?

**Richter** On the contrary, I want to demonstrate the full seriousness of death.

**Prikker** Why so blurred then?

**Richter** I first paint an exact rendition of the photo, sometimes more realistic than the model. That's possible with a little experience. What transpires is naturally an intolerable picture in every respect.

**Prikker** That reminds me of techniques in psychoanalysts, as if you were to suppress something initially, only to re-construct it again. If you paint the photo in a much bigger format, doesn't that also highlight its horror?

**Richter** In part, yes, since it's a reconstruction of the occurrence that confronts us life size, in all its marabie detail.

**Prikker** The photographer requires only a fraction of a second – but it takes you hours to create all this detail.

**Richter** At least it's work. By this I mean that I don't have to look on in silence but can actually do something constructive. That makes everything more bearable [...]

Richard Richter – Richard Richter, Jan Thoen Prikker, Remonstratie on the 18. Oktober, 1977, Veldt, Parkett, 19, 1989, 144–45, 146–47

## Jeff WALL Interview with Martin Schwander [1994]

**Martin Schwander** In an interview published in 1990 you said, '... the process of experience of a work, while it must be open to the associations brought to it by different people, is still structured and regulated and contains determinations. I think it is controlled, above all, by genre, by the generic character of the picture types and the types of subject. Bakhtin said that genre was the collective, accumulated meaning of things that has come through time and the mutations of social orders. It is the foundation of the guarantee of objectivity, the basis of the 'truth content' of representations. With these comments in mind, I'd like to know what genre tradition are you connecting *Restoration* with.

**Jeff Wall** I'm not so sure what the genre of the panorama picture is. The curious thing about the phenomenon of genre is that it operates whether the artist is very much conscious of it or not. That is what Bakhtin was referring to when he spoke about it as an aspect of what he called 'collective memory'. You do not really have to be conscious of the genre structure of the work you're doing to do it, even to do it well. The work you do will have such a structure in any case. Genre is a fluid construct that operates regardless of the consciousness of the artist. It is fluid in that it isn't so clear whether its 'constructs' can be very strictly defined, its borders easily located.

I think my panorama picture is something like one of those eighteenth century pictures that depict activity going on in a public building, like a church, where people are carrying on their normal business, as for example in a

painting by Hubert Robert. The fact that it is the restoration of a picture that is going on in my picture may be secondary. The immediate theme of the picture, its subject, may be secondary.

**Schwander** Even though you refer with the title of the work to the clearly visible, skilled process of restoration?

**Wall** Yes, I think it is possible for the dramatic theme of the picture to be dominated by the overall pictorial character of the work. To take again the example of Hubert Robert, you can imagine two pictures by him, both of typical public scenes. And in the two pictures two completely different kinds of things may be happening, and yet if the pictures were structured similarly, they may be more similar than different in terms of their generic identity, regardless of the subject [...]

**Schwander** In *Restoration*, the restorers simulate – and hopefully anticipate – the preservation of a large-scale panorama picture, which really is in alarmingly poor condition.

**Wall** I was interested in the massiveness of the task the figures are undertaking. That for me was an important part of the theme. There might be associations of that massiveness with the futility of ever bringing the past into the 'now'.

**Schwander** Another futile venture was probably the attempt to render a 360-degree panorama picture in a two-dimensional medium.

**Wall** A panorama can never really be experienced in representation, in any other medium. I made a 180-degree panorama photograph of a 360-degree picture, and so had to show only half of it. The geometry of that struck me as appropriate, harmonic, one to two. It itself expresses the fact that the panorama is unrepresentable. Maybe this unrepresentability was one of its great historical flaws. The fact that the panoramas emerged so strikingly, and then died out so quickly suggests that they were an experimental response to a deeply-felt need, a need for a medium that could surround the spectators and plunge them into a spectacular illusion. The panorama turned out to be entirely inadequate to the challenge. The cinema and the amusement park more or less accomplished what the panorama only indicated. The panorama has pretty much always been understood as a proto-cinematic phenomenon, a precursor also of other forms of mass culture. Lately, with 'virtual reality' devices, we've come back in a way to a 'panoramic aesthetic' which doesn't want to have any boundaries. The interesting tension in the picture for me is that between the flatness of the photograph I'm making and the curved nature of the panorama's space. Because you can see it curve away from you and disappear, I see it as a kind of making-explicit of the situation that exists with every picture which renders the illusion of volume and curved space on a flat plane. The fact that the panorama can be seen escaping from view is one of the things which most interested me in making the work. The idea that there is something in every picture, no matter how well-structured the picture is, that escapes being shown. I've always been interested in this. In a few pictures I've done I've concentrated on showing people talking. Speech is something which by definition cannot be adequately depicted in a photograph or a

picture, and so to me it always seemed fascinating as that thing which was forever escaping, a sort of will-o-the-wisp, something that can never be located in the picture, but it is what the picture is about, what it is showing somehow. In fact, in the Bourbaki picture, there is a pair of restorers on the farthest scaffold who can be seen having a conversation, one which cannot be heard because they are so far away. I thought about those round buildings where you can hear a conversation way on the other side if you stand in one special spot. These things are subtle elements of mobility, of restlessness, of the fugitive. The stillness and stable composition of the picture, in general, intensify this fugitive sense.

**Schwander** But at the same time the picture depends too on the contrast between the drama of the vast space of the picture and the almost intimate depiction of the two restorers in the foreground.

**Wall** I find that both poetic and very political. One can make gestures that are very intimate and personal in a public scene, and they become sort of models of behaviour. I think that in the arts, crafts and professions people develop patterns of behaviour which function as social models. These women, as restorers, are acting-out a kind of conceptual model of what their idea of civilization is like, their idea of a certain valid way of life. I think one of the historical roles of pictorial art was to make images which in a way are models of behaviour, too. First, they are conceptual models of what a picture should be, because every picture can be thought of as a proposal of a model of what a valid picture is. But, also, the behaviour of the figures in the picture may be models, or at least proposals of models, of social behaviour, of whatever kind. So, in the panorama picture, the characters are developing, and enacting, an intimate, meditative relation to a work of art through their practice, their work. This is a kind of statement.

**Schwander** The title you gave the work has itself a political dimension.

**Wall** *Restoration* has a post-revolutionary, even counter-revolutionary implication. I was interested in the double entendre in the title, the idea that the panorama and the 'regime' of representation in which it is involved could be identified with an 'ancien régime', which ironically we are preserving, and even resuscitating, bringing back to life. Why?

**Schwander** In many of your works you integrate pictorial concepts handed down through art history. This unambiguous handling of tradition, which is reflected in the works themselves, distinguishes you from the representative of a 'purist' and modernist conception of the avant garde which held true up into the 1960s.

**Wall** I think that Modernism as it is commonly construed overemphasizes the rupture, the break with the past. The emphasis on discontinuity has become so orthodox and routine that I prefer to concentrate on the opposite phenomenon. It's just as significant historically. Another aspect is that the photographic image by its physical nature is figurative, and so it is linked objectively to all figurative traditions, traditions which necessarily preceded both photography itself, and modern art. So it seems we are in a permanent relationship with a figurative



form of art, a figurative mode of depiction of things. This mode is bigger, more extensive, than our concept of art, and certainly more extensive than our idea of modern art or Modernism in art. Figuration rests on something spontaneous, which is the recognition of appearances by the human eye. So it has a kind of phenomenological base, even a physiological base, which is not so directly available to other forms of art, to experimental and conceptual forms. This is probably why the critique of a phenomenological basis to representation has been an important part of the traditions of experimental art in the twentieth century – for example, Duchamp's attack on the 'retinal'.

*Schwander* Restoration can also be considered a homage to the traditional forms of skilled work – painting and restoration. But on the other hand this picture was produced with advanced computer technology.

*Wall* I like the fact that these different technologies collide in the picture. The layering of technologies is part of the nineteenth-century 'spirit of the panorama', and we are still involved with that spirit in our own fascination with technological spectacle.

One paradox I have found is that, the more you use computers in picture-making, the more 'hand-made' the picture becomes. Oddly then, digital technology is leading, in my work at least, towards a greater reliance on hand making because the assembly and montage of the various parts of the picture is done very carefully by hand by my collaborator and operator, Stephen Waddell, who is a painter.

*Schwander* This complicated and complex method of production gives you for the first time the possibility to control and change continuously all the elements that are important for the composition of the picture while it is being developed. Paradoxically these accumulative work methods based on the most advanced visul technology recall the evolution of large, narrative and dramatic paintings of the past which painters constructed in their ateliers, step by step from a number of models and studies.

*Wall* It has curious resemblances to the older way of painting in the way you can separate the parts of your work and treat them independently. A painter might be working on a large canvas and, one afternoon, might concentrate on a figure or object, or small area. Part of the poetry of traditional painting is the way it created the illusion that the painting depicted a single moment. In photography, there is always an actual moment – the moment the shutter is released. Photography is based in that sense of instantaneousness. Painting, on the other hand, created a beautiful and complex illusion of instantaneousness. So past, present and future were simultaneous in it, and play with each other or clash. Things which could never co-exist in the world could easily do so in a painting. That is something photography was never sulted for, although cinema is. The early 'composite photographs' were unconvincing, and it's no mystery why serious photography went in the opposite direction for a hundred years. Computer montage has destroyed that barrier. In my computer pictures I can conjure something up by an assemblage of elements created with their pictorial

unification in mind [...]

*Schwander* In Castres' picture, women – mostly peasants – rush towards the soldiers to bring them food and give them assistance. In your picture, young women are trying to save Castres' picture from deterioration.

*Wall* To be a restorer, you must be in a very complex relationship with the past. Why would young people want to undertake this immense and tedious labour of preservation and repair, to work for such a long time in such a dusty place, so patiently, to preserve a monument which they themselves realize is part of a tradition – a patriarchal tradition – that they are probably battling with in the other aspects of their lives? To place a young woman in such a position is in my view something very pictorial. *Schwander* Accordingly, women have another kind of relationship to the past than men...

*Wall* Maybe, because it seems that so many restorers are women. In any case, I think there is something striking in the confrontation of a young woman (or a group of young women) with a monumental painting; that something is evocative, dramatic, what I called 'pictorial'. It is almost as if as soon as you think of the two elements, 'young woman big painting', your mind's eye grasps it as a pictorial situation, as something charged. There is a certain irony in it, obviously.

*Schwander* Could you elaborate on this ironic aspect?

*Wall* Well, the most obvious aspect is the relation to the men who made the picture, and the tradition in which it was made. The restorers have to have a special relationship with those men. They also have a special relationship with previous generations, in general, a special interest in the things left behind by past generations. I would see it as a special relationship with the male ancestral line. It's a kind of 'family romance'.

*Schwander* Perhaps it also has to do with a sublimated form of erotic relationship...

*Wall* In a way. But, I also think that, in pictures, everything has an erotic aspect. Everything pictorial has an erotic aspect – you could even say that everything erotic is pictorial and everything pictorial is erotic. I mean erotic here in the sense that there is pleasure to be gained from the picture, and that pleasure has a relation to the whole being of the person experiencing that pleasure, to the sexuality, too. The pleasure is physical. And when there are figures, images of beings, in the picture which gives pleasure, then there is a process of fantasizing that takes place, often unconsciously. The spectator will fantasize according to his or her desire, fantasize relationships between figures in the picture, and between him or herself and such figures. In old-fashioned pictures, which were illustrations of well-known stories, the spectators usually knew the story, and the relationships involved, and so their own fantasizing was shaped by that. So they knew something concrete about links between characters. In modern-type pictures we don't have the story, so the fantasizing is more free-form, and maybe more intense.

There are obviously works of art in which an erotic relationship between the figures is an explicit theme, like Picasso's 'artist and model' extravaganzas. I see that as a kind of narrativization of something that already exists in the structure of every picture, and so, in a way, as no more

erotic than any other picture.

*Schwander* Unlike in the case of Picasso, the erotic as such is not an explicit subject in your work. On the contrary, a lot of your works are about the obstacles or even the impossibility of human relations: they deal with aggression and alienation among people.

*Wall* I don't think that's true of all of my work. I've made pictures about contact and communication, friendship and closeness, too. I admit they're mostly about indirect contact, verbal communication. Up to now, the indirect eroticism of the pictorial as such has interested me more than any specifically erotic themes. But, in principle, I don't draw too sharp a line between the two approaches. An image of an erotic subject which could not provide the pleasure given by a beautiful pictorial construct would maybe not be something aesthetically interesting.

*Schwander* In *Restoration*, human relations play a subordinate role. They make up a kind of 'subtext' lacking plot or drama.

*Wall* I think this brings us back to the question of genre. When I was doing dramatic pictures, like *Atmih*, for example, I was interested in a certain type of picture, one I identified with painters like Caravaggio, Velasquez or Manet. In that type of thing, the figures are in the foreground, they are life-size, they are close to the picture surface, and the tension between them is what is central. Behind them, there is a space, a background. That is a very traditional kind of picture, I think. But I have become interested in other types of picture, and other types of pictorial space. I have made quite a few pictures which are very differently structured, in which the figures are further away from the picture plane, smaller, and more absorbed in the environment. You could say it's a move from Caravaggio to Vermeer or Brueghel. I am not necessarily interested in different subject matter, but rather in different types of picture. A different kind of picture is a different way of experiencing the world, it is a different world almost. *Restoration* is more this latter type of picture, which does not require the kind of dramatic intensity of the earlier pieces.

1. Jeff Wall, *Restoration*, 1993. See Jeff Wall on *artforum*, 2009. Wall's photographic idea to tell the story of the panorama – Edward Tawney's painting of 1901 depicting the retreat of the French army in the Second Battle of the Marne. Princeton University, 1901. The French Emperor Napoléon III is depicted here in his last moments and the women restorers stand in the same relation to the painting as the retreating soldiers to the French army. The camera is placed between the painting and the viewing platform so that we see the image and the restoration. As with most of Wall's photographs *Restoration* is presented in the gallery as a backlit transparency which takes on an added spatial dimension when it is formed as independent as the classical panorama it depicts. [David Lainger]

Jeff Wall, 'Jeff Wall' interviewed by Bart St. Schwander, 'Jeff Wall', *Restoration* [Kunstmuseum Luzern and Kunststiftung Museum 1994] 22–30.



# Thomas WESKI

## Art as Analysis: The Photographic Art of Louise Lawler [1994]

The creation of installation photographs, which document the presentation of ‘staged’ art, and of photographic reproductions is normally the field of activity of specially trained technical photographers or specialist photographers rather than artists. Reproduction, in this context, denotes a most faithful representation by photographic means of existing visual material, of drawings, prints, or paintings. A reproduction has a lower value than the original whose surface it represents. Although what it shows is identical, the reproduction differs in material, in size and in not displaying a distinctive artistic style. The reproduction is denied the unique aura of the original, partly because it is available in any quantity: it is not unique. Though not considered a work of art, it is often indispensable for research in order to reconstruct something that is no longer existent, to provide a visual impression. While the imitation of masterpieces was regarded as an artistic achievement before the invention of photography, the value of both copy and original decreased after the production of such images was made possible with the new technical medium: the copy, because its production no longer required artistic skill; the original, because it was distributed on a large scale and was no longer bound to its place of presentation. According to Walter Benjamin, the advent of photography robbed the work of art of its ‘aura’, and the copy became a useful reproduction.

For her photo art, Louise Lawler employs the photographic methods of documentation and reproduction. Those images that depict the reproduced works parallel to the picture plane in their exhibition context adopt the formal language of reproduction photography. Although the artist does not use the large-format camera of a commercial photographer, the low-speed, high-resolution black-and-white and colour film material allows for a high accuracy of detail and precise half-tone and colour gradation. The artist has standardized her photographic techniques over the years; her pictures reveal similar stylistic features and, when presented in sequence, join to form a series of single frames. Photographers work in series to avoid reducing their subject or motif to individual photographs, to be able to make complex statements in visual form. The standardization of the pictures’ composition, of their perspective, lighting and format, and their restriction to certain subjects invite comparison. The subject is dealt with according to comprehensible, conceptual criteria. The work is thus lent an examining, scientific character.

Art is the subject of Louise Lawler’s works of art. Similar to the chapters of a book, which are self-contained but only tell a story when read in sequence, Louise Lawler defines her subject from various angles of vision, attentive

to the various components which make up the meaning of a work of art. She examines the distinctive aura of the images photographed, analyzes the modification of works through the manner of their presentation, and investigates the reasons for changes in the value of art. Lawler photographs art in museums, galleries and private homes, but also behind the scenes, in storerooms and at auction. Her photographs are art-sociological comment turned image. They reveal to us how we think about art, how we use it and how we deal with it.

Louise Lawler photographs art according to her concept, her subject, but the results are not successful replicas of existing visual material in accordance with the rules of reproduction technique: the pictures are shown with too much environment intruding; often, more than one object is depicted; the works represented are bled off and shown in their frames. These are bad reproductions in photographic terms yet correct images in terms of the artist’s subject. Only strong works of art survive such rigorous treatment, and therefore Louise Lawler almost always selects motifs by recognized modern artists; which implies, further, that her photographs are also mirror images of the canon of masterpieces accepted in the art world. As these are generally works by male artist colleagues, Lawler’s work also reveals a feminist touch, reflecting the unspoken gender-specific rules of acknowledgement [ ... ]

Although at first glance they seem only to be unconventional reproductions or installation photos, Louise Lawler’s compositions investigate, on a second level of contemplation, the authorities that determine the intangible and the commercial value of a work of art, the criteria it has to fulfil to achieve long-term recognition, the rules according to which it acquires value for its owners, and the aspects that define its meaning for its recipients. In her artistic work, Louise Lawler employs a method otherwise regarded as inartistic, and thus redefines, just like her American colleagues Sarah Charlesworth and Sherrie Levine, a photographic genre that has been virtually ignored by contemporary art. She is an analytical artist who in her conceptual work establishes relations between the different aspects of the art trade. With her art she encourages us to think about art.

Thomas Weski, ‘On the Photographic works of Louise Lawler’, in Louise Lawler, *For Sale*, [Ostfildern, Germany: Cantz Verlag, 1994] 59–63.

## Wolfgang TILLMANS

### Interview with Steve Slocombe [1999]

*Steve Slocombe* On the subject of installation – and your installation technique in particular – what has always seemed to me to be one of the main aspects of your work that sets you apart from other contemporary photographic artists, is the manner in which you choose to present your work spatially within the gallery context.

*Wolfgang Tillmans* I guess that something I’ve found

problematic from the beginning when I first thought of exhibiting my work was the uniformity of photography as a medium. In traditional photography you have moderate sized prints in some sort of matted frame in one row along the gallery wall and I found that this presentation leaves little space for a physical experience of the work. I see my installations as a reflection of the way I see, the way I perceive or want to perceive my environment. They’re also always a world that I want to live in. In some senses I see the way in which I install my exhibitions almost as a temporal pattern, a pattern of parallelism as opposed to one linear stream of thought, because when you are confronted with a wall of my work there is the possibility for you to enter at any given place, or enter at different places at the same time. However, although there is no one particular way of reading it from the perspective of the viewer, it is important for me to work continuously on the installation – often right up until just before the opening – so that I can be absolutely sure that from my perspective it is ‘finished’ and offers no other potentially more complete alternatives.

*Slocombe* Within these installations you often include printed matter – magazine tearsheets, postcards, posters, and the like – alongside your prints. Is that an attempt to contest the elitist aura that is often inherent in a rarefied art object?

*Tillmans* When I first started including magazine spreads in my installations, I did it because to me they felt as much like artworks as the original prints. I have always been very receptive to magazines and so, when I started to produce these spreads in the early 1990s – typically for *i-D* magazine – it made sense to me to give both media an equal billing. It is important to state though, that this reasoning only really stands up when the quality of the spread itself actually merits an equal billing. I have also had quite a good number of postcards published by now – something like sixty different images – and I often also incorporate these into installations. Apart from the exhibition context, I am also interested in the idea of how magazines, postcards, etc., allow me to expand the possible dissemination of my images, to place them in other contexts besides the gallery or museum [ ... ]

Wolfgang Tillmans, ‘The All Seeing Eye: Interview with Steve Slocombe’, *Flash Art*, 33:209, November/December, 1999, 92–95.



# ‘JUST’ LOOKING

At the close of the 1960s practitioners and writers began an interrogation of the social structure of looking. Feminism, postcolonial theory and later cinema studies all adopted psychoanalytic theory in order to think through and challenge the existing visual order of society. This has had a lasting impact on making and thinking photography. Victor Burgin, Mitra Tabrizian, John Stezaker and Barbara Kruger have advanced an understanding of the dynamics of the look as much through their writings as their photography. Other artists such as John Hilliard have spoken throughout their careers on the place of photography in cultural constructions of vision. Like the detailed textual analysis developed by film theory, the most perceptive writings about the look in photography have emerged from close readings. This is exemplified by essays on the portraits of Thomas Ruff, the *Untitled Film Stills* of Cindy Sherman and the digital stagings of Wendy McMurdo.

## Alain ROBBE-GRILLET The Dressmaker's Dummy [1968]

The coffee pot is on the table.

It is a four-legged round table, covered with a waxy oilcloth patterned in red and grey squares against a neutral background of yellowish white that may have been formerly ivory coloured – or white. In the centre, a square ceramic tile serves as a protective base; its design is entirely hidden, or at least made unrecognisable, by the coffee pot placed upon it.

The coffee pot is made of brown earthenware. It consists of a sphere topped by a cylindrical filter holder with a mushroom-shaped lid. The spout is an S with flattened curves, widening out slightly at the base. The handle has, perhaps, the shape of an ear, or rather of the outer fold of an ear; but it would be a misshapen ear, too circular and lacking a lobe, which would thus resemble a 'pitcher handle'. The spout, the handle, and the mushroom lid are of a creamy colour. The rest is of a very light, smooth brown, and shiny.

There is nothing on the table except the waxy tablecloth, the ceramic base, and the coffee pot.

On the right, in front of the window, stands the

dressmaker's dummy.

Behind the table, the space above the mantel holds a large rectangular mirror in which may be seen half of the window (the right half) and, on the left (that is, on the right side of the window), the reflection of the wardrobe with its mirror front. In the wardrobe mirror the window may again be seen, in its entirety now, and unreversed (that is, the right French pane on the right and the left one on the left).

Thus there are, above the mantel, three half-sections of window one after another, with an almost unresolved continuity, and which are, in turn (from left to right): one left section unreversed, one right section unreversed, and one right section reversed. Since the wardrobe stands in the corner of the room and extends to the outer edge of the window, the two right half-sections of the latter are seen separated only by a narrow vertical piece of wardrobe, which might be the wood separating the two French window sections (the right upright edge of the left side joined to the left edge of the right side). The three window sections, above the half-curtains, give a view of the leafless trees in the garden.

In this way, the window takes up the entire surface of the mirror, except for the upper portion, in which can be seen a strip of ceiling and the top of the mirrored wardrobe.

In the mirror above the mantel may be seen two other dressmaker's dummies: one in front of the first window section, the narrowest, at the far left, and the other in front

of the third section (the one farthest to the right). Neither one is seen straight on; the one on the right has its right side facing the view; the one on the left, slightly smaller, reveals its left side. But it is difficult to be certain of this on first glance, because the two reflections are facing in the same direction and as a consequence both seem to be turned so that the same side shows – the left side, probably.

The three dummies stand in a line. The middle one, whose size is intermediate between that of the two others, occupies the right side of the mirror, in exactly the same direction as the coffee pot standing on the table.

In the spherical surface of the coffee pot is a shiny, distorted reflection of the window, a sort of four-sided figure whose sides form the arcs of a circle. The line of the wooden uprights between the two window sections widens abruptly at the bottom into a vague spot. This is, no doubt, the shadow of the dressmaker's dummy.

The room is quite bright, since the window is unusually wide, even though it has only two sections.

A good smell of hot coffee rises from the pot on the table.

The dressmaker's dummy is no longer in its accustomed spot: it is normally placed in the corner by the window, opposite the mirrored wardrobe. The wardrobe has been placed in its position to help with the fittings.

The design on the ceramic tile base is the picture of an owl, with two large, somewhat frightening eyes. But, for



the moment, it cannot be made out, because of the coffee pot.

Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'The Dressmaker's Dummy', from 'Three Reflected Visions', *Snapshots* [New York: Grove Press, 1968], 3-5.

# John HILLIARD

## Artist's Statement [1974]

‘My use of photography originally comes out of making sculpture and needing documentary evidence, and out of a subsequent recognition that those documents were almost always employed as the sole representatives of the work – thereby becoming first-order artefacts, albeit by default. I began first to deliberately extend and improve the use of photographs as viable substitutes and then to examine the problems inherent in that use of photography [...]

I value the peculiar properties of photographs, where space and time are frozen in an unreal stasis which invites an abnormally objective scrutiny, and I like their discreet form (initially, expanding the use of documentation was for me one way of eliminating a material excess that I found intrusive, depressing and wasteful).’

John Hilliard, interview with Luca Venturi, Milan 1974, excerpt reprinted in *Photography as Art. Art as Photography* [Kassel: Fotoforum, 1977] 56.

# John STEZAKER

## The Look [1978]

Leonardo seems to have been the first to be aware of portraiture as both a vantage point and a picturing of (another's) vantage point. With the development of the single viewpoint as the anchor for the preservation of appearance, the world of the seer and of the seen are divided and the division between the person as seer and as seen becomes the new point of departure for portraiture. The portrait thenceforth is engaged with the identificatory relations of empathy and distance in attempting, within a vantage point to allude to another. The appearance becomes something not only to record but also something to penetrate for an underlying reality.

The division between the person as seer and as seen is the very core of pictorial ‘mediation’ whose currency is the incessant mutual determination and modification of self-representations and social representations (stereotypes). Photography provides the currency with its ‘circulation’. One of the most dramatic features of the division between seer and seen in contemporary culture is the sexual difference involved in the division. The female subject confronts her own ‘reflection’ as a representation which is not her own and can be identified as ‘belonging’ to the opposite sex. Existence both within the spectacle and as spectator is, however, not a specifically female predicament. But it does seem as though women ‘make an appearance’ within the spectacle whereas the stereotyped

images of men seem to be types of agency rather than of appearance. Men’s looks, appearances, tend to allude to types of activity. The stereotyped image of the man looking to an imaginary horizon, not just outside the frame but beyond it, seems to be a symbol of his separation from appearance as it exists in the photographic frame (and from the division as seer and seen which commits the woman to her reflection). The sense of the greater visibility is that as pure appearance, her limits are the frame. The frame which confines the momentary, the facet and the fleeting appearance does not confine the man in the same way. Characteristically he looks beyond to another kind of limit of vision – not the limits of the packaged moments but the horizon ‘before’ which all representations appear. He appears to see beyond the frame. We see him not so much as an appearance but more as a vantage point aware of the limits of visibility itself. He becomes oddly invisible as a presence in terms of what is happening – as an agent of an event.

This division between the appearance of women and the agency of men is clearly not hard and fast or universal, but the stereotype described reflects a tendency which is obvious in the spectacle of culture, and which is much accentuated within a culture dominated by film. Cinema converts the visible (the appearance) into a mere moment as though extracted from a continuum of cinematically unfolding and shifting appearances. The appearance becomes a moment against the backdrop of a reality identified by film as motion. The horizon as the limit of the visible, alludes to a reality beyond the shifting vantage point and beyond the parade of appearance. The horizon, as the ever-present boundary of appearance, seems the more ‘real’ and becomes the focus for agency which is committed to the future for its realization. The limits of the photographic appearance are set by film as the dominant currency of reality.

John Berger, contrasting male and female presence in a photograph, suggested that when a man looks at the camera he issues a challenge, whilst when a woman looks at the camera she issues an invitation. It would be dangerous to see this as a fixed sexual type for the look (there is often an element of threat in the sexual invitation of a picture just as there is an aspect to the identification with the threatening presence of the male in a picture which involves a kind of invitation or identification). However the observation is indicative of the importance of the look (the gaze) as the point of access to the imagined vantage point of the person pictured.

The look, the person staring out at us or beyond us, or through us or at something or someone in or beyond the picture – these are the points of engagement with the picture. They define the ‘entry’ and ‘exit’ (and the oscillating relationships of empathy and distance between), of involvement and disinterest in the complex of identificatory relations which make the picture what it is and which characterize the way in which we adopt a particular relationship to the imagined vantage points represented. It is impossible to reduce this complex of identificatory relations, of imagined vantage points to fixed or unitary generalizations. The mutual interrelations of representations and self-representations involved in

looking at someone else looking back at myself is the very nature of the picture. It is what makes every picture a unique collision; the moment of encounter between the imagined subject and the imagined object and between the stereotypes of each. (The picture’s uniqueness within the forces of the general is seldom appreciated either by those who mistake the uniqueness of photographic encounter with that of physical encounter or by those who see the picture as a kind of language whose generalizations are encoded and decoded in the act of seeing.) The stereotype is not some deceptive illusion enclosed by the picture and into which we are manipulated in identification. The stereotype does not exist in the picture but is produced by it.

Appearance is as much a means of removal from the spectacle as it is an involvement in the spectacle. A person’s looks are as much a means of protecting himself/herself from the outside world of the spectacle. Appearance, fashion (in the widest sense of the word) can be a shield beyond which the look (the universal look for which the photograph is symbol and token) cannot penetrate. Empathy and distance, identification and withdrawal are involved in fashions as much as in the pictures which give fashions their currency. We become voyeurs of our own cultural appearance – of our social typification.

The social circulation of the picture in reproducible form seems to transform appearance into an illusion or typification, ‘behind’ which personal realities lurk like invisible ghosts. Personal identity becomes something to protect against the spectacle of representations and not simply as something which sees its expression (realization) in those representations. The photograph becomes an appropriation of appearance. Baudelaire seemed to understand the threat entailed in the promise of photographic portraiture. The reduction of people to facets both literally and metaphorically seemed to pose the threat of fragmentation of the soul (or of personal identity). But the development of photographic portraiture also changes the meaning of the portrait. The mechanical reproducibility of the picture which surrounds us with images, establishes new relationships to the picture. We learn to present a look in relationship to expected looks, an appearance over and against other appearances and our self-representations in the suppression of other possible representations. As the picture becomes one of many (possible pictures), the facet becomes both deception and shield as well as representation. The picture becomes the protection from, as well as the threat to, personal identity.

John Stezaker, ‘The Look’, *Fragments* [London: The Photographer's Gallery, 1978] 30-42.



# Victor BURGIN

## Interview with Rosetta Brooks [1981]

*Rosetta Brooks* There seems to be a quite definite change in artists' use of photography in the 1970s. From the almost documentary use of conceptual artists, it seemed to evolve into a reflection of the medium itself. How do you relate this change in your work?

*Victor Burgin* I think there are two main attitudes. You can think about the medium in almost purely technological terms: to take a photograph is to exercise a number of options – plane of focus, shutter-speed, aperture, framing, angle, and so on – and the 'content' of the work becomes your choice from amongst these options and the way you structure them. This is an attitude which comes very directly out of Greenbergian Modernism. Or, you can start from the fact that photography was invented to given an illusionistic rendering of some aspect of the world in front of the camera – which leads into considerations of representation and narrative – which is what I'm interested in.

*Brooks* You've been very critical of Modernism in fact.

*Burgin* I've been critical of the political conservatism of Modernism, of its complicity in the cold war, cultural politics of the 1950s for example, but we should remember that the humanist, documentary realism of Edward Steichen's 'Family of Man' photography show served the same ideological ends as painterly abstraction in that same period. When I said that the first sort of attitude comes out of Greenberg, I should have said it comes out of what Greenberg says about painting. Basically, Modernism says you should ground your practice in its specificity – that which it has to offer that is different from the other media around it. Obviously, how you define that specificity is crucial. The technology of the medium is just part of this specificity – no need to make a fetish of it.

*Brooks* On one level your work might be seen as Adorno's nightmare – advertising for its own sake. How do you respond to this sort of criticism – dismissing the works as radical advertisements? Do you feel you inherit the limitations of the advertising image – the singular, unambiguous reading, consumed in a moment?

*Burgin* Both advertisers and critics of advertising like to believe in that Thurberesque beast, the 'unambiguous reading' – I don't believe it ever existed; it's certainly extinct now. The form of the text, the context in which it's produced, the mind of the reader, all can reverse the communicative intention. Take that ad in the London underground which shows a woman opening her garage door to reveal a tube-train – I saw one poster where someone had added in pencil 'so that's where they've all got to'. That familiar sort of semiotic subversion wouldn't be possible if readings could be made unambiguous. As for the speed of consumption ... from what I've just said, obviously I don't accept the idea of 'consumption' – there's always some investment of meaning made by the reader. Now certainly you can design the text to encourage

a reading which is closer to the 'consumption' end of the scale than the 'investment' end, one which is read more easily and therefore faster – which is what I did when I made posters for the street. Other texts I deliberately construct to slow down the reading, make it more difficult. *Brooks* Your pictures and your texts often seem like quotations. One gets no sense of a single voice from the words. The texts range from the documentary to the almost poetic; but I find there is more of a trace of style in the photographs. They all at least remain within the documentary genre.

*Burgin* What I've always aimed for in the texts is a 'lapidary' style – the idea originates in classical antiquity – it's a style suitable to inscriptions carved in stone – terse, economical, all that ... The work called *US 77* has three distinct voices: didactic, narrative and paradoxical. As far as the images are concerned, I used a documentary style because of three things: first, I believed that that was what photography did best; second, I tend to have a cut and dried approach to things, so I wanted to put myself in a situation – the street – where it was impossible to be fully in control; third, who knows what appearances of our period are going to be interesting to people in a hundred years time or more? Maybe it's something in the street we don't even think about now.

*Brooks* It is interesting that as your work has become more involved with sexuality and with sexual stereotypes the works have become more associative ...

*Burgin* It isn't just in respect of sexuality that the texts have become more associative – it becomes a necessary condition of the way I work. The text superimposed on the image had to be comparatively small in area, otherwise it would take on too much independence – which meant it had to be short, otherwise the typeface would be too small to read. As there was a lot I wanted to put into that small text, it meant a work of condensation, of compression into a small space. Compressing a text like that meant breaking, short-circuiting, the usual sorts of linear connections we expect to be offered. It means shortening the horizontal lines which are actually present, set in type, and relying on the vertical chains of associations which are always potentially there in your mind.

*Brooks* What do you think about tendency of advertising to separate the word and image? I am thinking about the much discussed Benson and Hedges campaign and in recent Guinness advertising where the text is absent altogether, or in 1970s fashion photography, the tendency to give the image greater and greater autonomy from the product.

*Burgin* One story I heard about Bensons was that they got wind that cigarette advertising was going to be banned entirely so they started moving towards campaigns which wouldn't show or mention cigarettes at all. I mean, they could almost get away with putting up a rectangle of gold paper now, couldn't they? I don't know whether there's any truth in that story but whatever the case, we have the visual evidence – on the street – of an emphatic recognition of what, theoretically, is referred to as 'intertextuality'. All texts depend on, are associated with, and are invaded by other texts. Advertising has known this for a long time. If, for example, you use the caption 'Play it

again, Sam', then you instantly engage with a whole narrative, a morality, a cult, and so on – all of which is activated by those four words. What is being recognized now is that you don't actually need to put words on the image because the words are already in the mind of the viewer – again, this is hardly new knowledge; painting in the Renaissance was based entirely on this. In more recent history we got the silly dogma of the 'purely visual' that the more academic of our art schools still teach. Certainly, light striking the retina is something 'purely visual' – but that retina is connected to the brain, and that brain doesn't see the retinal image. What the brain 'sees' is mediated by prior experience and knowledge which is both visually and verbally encoded. Dreams are examples of mental activity which turns words into images, and vice versa. Dreams also show us how profligate this mental activity can be; and to control this you need some words. Those ads which, of late, have seemed so empty of language, all contain words, but words now keep a low profile, they're used much more sparingly, economically.

*Brooks* Where does the idea of an image/text fusion come from? I think of the artist as film director – wholly in charge of the scenario. Cinema, I suppose, is the ultimate fusion of the word and the image. Working in series imposes an equivalent linear ordering of encounter with the image. Do you wish you were a film director?

*Burgin* I do from time to time wish I was making films, but not because I'm unhappy with my own form of practice – it's rather that I'm unhappy with the conditions of distribution and consumption of that practice. It's like this – one works for an imaginary audience; now, for someone with my sort of theoretical and political concerns who makes films there is a real audience to correspond to that imaginary audience, and there are modes of distribution for reaching that audience. More or less the same audience is potentially there for the type of work I produce – for example, I know there were a lot of people who went to the recent shows of feminist work at the ICA, London, and who went to the 'Three Perspectives' photography show at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 1979, who never normally set foot in a gallery – but there's no corresponding distribution network. I made a large work in Berlin – *Zoo*. It's been shown one in England – at the Hayward in 1979 as part of the Hayward Annual – and it's unlikely that it will be shown again anywhere in this country. If I had made a film in Berlin, then that film could have gone several times round one or other of the universities and other networks by now. Also, with film, there's always the possibility of moving into a more general audience arena – with art, if it's been hung in the Hayward, that's it – finished. As an avant-garde filmmaker friend said to me: 'You're at the centre of a periphery – I'm at the periphery of the centre'. I spoke about this to another filmmaker, and she told me that I overestimated the conditions for theoretical/political filmmaking – she said that you should consider the work as being one of creating an audience – but how is that possible without minimal access to the means of distribution?

*Brooks* But isn't art inevitably peripheral? Most artists could feel that marginality is the price of independence.

*Burgin* There's a position on the left in which 'art', indeed



any form of cultural activity, is seen as ‘peripheral’ to the real world of party politics and economic class struggle. There’s a position on the right which agrees with this and welcomes it as a ‘guaranteeing the independence’ of artistic creativity. You’re then offered a choice as to which square to occupy on a checker-board of positions — any position as long as it’s black or white. I think it’s important not to accept any games played on this board. Cultural production, to which ‘art’ contributes, involves social relations and apparatuses, and has definite societal effects. Artists are not independent — socially, economically, ideologically, politically — for all it suits some of them to pretend that they are. But neither are they ‘a cog and a screw’ in the party machine.

**Brooks** Your work uses a format which relates to a culturally mainstream of image use. Marginality seems to be an essential part of the strategy.

**Burgin** I think what’s at issue here is a metaphor. You use the word ‘margin’. A margin is a space running along the edge of something to which it doesn’t belong. I’ve used this term myself — ‘society marginalizes its artists and intellectuals’ — that sort of idea. It’s a metaphor which slips out easily, but I wonder if it’s the most appropriate one. Maybe ‘fringe’ would be better. If I’ve got it right, ‘fringe interference’ is what takes place when different wave forms encounter each other. If you throw three stones into a pond and watch the ripples, then there are places where those waves are encountering each other and producing something new. So ‘fringe’ allows for a more dynamic and de-centred picture than ‘margin’. I feel I’m working across the fringe areas — for example, as I’ve said already, where ‘art’, ‘advertising’, ‘documentary’, ‘theory’, etc., overlap; but the very fact of cultural production taking place in those areas of overlap means that ‘ripples’ then emanate from those points. Definitions of art change as a result — for example, the idea of what it’s possible for an art exhibition to be about. The changes are resisted, but then the resistance becomes the very sign of change. Even exclusion, that silent form of resistance, marks a space which is destined to be occupied.

Victor Burgin, ‘Interview. Rosetta Brooks talks with Victor Burgin’, ZG, 1, 1981, 11–14.

# Cindy SHERMAN

## Artist’s Statement [1982]

I want that choked-up feeling in your throat which maybe comes from despair or teary-eyed sentimentality: conveying intangible emotions.

A photograph should transcend itself, the image its medium, in order to have its own presence.

These are pictures of emotions personified, entirely of themselves with their own presence — not of me. The issue of the identity of the model is no more interesting than the possible symbolism of any other detail.

When I prepare each character I have to consider what I’m working against; that people are going to look under the make-up and wigs for that common denominator, the recognizable. I’m trying to make other people recognize

something of themselves rather than me [ ... ]

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Statement*, *Documenta VII*, Vol. 1 [Kassel]: Documenta, 1982], 411.

# Nan GOLDIN

## Interview with Mark Holborn

### [1986]

**Mark Holborn** You presented *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* as a large slide show with a soundtrack at the 1985 Whitney Biennial. What is *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*? Is it a slide show, an installation, a story, a document, or a diary?

**Nan Goldin** It’s the diary I let people read. I keep a written diary, but I never allow people to read it. This is my public diary. My written diary is a document of a closed world. My visual diary expands with the input of other people from its subjective, self-referential roots. A large part of my work is about the quality of the relationship between me and the person that I am photographing. It is almost a collaboration. It takes on its own life. At one point there was a series of single images; then there were slide shows for friends. Now the slide show has a title and a life of its own. The primary life of *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* is as a slide show.

**Holborn** To what extent does this diary address other people?

**Goldin** There is a universal aspect about the slide show, and I hope it transcends the specific world in which it was made and applies to the whole nature of the relationships between men and women. It addresses people who are involved in pursuing close relationships.

**Holborn** How did it begin?

**Goldin** I have been taking pictures of my life since I was sixteen. I was the school photographer at a Summerhill type school. I was always obsessed with recording my life. The major motivation for my work is an obsession with memory. I became a serious photographer when I started drinking because (the morning after) I wanted to remember all the details of my experiences. I would go to the bars and shoot and have a record of my life. I lived with some drag queens so I photographed drag queens. I never decided that drag queens formed a subject that I had to photograph. The work was always a direct offshoot of my life. I have a need to remember everything. The photography comes from that need. Photography provides the material for this diary [ ... ]

**Holborn** What is the difference between the slide show and an exhibition of your prints?

**Goldin** The slide show allows me the opportunity to show seven or eight hundred images in 45 minutes. I like the prints but I don’t worship photographs as objects. I am interested in content. The slide show enables me to make political points more clearly. It helps me to reveal my ideology. I can clarify my intentions through the juxtaposition of the lyric of the soundtrack and the image. The sheer accumulation of imagery as well as the editing assists the clarity. Also through the editing I can create a

clearer narrative than is possible with the single images and one that has an intense emotional effect. People cry during the show; it can also be very funny. My goal is to provoke the same emotions in my audience as are described in the show.

Some of the single images are very strong on their own; others are just included to provide narrative threads. I’d like to find a way to show the prints that would have the same impact as the slide show [ ... ]

**Holborn** How is the show structured?

**Goldin** It starts with portraits of men and women. One of the first portraits is of my parents when they were young. It then breaks down into the genders, first women and then men. The photographs show people in terms of their images of themselves, their conditioning, their gender identification, and their relationships to each other. The women, then the men, are shown first outside in the world, then alone in their rooms; then women are shown together and men are shown together. Battered women are shown, and women who have been abused, who have been subjected to violence. Some men are shown as violent, and the conditioning of violence is explored through things such as guns and dogs. The images of women are followed by images of prostitution, brides, and mothers, so there is a sequence of the mother, the whore, the bride, the sexual woman, and introspective woman. The children are shown with their parents, by themselves, and the boys are shown fighting. The drag queens are shown as a third sex, not as men dressed as women. They are shown in a world of their own, in their clubs, in their jobs, on the street, in their home lives, and in their relationships with lovers. There is a long section of men alone in their rooms masturbating with that version of *My World Is Empty Without You*. There are pictures of a group of skinheads in London. The show enters the downtown world with the song *Downtown*, and it includes parties and fashion, the clubs and the bars. It continues with couples. There are couples together and couples in bed having sex, followed by images of empty rooms, empty beds, and graves. At the end there is a Mexican couple in their seventies who got divorced a week after the picture was taken. The final image is of skeletons coupling after they have been vaporized. In spite of it all, people have a need to couple. Even when they’re being destroyed, they’re still coupling. *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* starts and ends with this premise, but in between there is the question as to why there is this need to couple and why it is so difficult.

**Holborn** How much is the dependency you describe something that you see in others, or how much is it in yourself?

**Goldin** It comes from myself, and I see it in the people around me. I think that men and women are irrevocably strangers to each other, irrevocably unsuited. It is almost as if men and women are from different planets, they have such difficulty understanding each other. I find men, or the male emotional system, very difficult to understand. Men seem to be afraid of women. Emotionally I am much more suited to be with a woman, but then there is this sexual desire for men. I realize my emotional and sexual need for the opposite sex. The slide show touches gay relationships



too; I am dealing with the difficulty of coupling, and part of that is the difficulty in maintaining intimacy. *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* is an exploration of my own desires and problems.

*Holborn* You never feel like a voyeur?

*Goldin* The premise that a photographer is a voyeur by the nature of photography is just not true. The people who have been photographed extensively by me feel that my camera is as much a part of their life as any other aspect of their life with me. It then becomes perfectly natural to be photographed. It ceases to be an external experience and becomes a part of the relationship, which is heightened by the camera, not distanced. The camera connects me to the experience and clarifies what is going on between me and the subject. Some people believe that the photographer is always the last one invited to the party, but this is *my* party. I threw it [...]

*Holborn* Is the ballad finite? Does it go on growing and growing, or will it reach a definitive version?

*Goldin* It can never be perfect. Next week I am putting it on video for the first time. It will then exist outside my control. But this is not the final version. I will continue to re-edit it. It's my 'Leaves of Grass', constantly updated and revised.

Nan Goldin, 'The Ballad of Sexual Dependency. Interview by Mark Holborn', *Aperture*, 103, Summer, 1986, 38–45.

## Barbara KRUGER Interview with Jeanne Siegel [1987]

I think that the exactitude of the photograph has a sort of compelling nature based in its power to duplicate life. But to me the real power of photography is based in death: the fact that somehow it can enliven that which is not there in a kind of stultifyingly frightened way, because it seems to me that part of one's life is made up of a constant confrontation with one's own death. And I think that photography has really met its viewers with that reminder. And also the thing that's happening with photography today vis-à-vis computer imaging, vis-à-vis alteration, is that it no longer needs to be based on the real at all. I don't want to get into jargon – let's just say that photography to me no longer pertains to the rhetoric of realism; it pertains more perhaps to the rhetoric of the unreal rather than the real or of course the hyperreal.

I have frequently said, and I will repeat again, in the manner of any well-meaning seriality, that I'm interested in mixing the ingratiation of wishful thinking with the criticality of knowing better. Or what I say is I'm interested in *coupling* the ingratiation of wishful thinking with the criticality of knowing better. To use the device to get people to look at the picture, and then to displace the conventional meaning that this image usually carries with perhaps a number of different readings ...

I think that social relations on a neighbourhood and global level are contained by a market structure, a calculator of capital that fuels a circulatory system of

signs. We sell our labour for wages. Just because something doesn't sell doesn't mean it's not a commodity. None of us are located in a position where we can say 'I am untainted and I'm pure'. I think one would be deluded if one thought that way...

I work circularly, that is around certain ideational bases, motifs and representations. To fix myself, by declaring a singular methodology or recipe, would really undermine a production that prefers to play around with answers, assumptions and categorizations ... I think that sometimes there is an openness in terms of the possible readings of my work. But I'm also a body working within a particular space who is making work to further her own pleasure. And that pleasure means a certain investment in tolerances, in differences, in plenitudes, in sexualities and in pleasure rather than desire. Because desire only exists where pleasure is absent. And one could say that the wish for desire is the motor of a progress that can only efface the body.

It was Roland Barthes who suggested that the stereotype exists where the body is absent. He had a knack for being so economically eloquent. One of the possible meanings of his comment could be that the repetition of stereotype results in a figure which is not embodied. Not an empty signifier, but a perpetual ghost with a perpetual presence [...]

Barbara Kruger, 'Pictures and Words: Interview with Jeanne Siegel', *Arts Magazine*, 61:10, June, 1987, 17–21.

## Norman BRYSON, Trevor FAIRBROTHER Thomas Ruff: Spectacle and Surveillance [1991]

The *Portraits* derive a discomfiting aspect from the tension between allure and boredom that they engender. However, familiarity begins to dissipate the mood of indifference and neutrality that they initially project. Even though the titles seldom name the sitters and the people present no smiles to the viewer (thereby breaching the main behavioural convention of Fuji Polaroid snapshot etiquette), the people in the portraits are nonetheless rather sweet. They are not trying to be anything that they are not, and so they are comfortable with themselves. There are no frozen, tensed-up facial expressions. Since they are fresh and clean it seems unlikely that they have gone to be photographed at the end of their day. The sitters reflect the conventions of portraiture in this sense of being well turned out for the event. Moreover, the photographs themselves are thoroughly traditional in being lovingly crafted in a conventional work intensive studio set-up. The lens's narrow depth of field brings maximum sharp detail to the head and reduces the background to a soft shadowless colourless blank.

Scale gives the subjects and the artworks themselves the power to allure; but it also makes them vulnerable and ready specimens for inspection. Since the photographs

are large enough to allow us to count hairs, we are also in the position to pass vicarious judgements on the personal, from dandruff to sex appeal. Relations between the viewer and the viewed are reduced to realpolitik. The sitter has the privilege of being in the picture, enlarged to a towering status, and we have the power of looking back, getting intrusively close, cataloguing how and why we are different. The enormous scale of the finished product destroys all chances of the *Portraits* ever being mistaken for the conventional: bigness problematizes their conventionality by seeming to show it as it might appear under a magnifying glass, or tendered as a headline in capital letters.

The *Portraits*, it turns out, are as unified a group as the *Stars*. Since we all spend our lives engrossed by the specifics of individual faces this point is easily missed. In fact the basic similarities of the people will become increasingly apparent as their time and looks recede into a period phenomenon, for Ruff chose only people of his own generation (in their mid to late twenties) from his own milieu in and around the Dusseldorf Academy. There is little evidence that the people in the *Portraits* have been touched or marked by anything difficult in their lives. His decision to photograph adults that are still young in this way becomes more interesting with time. It may eventually explain why the photographs induce in us a liberating freedom to look while instilling on a visceral level an awareness of the power relations implicit in the looker's gaze.

Ruff's portraits remind us that from its beginnings in the nineteenth century, photography has been deployed by a society increasingly interested in surveying the bodies of its citizens. The aims of that surveillance have been many – we need not consider them monolithic. Photography has clearly been crucial to forensics (mapping the physiognomies of lawbreakers and the scenographies of crime), to medicine (mass X-rays, body scans, visual probes), to the management of populations (whether on the epic scale of August Sander's *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (*People of the Twentieth Century*) or on the bureaucratic scale of the passport and the identity card), and to the safeguarding of property (the cameras that watch us in banks, supermarkets, malls, subways, freeways, atria, the corridors of hospitals, airports, apartment buildings). Ruff's portraiture arrives at a moment when the lenses of the social panopticon no longer inspire outright fear, as they did in George Orwell, but have been generalized, naturalized, and more or less accepted as routing. The sitters in Ruff's portraits will have been surveyed many times in their young lives; the viewers who look at them in museums may themselves be on camera.

Ruff's sitters are not addressing the camera with any particular branch of surveillance in mind, just its average or typical form. They wear the countenance expected of them by authority at large. Foucault said that in the nineteenth century prisons came to resemble factories, factories came to resemble schoolrooms, schoolrooms came to resemble prisons. In the same way, in our time the face needed by the state has come to resemble the face required by a job application form, a reception desk, a



library card, a driver's license. Ruff repeats what all these have in common: frontality, clear illumination, the *gravitas* that comes from eliminating from the face whatever is transient and incidental (expression, context, interaction) in favour of what is more useful to authority, the face's permanent and central form. The sitters are captured in the moment of interpellation, when they become subjects of authority in the widest sense. But what is interesting is that their faces are not ground down by this gaze of power. On the contrary, they remain intact and undamaged.

Norman Bryson and Trevor Fairbrother, 'Thomas Ruff: Spectacle and Surveillance', *Parkett*, 28, 1991, 92-96.

# Laura MULVEY

## Cosmetics and Abjection: Cindy Sherman 1977–1987

### [1991]

*When I was in school I was getting disgusted with the attitude of art being so religious or sacred, so I wanted to make something which people could relate to without having read a book about it first. So that anybody off the street could appreciate it, even if they couldn't fully understand it; they could still get something out of it. That's the reason why I wanted to imitate something out of the culture, and also make fun of the culture as I was doing it.*

– Cindy Sherman'

Cindy Sherman's works are photographs. She is not a photographer but an artist who uses photography. Each image is built around a photographic depiction of a woman. And each of the women is Sherman herself, simultaneously artist and model, transformed, chameleon-like, into a glossary of pose, gesture and facial expression. As her work developed, between 1977 and 1987, a strange process of metamorphosis took place. Apparently easy and accessible postmodern pastiche underwent a gradual transformation into difficult, but still accessible, images that raise serious and challenging questions for contemporary feminist aesthetics. And the metamorphosis provides a new perspective that then alters, with hindsight, the significance of her early work. In order to work through the critical implications of this altered perspective, it is necessary to fly in the face of her own expressly non-theoretical, even anti-theoretical stance. Paradoxically, it is because there is no explicit citation of theory in the work, no explanatory words, no linguistic signposts, that theory can then come into its own. Sherman's work stays on the side of enigma; deciphering its pictographic clues, applying the theoretical tools associated with feminist aesthetics, is, to use one of her favourite words, fun, and draws attention to the way that, through feminist aesthetics, theory, decipherment and the entertainment of riddle or puzzle solving may be connected.

During the 1970s, feminist aesthetics and women

artists contributed greatly to questioning two great cultural boundary divisions. Throughout the twentieth century, inexorably but discontinuously, pressure had been building up against the separation between art theory and art practice on the one hand, and between high culture and low culture on the other. The collapse of these divisions was crucial to the many and varied components of postmodernism, and also to feminist art. Women artists made use of both theory and popular culture through reference and quotation. Cindy Sherman, first showing work in the late 1970s, used popular culture as her source material without using theory as commentary and distancing device. When her photographs were first shown, their insistent reiteration of representations of the feminine, and her use of herself, as model, in infinite varieties of masquerade, won immediate attention from critics who welcomed her as a counterpoint to feminist theoretical and conceptual art. The success of her early work, its acceptance by the centre (art market and institutions) at a time when many artists were arguing for a politics of the margins, helped to obscure both that the work has intrinsic interest for feminist aesthetics and that the ideas raised by the work could not have been formulated without a prehistory of feminism and feminist theorization of the body and representation. Her arrival on the art scene certainly marks the beginning of the end of that era in which the female body had become, if not quite unrepresentable, only representable if refracted through theory. But rather than sidestepping, Sherman reacts and shifts the agenda. She brings a different perspective to the 'images of women question' and brings back a politics of the body that had, perhaps, been lost or neglected in the twists and turns of 1970s feminism.

In the early 1970s, the Women's Movement claimed the female body as a site for political struggle, mobilizing around abortion rights above all, but with other ancillary issues spiralling out into agitation over medical marginalization, and sexuality itself as a source of women's oppression. A politics of the body led logically to a politics of representation of the body. It was only a small step to include the question of images of women in the debates and campaigns around the body, but it was a step that also moved feminism out of familiar terrains of political action into a terrain of political aesthetics. And this small step, from one terrain to another, called for a new conceptual vocabulary, and opened the way for the influence that semiotics and psychoanalysis have had on feminist theory. The initial idea that images contributed to women's alienation from their bodies and from their sexuality, with an attendant hope of liberation and recuperation, gave way to theories of representation as symptom and signifier of the way that problems posed by sexual difference under patriarchy could be displaced onto the feminine [ ... ]

The first series of photographs, which also established Sherman's reputation, are called *Untitled Film Stills*. In each photograph Sherman poses for the camera, as though in a scene from a movie. Each photograph has its own *mise-en-scène*, evoking a style of film-making that is highly connotative but elusive. The black and white photographs seem to refer to the 1950s, to the New Wave, to neo-realism, to Hitchcock, or Hollywood B-pictures.

This use of an amorphous connotation places them in a nostalgia genre, comparable to the American movies of the 1980s that Fredric Jameson describes as having the postmodern characteristic of evoking the past while denying the reference of history.<sup>2</sup> They have the Barthesian quality of 'fifties-ness', that American collective fantasy of the 1950s as the time of everyone's youth in a white and mainly middle American setting, in the last moment of calm before the storms of civil rights, Vietnam and finally feminism. Nostalgia is selective memory and its effect is often to draw attention to its repressions, to the fact that it always conceals more than it records. And the 1950s saw a last flowering of a particular culture of appearances and, particularly, the feminine appearance. The accoutrements of the feminine struggle to conform to a façade of desirability haunt Sherman's iconography. Make-up, high heels, back-combed hair, respectable but eroticized clothes are all carefully 'put on' and 'done'. Sherman, the model, dresses up into character while Sherman, the artist, reveals her character's masquerade. The juxtaposition begins to refer to a 'surfaceness', so that nostalgia begins to dissolve into unease. Sherman accentuates the uneasiness by inscribing vulnerability into both the *mise-en-scène* of the photographs and the women's poses and expressions.

These *Film Still* scenes are set mainly in exteriors. Their fascination is derived from their quality as *trompe l'oeil*. The viewer is subjected to a series of doubletakes, estrangements and recognitions. The camera looks; it 'captures' the female character in a parody of different voyeurisms. It intrudes into moments in which she is unguarded, sometimes undressed, absorbed into her own world in the privacy of her own environment. Or it witnesses a moment in which her guard drops as she is suddenly startled by a presence, unseen and off screen, watching her. Or it observes her composed, simultaneously demure and alluring, for the outside world and its intrusive gaze. The viewer is immediately caught up by the voyeurisms on offer. But the obvious fact that each character is Sherman herself, disguised, introduces a sense of wonder at the illusion and its credibility. And, as is well known in the cinema, any moment of marvelling at an illusion immediately destroys its credibility. The lure of voyeurism turns around like a trap, and the viewer ends up aware that Sherman, the artist, has set up a machine for making the gaze materialize uncomfortably in alliance with Sherman, the model. Then the viewer's curiosity may be attracted to the surrounding narrative. But any speculation about a story, about actual events and the character depicted, quickly reaches a dead end. The visitor at a Cindy Sherman show must be well aware that the *Film Still* is constructed for this one image only, and that nothing exists either before or after the moment shown. Each pregnant moment is a cut-out, a tableau suggesting and denying the presence of a story. As they pretend to be something more, the *Film Stills* parody the stillness of the photograph and they ironically enact the poignancy of a 'frozen moment'. The women in the photographs are almost always in stasis, halted by something more than photography, like surprise, reverie, decorum, anxiety or just waiting.



The viewer's voyeurism is uncomfortable. There is no complementary exhibitionism on the part of the female figures and the sense of looking on, unobserved, provokes a mixture of curiosity and anxiety. The images are, however, erotic. Sexuality pervades the figures and their implied narratives. Sherman performs femininity as an appearance, in which the insistent sexualization of woman hovers in oscillation with respectability. Because Sherman uses cosmetics literally as a mask she makes visible the feminine as masquerade. And it is this culture of appearance, a homogeneity of look that characterizes 'fifties-ness', that Sherman makes use of to adopt such a variety of similar, but different, figurations. Identity, she seems to say, lies in 'looks' for white femininity at the time. But just as she is artist and model, voyeur and looked at, active and passive, subject and object, the photographs set up a comparable variety of positions and responses for the viewer. There is no stable subject position in her work, no resting point that does not quickly shift into something else. So the *Film Stills*' initial sense of homogeneity and credibility breaks up into the kind of heterogeneity of subject position that feminist aesthetics espoused in advance of postmodernism proper [ ... ]

1 Cindy Sherman quoted in Sandy Nairne, *State of the Art: Ideas and Images in the 1980s* [London: Chatto & Windus, 1967] 132.

2 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Logic of Late Capitalism* [London: Verso, 1991] 19.

Laura Mulvey, 'Cosmetics and Abjection: Cindy Sherman 1977-1987', *Fetishism and Curiosity* [London: British Film Institute, 1996] 65-76; first published under the title 'A Phantasmagoria of the Female Body. The work of Cindy Sherman', *New Left Review*, July/August, 1991.

## Mitra TABRIZIAN

### The Black as Such [1992]

Homi K. Bhabha, in his article 'The Other Question' writes: 'The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation ... The legends, stories, histories and anecdotes of a colonial culture offer the subject a primordial Either/Or.' Either the black is fixed in a consciousness of the body as representing a 'negative difference', or the black is fetishized, disavowing that 'negative difference'. The link between the fixation of the fetish and the stereotype (or the stereotype as fetish) is an important one here. For fetishism is always a 'play' – or oscillation – between sameness/difference, pleasure/displeasure, presence/absence, knowledge/disavowal; holding two contradictory beliefs at the same time; recognition of difference and simultaneously disavowal of it. As Bhabha writes: '... in Freud's terms: "All men have penises"; in ours "All men have the same skin/race/culture" – and the anxiety associated with lack and difference. Again, for Freud "some do not have penises"; for us "some do not have the same skin/race/culture"'.'<sup>2</sup>

The scene of fetishism is also a scene which reactivates

the subject's desire for 'pure origin' which, for Freud, is always threatened by its division. In this case, it is also threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture. Concerning fetishism it is important to remember the 'knowledge value'; the recognition of difference, which cannot be reduced to a neat division of masculine/feminine, or white/black, positive/negative, superior/inferior, Self/Other. Difference, Jacques Derrida has argued, is not a concept. Differences always take us elsewhere, we might say, involve us in an ever-proliferating network of displacement and deferral of meaning. To see difference principally as the gap between the two parts of a binary opposition (as for instance between masculinity and femininity or in this case black and white) is therefore to impose an arbitrary closure on the differential field of meaning. In other words, meaning (signification) is not produced in the static closure of the system of opposition. Rather it is achieved through the 'free play of the signifier'. The Derridean term *différance* can be translated both as 'difference' and as 'deferral' in English. Similarly Bhabha writes: 'The place of the Other must not be imaged, as Frantz Fanon sometimes suggests, as a fixed phenomenological point, opposed to the Self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness. The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity – cultural or physical – that introduces a system of differentiation which enables the "cultural" to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality.'

Jacques Lacan stresses the proximity of the woman to the Other, in the sexual relation. Man relates to woman on the basis of fantasy, as the Other to assure his own identity. In Freud's concept of fetishism, the man disavows the mother's/woman's 'lack' – her difference, by the substitution of a fetish in order to assert his phallus. Lacan developed the idea further, that it is not the phallic mother/woman that the man finally relates to, but the *objet petit 'a'*, or the lost object, as 'something' from which the subject has to detach itself in order to become the subject. Although the *objet 'a'* may be roughly identified as 'the mother's breast' more precisely it is '... the object described by analytical theory: the nipple, the stool ... the imaginary object ... (an unthinkable list, to which one does not add, as I do ... the look, the voice ... etc. ...'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the *objet 'a'* stands for, '... the experience of separation, from all things that have been lost from the body (for example the mother's breast which was once experienced as part of the infant's body)'.<sup>5</sup>

Once the subject is split (separated from the *objet 'a'*), it can never be whole again, but the longing for the lost object haunts the subject forever. This is Lacan's concept of desire; desire by definition is unfulfillable, so the *objet 'a'* is defined as the cause and not the object of desire. The *objet 'a'*, cause of desire and support of male fantasy, gets transposed onto the image of the woman as Other, who then acts as its guarantee.<sup>6</sup> Formulated in this way, the woman is reduced to being nothing other than a 'fantasmatic place'. 'The Woman does not exist', writes Lacan, which means 'not that women do not exist, but that women's status as absolute category and guarantor of fantasy (precisely The Woman) is false'.<sup>7</sup> 'There is no such thing as The Woman where the definite article stands for

the universal ...'<sup>8</sup> So Lacan's rejection of the category 'woman' – The Woman – is therefore an attempt to disqualify the belief in the Other as such – as the guarantor of male fantasy.

Returning to Bhabha's statement, '... The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity – cultural or physical – that introduces the system of differentiation ...' What this means is that there is no innate, fixed identity whether masculine/feminine – or white/black – which can pre-exist language and culture. And the function of the Other is only to introduce the system of differentiation within language and culture in order to signify meaning and sexual identity, yet with uncertainty. So the Other is that site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers; it is from where the subject seeks both meaning and the certainty of its identity. However, for Lacan the Other is also the 'place' of the unconscious – where both meaning and sexuality fail. There is no guarantee either for meaning or sexuality. In the field of fantasy, the black is imaged as the Other to guarantee the status of the 'white man's' identity. Racist stereotypical discourses reinforce power relations based on the fixation of the positions of the white/black, Self/Other. They do this by either denigrating black people as being completely different, a different race, blood, or inviting them to identify, to be white – an impossible identification. As Bhabha argues: 'The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's avenging anger ... "Black skin, white masks" ... is not a neat division; it is a doubting, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once which makes it impossible for the devalued ... to accept the colonizer's invitation to identify: "you are a doctor, a writer, a student, you are different, you are one of us"''.<sup>9</sup>

Stuart Hall, in his article 'The Whites of their Eyes' makes a distinction between what he calls 'overt' racism and 'inferential' racism. Here Hall is discussing racism on the plane of culture rather than the unconscious. By overt racism he means those modes of arguments and representations which openly circulate and popularize racist policies and ideas. The fact that these things can be overtly advocated 'legitimizes' their existence. 'Racism becomes "acceptable" – and thus, not too long after, "true" – just common sense.''<sup>10</sup> By 'inferential' racism Hall means those apparently naturalized representations relating to race, with racist connotations yet presented as a set of unquestioned assumptions, concealing their racist nature. This form of racism is more widespread, yet more 'invisible' even to those who uphold it, e.g., by humanist liberals with good intentions. He gives as an example of this type of racist ideology the sort of TV programmes that deal with a 'problem' in race relations and tend to conclude that if only the 'extremists' on both sides drop their dogma, 'normal' black and white people would be able to live in harmony. However such programmes operate with the unrecognized premises that the black people are the source of the problem. They assume a pre-existent 'natural' identity, generally considered inferior, but now to be reconsidered on humanitarian grounds. Although the notion that 'black people are the source of the problem' is presented differently from that of the more



overt racism which claims that ‘black people are a problem for white society’ (i.e. the problem of immigration; too many black people; black people as law-breakers; prone to crime; trouble; creating civil disorder) ... in the last instance both categories reproduce the argument that black people are a threat to white society. The solution would be either to be ‘good’ to them, to make them ‘one of us’, or to get rid of them. At any rate what is at issue here is the centrality of the position of white people, which has to be shifted if there is to be a shift in power relations between white and black people.

A challenge to any racist ideology must begin with making ‘visible’ what is usually ‘invisible’; in this case, those racist traits, woven into the unconscious of white society to expose the fiction of identity. What is at stake here is the crisis of identity. And what is important is the understanding of the process of subjectification rather than the identification of images as positive or negative. This is certainly not the only kind of intervention. But it is one strategy that attempts to question any absolute definition of the white and of the black, the meanings of which are polarized around fixed relations of domination and subordination, displaced from the language of history into the language of ‘Nature’. It is a strategy which tends to explore the ambivalence of the unconscious. If ‘The Woman does not exist’, we might equally say, ‘The black as such does not exist’ either, which means not that black people do not exist but their status as absolute Other, as the guarantor of the ‘white man’s identity’ is a fraud.

The title of my work *The Blues* is used here as a metaphor signifying the black voice – as a voice of resistance. The work uses the codes of movie posters as a popular form, to construct in each ‘untold story’ a critical moment in the confrontation between black and white. What the black man is confronting is the status of whiteness. The blue colour is also an integral part of the *mise-en-scène* of crime movies. No matter what position he is put in – under police interrogation, in prison, in a low-paid job, being an ‘invader’ – the black man questions the white man’s identity. Yet the black voice is still a black man’s voice. So the work begins with the confrontation between men, and ends up with the encounter between the black woman and the black man.

1 Homi K. Bhabha, ‘The Other Question’, *Screen*, 24:6, 1983, 27.  
2 Ibid, 27.  
3 Homi K. Bhabha, Preface, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* [London: Pluto Press, 1986] XV111.  
4 Stephen Heath, ‘Anata mo’, *Screen*, 17:4, 1976-77, 53-4.  
5 Constance Penley, ‘The Avant Garde and Its Imaginary’, *Camera Obscura*, 2, 1977, 22.  
6 Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, ‘Feminine Sexuality’ [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986] 50.  
7 Ibid, 48.  
8 Ibid, 144.  
9 Homi K. Bhabha, Preface, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., XV1.  
10 Stuart Hall, ‘The Whites of Their Eyes’, *Silver Linings*, [London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1981] 37.  
11 Mira Tabrizian, ‘The Black as Subject’, *Camera Austria*, 40, 1992.

# Della GRACE

## Dynamics of Desire [1993]

*Images exist; things themselves are images ... Images constantly act on and react to one another, produce and consume. There is no difference between images, things and movement ...’*

As a photographer who deals in seduction and exchange I have been wondering why it is that people allow themselves to be photographed by me in what you could call compromising positions. Although I usually pay travel expenses, give them prints and occasionally a bit of money, if I am being paid, the incentive to ‘pose, perform or model’ for me isn’t financial. I ask them to submit to my fantasies and to confess their own to me. At times they may be in great physical discomfort and occasionally at risk, from the law or the less than law abiding, who wish to censor their display. Is it any more than narcissistic pleasure? Or an overwhelming ‘desire to speak sex and hear it spoken?’<sup>2</sup> [ ... ]

Traditionally the relationship between the photographer and model is gendered, with the male being the photographer and the female being the photographer’s object. What might an image look like if both the photographer and the photographed inhabited the subject position, or even if the subject-object dynamics oscillated between them in a way that caused the spectator to question his or her own positioning? It is this ‘play of looks’ that I want to explore, within the framework of desire and its visual representations. By unearthing some of the psychical, social and sexual processes involved in representations of desire we can begin hopefully to examine the dynamics of desire present in the relationship between the photographer, the photographed and you [ ... ]

My desire is complex. I want the people I photograph in an extremely specific way and although this wanting is undeniably sexual, it is far from genital. If I said that a photo shoot is my way of *having* them without doing it, what would you understand by that? If I said that the high I get during a successful photo session is more satisfying than multiple orgasms or even my favourite foods, would you understand my definition of *having*? Although there is an element of possession involved (in law I own the image) *having* is not possessing. Possession is a kind of permanent having that implies power over someone or something. Having is a temporary condition of being, as in *having* (rather than possessing), an orgasm. In this context it is something both the photographer and the photographed can experience, though not necessarily simultaneously. During these moments the model *has* an absolute hold on my attention. I want them, I need them, I exist only to have them. We are irretrievably and symbiotically linked. This is a power relationship but neither of us have power *over* the other, rather, the power we have is fluidity itself. The images we create together give us a visual voice in a world that prefers our silence [ ... ]

1 Gilles Deleuze, *Afterimage*, 7, Summer 1978.

2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol.1, 51-73, [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990].  
Della Grace, ‘Dynamics of Oesire’, in Victoria Harwood, David Oswell, Kay Parkinson and Anna Ward [ed.], *Pleasure Principles: Politics, Sexuality and Ethics* [London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993].

# Victor BURGIN

## Interview with Naomi Salaman [1998]

*Naomi Salaman* I was interested to pull out original things like *Thinking Photography*, and this edition of *Studio International*, in which you published *Photographic Theory and Art Practice*. OK, that period is over, but I’m still interested in the way you can bring together these focus points of theory in the way you build dense arguments. This is just not possible now, partly because of the way ‘theory’ has mushroomed, particularly in teaching. It seems there may be an inverse law in operation: the more publications, courses, conferences, etc., the less the ideas seem to connect in any coherent way.

Also, the funding issues which you mention ... just this year something like four publicly funded photography spaces have closed or had the funding seriously curtailed.

I suppose I’m looking back at that time, seeing it as an extraordinary scenario, of theories coming together ... rather than seeing it as an orthodoxy, seeing it as quite an incredible moment ... the connection between those theories and making work coalesced; what had been a theory of representation became a practice of theoretical representational issues.  
*Victor Burgin* Yes, that of course allowed the anti-intellectual critics to dismiss the work produced as *illustration of theory*. I think that was just a cheap way of not having to deal with the work. The work being produced was not illustrating theory; image/text work was a different mode of discourse.

It’s rather like the renaissance poets of the humanist period who would study rhetoric and the Classics in order to polish their prose. It wasn’t illustration of the Classics but rather a way of having a theoretical foundation. We were making a new theoretical foundation for what we were doing because the recognition was always that no one can work without a theory.

And that was always the premise of the teaching at PCL [Polytechnic of Central London]. To any student who questioned theory, you would simply say, ‘*Well, you know, you have a theory already, you just haven’t been made self-conscious about it. Your assumptions about spontaneous creativity emerging out of the flame burning in the breast of the artist – you can locate those kinds of notions historically. You can talk about the context of Romanticism in which they functioned, in which ideas of individuality were being asserted in the face of encroaching capitalism, early industrialization, which was progressively led to a de-individualization of people by putting them onto assembly lines, and so on. Then you can see how the autonomy of the*



*individual was functioning as an idea*’.

Once you’ve accepted that you cannot work without a ‘theory’ of some kind, then you have to ask the question, ‘*Am I happy just working with what I’ve inherited, or do I want to look critically at what I’ve inherited?*’ So the people whose work used theory were really trying to reorganize the basis from which they worked. But there is always a basis.

*Salaman* There is always a basis *but* becoming conscious of that basis in a sense is quite a desublimatory activity, and it’s so crucial how that process takes place, so that you don’t end up with shipwrecked people who can’t work because the theory has negated them.

*Burgin* At the end of the second year I’d have students come into my office and they’d say, ‘*Don’t get me wrong, it’s not that I don’t like the theory classes. I find them really interesting, but I can’t take a picture any more. Every time I raise the camera to my eye I think, is this politically OK? Is this ...*’, etc., etc. The advice I always gave them was: ‘*Shoot first, ask questions later.*’ These are questions you ask later, and you answer theoretically perhaps. Go with the moment of sublimation, the moment of desire. The first rule of psychoanalysis and the couch is ‘*say the first thing that comes into your mind*’. It sounds easy, but it’s not. There are so many checks and balances on what we’re able to say [ ... ]

Victor Burgin, ‘Messages for Western Union’, Interview with Naomi Salaman’, in Naomi Salaman and Ronnie Simpson [ed.], *Postcards on Photography: Photorealism and the Reproduction* [Cambridge, England: Cambridge Darkroom, 1998] 91–99.

## Gilda WILLIAMS

### Identity Twins: The Work of Wendy McMurdo [1998]

A *Doppelgänger* is a mythical monster of German folklore who randomly chooses an innocent person and pursues them in their shadow, observing their habits, appearances, expressions and idiosyncrasies. As time passes the *Doppelgänger* starts to look like his selected victim, behave like them, and eventually becomes and even replaces that person, without anyone noticing. The word itself is made of two, derived from the German *doppel* (double) + *gänger* (a modification of *gehen*, ‘to go’). The *Doppelgänger* enters the lingua franca of psychoanalysis thanks to Freud’s much-quoted essay on the uncanny (*unheimlich*), in which he defines uncanny experiences as resulting when ‘something which is familiar and old-established in the mind ... becomes alienated from it only through the process of repression’. Rooted, therefore, in the dark recesses of our own fears and anxieties, the uncanny unfolds through repetition and coincidence as it invokes the sense of fatefulness, of something inescapable, of chance becoming destiny. Freud identifies three principal sources of the uncanny – and these are all at the heart of Wendy McMurdo’s digitally-manipulated photographs of ordinary-looking subjects combined with ‘*doppelgänger*’ twin images of themselves. The three

experiences which determine the uncanny are 1) when we are faced with a being whom we cannot be sure is inanimate or alive, mechanized or living; 2) the fear of losing sight, i.e., of not being able to trust our eyes for information and for recognizing the familiar; and 3) the fear of confronting one’s own double, the *Doppelgänger*.

McMurdo’s photographs, with their somewhat hallucinatory feel, follow in a rich twentieth century tradition of visual and literary works which have impersonated and contextualized such instances of the uncanny. The frightening apparition of multiple selves is a recurring theme since the early days of cinema, when it was discovered that the screen could be split and otherwise manipulated, allowing the actor to ‘meet himself’ through the miracle of post-production. In Henrik Galeen’s 1926 film *The Student of Prague*, the young man in question sells his mirror image to a warlock, and then is cursed with an evil twin who destroys his life by committing a series of crimes. He eventually is forced into suicide, killing his criminal double and, thus, himself: his ‘innocent’ side as well as the ‘guilty’. In a chapter of Italo Calvino’s *If on a winter’s night a traveller*, a tycoon hires countless look-alikes to take his place, to ward off kidnappers, to mask his love affairs, to confuse his enemies. He eventually loses himself, caged in a kaleidoscopic tangle of self-effigies, killed by multiple murderers and mistresses.

The psychological symbolism of these two works is easily read: these are literal portrayals of such themes as self-inflicted punishment, repression, denial of the unsavoury or uncontrollable sides of one’s personality, schizophrenia, and the non-recognition of a desired self-image in one’s real actions. Facing oneself within the hidden confines of a guilty conscience is unpleasant enough; having actually to sit down and converse with its embodiment, observing the ticks, narcissism and other unflattering habits of one’s physical person is positively unbearable. Although this fear lies at the centre of Wendy McMurdo’s double (triple, quadruple, and further multiplied) portraits, hers are not sinister images. In contrast to Galeen’s or Calvino’s *Doppelgängers*, which present menacing figures who embody a sort of death warning, in McMurdo’s self-confrontations the encounter is neither violent nor unexpected. Like Alighiero Boetti’s collage *Twins* (1968), in which the artist levitates quite cheerfully, hand in hand with himself in a garden, in McMurdo’s works we seem to witness a kind of serene, if momentous, meeting. Her subjects are posed to perform a kind of relaxed inevitability. Though we are unsure whether these images are real or not, i.e., in Freudian terms, whether the people photographed are mechanized, digitally manufactured beings or living creatures, we are not frightened by this bewildering – and unresolved – impossibility. The psychosis associated with the uncanny, here, seems virtually cured.

Usually McMurdo chooses as her subjects the very young, often small children. This is a strategic choice which accentuates the unfamiliarity with one’s physical self: a self which as children seems to grow ‘monstrously’ and relentlessly less recognizable each day. For children, so many events verge on the unfamiliar, resulting in

childhood’s recourse to a rich and vivid imaginary life which can flourish, becoming stronger and more durable even than the everyday. (Witness the invention, by so many children, of an ‘invisible friend’, an imagined companion who, like a double, follows you everywhere.) In some of McMurdo’s work, such as *Helen, Backstage, Merlin Theatre (The Glance)* (1996), the double is seen literally in the instant of the initial encounter, when one is faced for the first time with the reality of one’s physical self: my eyes are too big, my legs are crooked, my hair has a will of its own. This is a kind of portrait of the first moment of physical awareness as children, when we admit to and really observe for the first time the hard nature has dealt us, literally facing the bodily reality which will at least according to Freud’s conviction that ‘anatomy is destiny’ shape our lives. A hesitancy and slightly fearful curiosity is signalled in the right hand figure’s playful, sideways bend, as if wanting to be friendly but daring not to come too close, like our first tentative reckoning with self-image, bodily awareness and proprioception. Other portraits of the same girl such as *Helen, Sheffield* 1996 (1997) seem to follow chronologically, as if depicting events subsequent to the first encounter. Now little Helen is ‘photographed’ playing comfortably with her recently introduced self – although with obvious struggles for domination as seen in this playground game of ‘who’s on top’. In a sense, learning to live with oneself is a task we discover in childhood and never quite master. McMurdo’s childhood portraits mark an early period in our lives when we thought this coexistence would be easy [ ... ]

Gilda Williams, ‘Identity Twins. The Work of Wendy McMurdo’, *Wendy McMurdo* [Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca, 1998] 33–43.

## John HILLIARD

### Interview with Neil Mulholland [2001]

*Neil Mulholland* In the early 1970s, you produced a series of works which were, in many ways, a harbinger of the politics of representation, using first-order photography and captioning to analyse and deconstruct the subjective positions from which we experience material reality. Your photo-based works were seen simultaneously to ask viewers to include their own (hitherto repressed) emotions in their response, while reflecting on the conditions and consequences of their varying reactions. For me, there remains an ‘emphatic’ and humanist dimension (e.g., the use of the term ‘elemental’ against its opposite, ‘conditioning’) in these works which separates them from the ‘photo-conceptual’ pieces made by artists such as Victor Burgin at the time. This seems even more prevalent in your current work. Did you and do you now see yourself as an artist who is primarily concerned with exposing the conditions of production hidden behind the mechanisms of visual art’s means of seduction? To what extent do you see your works as autonomous from such concerns?



**John Hilliard** Initially, it seemed as though a job needed to be done, in circumstances where artists (including myself) had begun to use the photograph as a proof to evidence and validate a range of transient activities (performances, site-specific installations, works in remote locations and so on). That job was to contest and examine received presumptions about the reliability of a (usually single) photographic representation, by demonstrating the sometimes dramatic variations contingent merely upon making one simple decision rather than another at the most basic stages of production. Each work dealing with this issue was thought out and carried out as rigorously and efficiently as possible, with little margin for incorporating any additional subject matter. But there was another issue on the agenda as well – to identify and articulate the special character of the medium and to foreground it, rather than deploy it only as a convenient ‘transparency’. Fairly rapidly, attention to an expanding range of representational influences (cropping, captioning, variable focusing, etc.), combined with a determination to celebrate the material and grammatical features of photography, dictated the resort to a diverse catalogue of picture material and an array of formal and physical devices. Then, as now, some interest in or question about an aspect of representation itself is most likely to get me started, and the specific details of an image will be the product of that initiative, so that critical inquiry and picture content will be interdependent and interactive. In the end, though, in spite of this order of development, the interpersonal narratives or evocations of particular sites in my finished works are just as much their subjects as any other aspect (not least because they will be rooted to varying degrees in my own experiences and obsessions). Indeed, they may also be a ‘means of seduction’, albeit a seduction perversely subverted by a deconstructive self-consciousness of the image.

**Mulholland** You once said that you wanted to ‘re-assess the *language* of art, to deconstruct and demystify it’. In what way can visual culture be said to be a ‘language’, given that there is no minimum schema for representation? And if art is not a language, how can we read and deconstruct it? Also, the idea of demystification raises the notion of ‘merger’. Your current works seem to be related to Brecht, for whom the whole pretence that what was happening on the stage was ‘real’ interfered with the effective communication between dramatist and audience. Only by recognizing that actors are acting, Brecht argued, can the audience begin seriously to involve themselves in the dramatist’s critical presentation of reality. The ability to detect art’s mask without removing it entirely is essential to the production of this critical distance. This is traditionally the role of the painter (a magician figure), yet you claim that your ‘lush’ Cibachromes do not ‘revert’ to painting. Is your current work more overtly Brechtian than that produced in the 1970s and 1980s?

**Hilliard** The methodologies of art (drawing, painting, photography, video, etc.) do incorporate linguistic features, it seems to me, and however blurred the edges of the ‘reading’, a certain colour or tonality, or line or juxtaposition, or pan or zoom or cut can be reasonably

calculated to elicit a certain response. The iconographics of art also anticipate shared readings within a particular cultural framework, and it is by assuming that the constituent elements of art are generally deployable as language that an artist is guided through the decision-making minutiae required throughout the process of making their work, and that the spectator feels invited to approach it. Certainly, I work according to that presumption of communicability, even if, or perhaps especially because, I’m also aware of the fallible notion of ‘absolutes’ in representation. Detecting art’s mask, yet also allowing it to stay in place, is an objective I feel affinity with, and I would concede that, particularly in pieces of mine from the early 1970s, the means of production were laid very bare indeed. Not so long ago I was talking about my work to the students of another artist who uses photography, Olivier Richon. Afterwards, he said he felt that with earlier works I led the spectator through, step by step, so that the deconstruction was clearly evident, whereas now everything is more condensed and the spectator must do more of the unravelling. You could say the mask has been revealed and loosened, without actually being removed, leaving the spectator mentally to undress the picture, which otherwise is allowed to retain its dignity. You could also say I want to have my cake and eat it – to facilitate the critical subversion of a work without sacrificing the twin pleasures of its physical sensuality and psychical fantasy.

**Mulholland** In many ways your new works seem to contain formal values that would have interested aesthetes (especially in the ready way in which they draw attention to the colourful qualities of the surface as a ‘barrier’ rather than a ‘window’). Given that this is one of their most striking characteristics, in what sense do your current works deny painterliness? Are you a closet aesthete? If so, is this such a bad thing?

**Hilliard** My clouding of photography’s normative ‘window’ is, in the first place, to declare an argument with precisely that convention, and can be seen as a continuation of the original agenda I’ve described – to contest a set of assumptions about photography’s presumed ‘transparency’. In so doing, the opaque materiality of the print is asserted, just as the fact of applied pigment is always asserted in painting. Capturing for photography something akin to painting’s objective presence is one of my interests – even if it may never really be attainable. Blurred streaking, unfocused haze, a sharp rain of granular dots, continuous monochrome fields – if these planar obstructions become themselves as engaging as those more orthodox pictorial illusions they obscure, and thereby acquire a ‘painterly’ association, then one of my references to the larger visual spectrum (which also includes cinema and advertising) has been realized. I have no investment in denying the formal or sensual in my work. The scopophilic is, in any case, a necessary foil to the scopophobic intent of denying access to the larger, central zone of the image.

**Mulholland** You once claimed that your work showed a ‘commitment to the present’, incorporating ‘contemporary concerns and technology’, rather than looking back in a ‘retrogressive manner’. To what extent do

you feel that this (euphemistic) defence of photography is an instance of what Raymond Williams disparagingly characterized as ‘technological determinism’ – i.e. why should new technology (which would not include the 19th-century medium of photography) be regarded as being more contemporary than, say, weaving as a means of producing art?

**Hilliard** Over time, one accumulates a patchwork of recorded remarks, originating in a particular context, which one then has to defend, renounce, or re-shape. I do feel, though, that the artist is very alert to the present, looking forward not backward, contributing and subject to an array of current ideas, information and methods. Photography isn’t just a static nineteenth-century form; it’s evolving in the twenty-first century under the influence of digital technology, and the totality of this provision, from gum bichromates to Photoshop, is there to be used and added to [...]

John Hilliard, Interview with Neil Mulholland, *Fig-1: 50 Projects in 50 Weeks*, ed. Mark Francis [London: Spafax Publishing, 2001].



At the end of the second year I'd have students come into my office and they'd say, Don't get me wrong, it's not that I don't like the theory classes. I find them really interesting, but I can't take a picture any more. Every time I raise the camera to my eye I think, is this politically OK? Is this ..., etc., etc. The advice I always gave them was:

Shoot  
first, ask  
questions  
later.



# THE CULTURES OF NATURE

Nature has been

a persistent but contradictory subject for artists and writers. Within and beyond the genre of landscape, photography has been central to our apprehension of the natural. While Land artists turned to the photograph as a form of documentation in the 1960s, many soon began to explore its shortcomings. For Robert Smithson the camera was indispensable precisely because its inherent ambiguities could mediate his own doubts about the status of nature. Joan Fontcuberta outlines how the discourses of the natural sciences have been the framework for his photography, while Gregory Crewdson discusses the place of nature as subject matter and metaphorical allusion in his theatrical tableaux. Looking at the ongoing appeal of the classical landscape image, David Bate has examined the deep tensions between the wish for compositional harmony and a need to reflect the imbalances of nature in contemporary culture.

## Robert SMITHSON Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan [1969]

### THE FOURTH MIRROR DISPLACEMENT

South of Campeche, on the way to Champoton, mirrors were set on the beach of the Gulf of Mexico. Jade coloured water splashed near the mirrors, which were supported by dry seaweed and eroded rocks, but the reflections abolished the supports, and now words abolish the reflections. The unnameable tonalities of blue that were once square tide pools of sky have vanished into the camera and now rest in the cemetery of the printed page—*Ancora in Arcadia morte*. A sense of arrested breakdown prevails over the level mirror surfaces and the unlevel ground. ‘The true fiction eradicates the false reality’, said the voiceless voice of Chalchihuitlicue – the Surd of the Sea.

The mirror displacement cannot be expressed in rational dimensions. The distances between the twelve mirrors are shadowed disconnections, where measure is dropped and incomputable. Such mirror surfaces cannot be understood by reason. Who can divulge from what part of the sky the blue colour came? Who can say how long the colour lasted? Must ‘blue’ mean something? Why do the

mirrors display a conspiracy of muteness concerning their very existence? When does a displacement become a misplacement? These are forbidding questions that place comprehension in a predicament. The questions the mirrors ask always fall short of the answers. Mirrors thrive on surds, and generate incapacity. Reflections fall onto mirrors without logic, and in so doing invalidate every rational assertion. Inexpressible limits are on the other side of the incidents, and they will never be grasped [ ... ]

### THE EIGHTH MIRROR DISPLACEMENT

Against the current of the Usumacinta the dugout headed for the Island of Blue Waters. The island annihilates itself in the presence of the river, both in fact and mind. Small bits of sediment dropped away from the sand flats into the river. Small bits of perception dropped away from the edges of eyesight. Where is the island? The unknowable zero island. Were the mirrors mounted on something that was dropping, draining, eroding, trickling, spilling away? Sight turned away from its own looking. Particles of matter slowly crumbled down the slope that held the mirrors. Tinges, stains, tints and tones crumbled into the eyes. The eyes became two wastebaskets filled with diverse colours, variegations, ashy hues, blotches and sunburned chromatics. To reconstruct what the eyes see in words, in an ‘ideal language’ is a vain exploit. Why not reconstruct one’s inability to see? Let us give passing shape to the unconsolidated views that surround a work of art, and

develop a type of ‘anti-vision’ or negative seeing. The river shored up clay, loess, and similar matter, that shored up the slope, that shored up the mirrors. The mind shored up thoughts and memories, that shored up points of view, that shored up the swaying glances of the eyes. Sight consisted of knotted reflections bouncing off and on the mirrors and the eyes. Every clear view slipped into its own abstract slump. All viewpoints choked and died on the tepidity of the tropical air. The eyes, being infected by all kinds of nameless tropisms, couldn’t see straight. Vision sagged, caved in, and broke apart. Trying to look at the mirrors took the shape of a game of pool under water. All the clear idea of what had been done melted into perceptual puddles, causing the brain to gurgle thoughts. Walking conditioned sight, and sight conditioned walking, till it seemed only the feet could see. Squinting helped somewhat, yet that didn’t keep views from tumbling over each other. The oblique angles of the mirrors disclosed an altitude so remote that bits of ‘place’ were cast into a white sky. How could that section of visibility be put together again? [ ... ]

Robert Smithson, ‘Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan’, *Artforum*, September, 1969; reprinted in Jack Flam [ed.], *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996] 122–23.



# Joan FONTCUBERTA

## Interview with Diane Neumaier [1991]

*Joan Fontcuberta* We invented a German naturalist who in the early 1920s made expeditions around the world, discovering various strange species. He was a Darwinist, but since all great theories have exceptions, he was trying to find exceptions to the theory of evolution: hybrid or mutant animals. We documented the existence of these fictional animals, appropriating the techniques of museums of natural history: we included a map where the animals were found, the sounds of birds recorded on tape, information about metabolism, sexual reproduction, whatever. We created a biography of this character from his family album, his letters, his daybook; artefacts that would underline the idea of uncovering an archive. So my friend and I play out the idea of the ‘death of the author’, representing ourselves as not the authors but the editors, just the ones who by chance found this material and presented it to the world for consideration.

A resource that has been very important to my career is *Evidence*, the book published in the USA in 1977, edited by two California artists, Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel. From the NASA archives and different scientific institutions they collected pictures that were very informative in their context, but decontextualized in the book – they were just surreal, mysterious. This emphasized to me that it’s the cultural and ideological environment that provides the meaning.

*Diane Neumaier* The *Fauna* series is almost an inversion of that process.

*Fontcuberta* Yes, exactly.

*Neumaier* The installation is photographs, three-dimensional objects and documentation?

*Fontcuberta* Yes, and field notes, x-rays, sometimes the footprints of the animals. Like a naturalist doing research, I’m trying to collect as much evidence connected to those animals as possible. Interestingly, the reception of this material has been very different in different countries. For instance, here in the United States, people got worried about the possibility that my partner and I killed animals to do the project. Of course, I must say that all the animals died naturally; usually we bought the animals from the zoo in Barcelona. Then we would take them to a taxidermist. Our working method was that we would do a sketch or drawing of a hybrid animal. Then we would go to the zoo and say, ‘When you have a turtle and a snake, let us know, because we are interested in them’; from time to time they would call us. It was a very long process.

The taxidermist could participate, too, because sometimes we did very funny drawings that were impossible to carry out. For instance, the fur of the animal was not able to stick together with the feathers of the birds. The taxidermist also provided an opinion and gave suggestions about the structure of the final monster. And another interesting thing happened: the zoo staff began to anticipate our needs. So when they had a particular animal

dying, they’d just call us and say, ‘We just got a bear’, or, ‘We just got a squirrel, could you do something with that?’ I like this aspect, that we involved many people in that project.

I’ve been doing the installation in art museums or galleries and in museums of natural history. In the first case we try to replicate the conventional displays of museums of zoology – maps, educational videotapes and so on. In this context we often get the angry question: ‘Is this really art?’ Even art critics have raised this question.

But to me the exhibition fulfils its scope best when presented in scientific institutions, because there we can challenge the authority of the institution. You have a disposition to believe that a museum will provide a specific content, a specific aura to the objects on display. In a museum of natural history you expect to see natural representations of something from the natural world. When we put that installation in the museum of natural history in Barcelona, it was amazing, because our fictional stuffed animals were set together with real stuffed animals. There was no difference between the explanations that were fake and the ones that were truthful and precise. In a poll conducted by the education department of the museum, 30% of the visitors aged 20 to 30, with university training, believed that some of our animals could have existed. I am talking about flying elephants, hairy snakes or snakes with twelve chicken legs, rats with snake tails, things that. When you think really objectively, with a cold mind, you must realize these creatures are impossible. But we need to believe and to feel ourselves safe inside these institutions, because somehow our knowledge is based on the respect we feel for them. We could say the same about religious institutions, the family, universities, the entities that produce and transmit knowledge. Many artists have similarly been making critiques of mass media messages, and it’s clear that mass media are influenced by powerful ideological, economic, and political concerns. But when you deal with scientific institutions usually you expect a more neutral ideological standpoint. So you are not so critical.

*Neumaier* Was it ever interpreted that you were confronting the audience with a hostile hoax, that the joke was on the audience, or was it interpreted that you were making a critique of the power of the institution; or both?

*Fontcuberta* I think both. In fact, in some of the museums of natural history where we have presented the show, the directors or the staff were not aware of the subversive scope of the exhibition. In other cases they liked that because it was a tool to make people think. Our installation could be used as a tool to teach schoolchildren why these animals were impossible in terms of evolutionary laws [ ... ]

Joan Fontcuberta, interview with Diane Neumaier: ‘Reviving the Exquisite Corpse. Joan Fontcuberta and Spanish Photography’, *Afterimage*, April, 1991, 6–10.

# Hiroshi SUGIMOTO

## Interview with Thomas Kellein [1995]

*Thomas Kellein* Can we talk about your *Seascapes* and the *Theatres*?

*Hiroshi Sugimoto* Actually all my three photographic series started around 1976–77. In all cases I started with an idea. It took me quite a while, however, to find out if it would work. My method is different from the one that most photographers use. I do not go around and shoot. I am not a hunter. I usually have a specific vision, just by myself. One night I thought of taking a photographic exposure of a film at a movie theatre while the movie was being projected. I imagined how it could be possible to shoot an entire movie with my camera. Then I had the very clear vision that the movie screen would show up on the picture as a white rectangle. I thought that it could look like a very brilliant white rectangle coming out from the screen, shining through the whole theatre. It might seem very interesting and mysterious, even in some way religious. So the next step was to make that happen. If I already have a vision, my work is almost done. The rest is a technical problem. It is a very difficult process, though, because you have to keep trying and trying. My work becomes a trial-and-error process. The results have to coincide with my vision. With the *Theatres*, the first test was actually quite successful. It was basically easy but I still had to refine the quality a lot. It took about one year to get the quality I wanted. Since then I have kept going on and on.

*Kellein* What happened with the *Seascapes*?

*Sugimoto* It was the same thing. I was half asleep when I had a very clear vision of a sharp horizon, a very calm seaside, with no clouds and a very clear sky. The horizon was exactly in the centre of the image. That vision was probably something dating back to my childhood. I still remember my first encounter with the ocean. I was born in Tokyo, which is near the sea. Usually Japanese people like to see Mount Fuji. For me, it was very important to see the ocean, the big ocean. I liked this image and I started to think about a series. It had to do with the idea of ancient man, facing the sea and giving a name to it. Naming things has something to do with human awareness, with the separation of the entire world from you. Language has to do with the need to communicate with a world that is separated from yourself, the separation between inner world and outer world would be less clear without language. So with the *Seascapes* I was thinking about the most ancient human impressions. The time when the first man named the world around him, the sea [ ... ]

*Kellein* You told me the other day that it is especially difficult to work on the *Seascapes*.

*Sugimoto* Since I have been working on the *Night Seascapes* too, I have been in a twenty-four-hour operation. I work day and night. I stay up continuously, every day. Technically speaking, the *Seascapes* are truly the most difficult works, although they seem to be simple to do. You just go out and you take a picture of nature. There



is literally no technical gimmick involved. But regular nature photography uses a lot of trees or mountains, or other figurative things. If you intend to take a picture of the air, how do you do it? Air is transparent, there is nothing to see. You have to have a hundred per cent pure processing method, otherwise many different things show up in your negative, for instance the unevenness of the film emulsion or even dust. You have to be extremely accurate to record very minor things. It is like listening to the insects in a field. With a garbage truck next to the field you won't hear anything[ ...]

*Kellein* Have you ever thought of enlarging your prints so that they would meet the sizes of today's large photography, often shown by other artists?

*Sugimoto* I want to make people see my works twice, from a distance and from close up. If you have a large photograph you start to see the grain. You see the water, for instance, as a large amount of dots, and that is where the image ends. Everything is a dot. By using my size, which is four times bigger than the negative, people can get very close to the image and truly study the waves, for instance. You still don't see the grain. I want people to be drawn into my pictures[ ...]

Hiroshi Sugimoto, interview with Thomas Kellein, *Time Exposed* [London: Thames & Hudson, 1995] 89-95.

# Gregory CREWDSON

## Interview with Bradford Morrow [1997]

*Gregory Crewdson* I've been asked many times, what's your relationship to nature or the suburbs? I'm not that interested in either as subjects as much as I'm interested in using the iconography of nature and the American landscape as surrogates or metaphors for psychological anxiety, fear or desire. Everything in the photographs – the birds, the iconography, the images, and probably most directly, the actual casts of my body parts – deals with my own psychology. These elements are used as tropes to investigate my interior life. I want to take familiar tropes like the suburban home or aspects of the landscape and project onto them some kind of personal meaning[ ...]

I'm not sure what my responsibility is to the viewer. Originally, one of the reasons I was drawn to photography, as opposed to painting or sculpture or installation, is that of all the arts it is the most democratic, in so far as it's instantly readable and accessible to our culture. Photography is how we move information back and forth. But I also want the work to have a visceral impact that draws the viewer in through photographic beauty, lushness, vibrant colour. Perhaps they're democratic. I think ultimately they're quite optimistic. I never see them as being ugly or repulsive.

*Bradford Morrow* I'm sure you know the installation by Duchamp in Philadelphia, *Etant Donnés*. Was Duchamp an influence at all?

*Crewdson* On this most recent work [*Untitled*, 1996] an absolutely significant influence. Duchamp worked on that

installation in absolute secrecy in his guest bedroom. *Morrow* Secrecy was part of the whole aesthetic experience. *Crewdson* Exactly. He worked on that piece for the last ten years of his life. I've always been captivated by that image. Interestingly enough, I have only seen the installation through photographs. A few years ago, I had a chance to view the actual installation and I decided against it. It's like my relationship to my work where I'm only interested finally in the image, not the installation. And I wanted only to know the installation through an image. At some certain point, partially because I was haunted by that photograph of the Duchamp piece, I wanted to incorporate the body into the landscape.

*Morrow* Have I accidentally hit upon the most important visual influence?

*Crewdson* Absolutely. *Morrow* I want to talk a little more about the notion of you as a sculptor. The photograph of the image is a communicative device in so far as it brings the image to us, so we don't have to go, say, to Philadelphia. You are a multidisciplinary artist. Can you tell me about your work as a sculptor? As diorama?

*Crewdson* Well, ultimately I do everything so wrong-headed every step of the way. I've figured out how to do everything by mistake. You see the perfect images here – but if you came to my studio, it's an absolute chaotic mess, completely disorienting and confusing. Yes, the work definitely has connections to sculpture and installation and film, but what I'm most interested in is the final picture. I don't consider myself very good at any particular craft. The only reasons I make installations are because I have an image in my mind of how I want the final photograph to be and I just have to create it to make it look like that. It never, ever looks like what I have in my mind[ ...]

Gregory Crewdson, interview with Bradford Morrow, *Bomb Magazine*, Fall, 1997.

# David BATE

## Notes on Beauty and Landscape [2000]

[ ... ] To make an ugly or 'unpleasant' object into something beautiful, at one level, only demonstrates the skill of the producer to subdue the ugliness into the appearance of something beautiful in the picture.' But the issue of beautification needs to be looked at in a different way if we are to see the politics of beauty in relation to landscape.

Concerned and oppositional photographic practices have attempted to undo this reduction of the world to the category of the beautiful in image practices. From whatever starting position, such 'de-mythologizing' practices have had the shared project of throwing off the shroud of beauty, of showing how the idealization of subject matters represses, ignores or 'mis-represents' real social relations. In other words they have tried to demonstrate how the experience of a picture as beautiful,

or let's say pleasurable, can lead to a so-called 'false consciousness' or wrong-headedness about how the world really is. But there has always been a resistance to this sort of criticism. There is something about picturesque images which cannot be waved away or dispelled – their pleasure. No matter how much rational critique is made, individuals tenaciously cling to the pleasure of this or that image, no matter how far others find the same image to be appallingly 'clichéd', trite or meaningless. There is, I suggest, a fascination with something about the image as beautiful which persists in spite of any conscious knowledge about the material social or political status of landscapes as 'rural myth', romanticism and so on. It appears as though the spectator is in the grip of some emotional effect of pleasure which no amount of 'deconstruction' or rational criticism will release or stop.

One way to understand this grip of pleasure is through the composition of the picture in relation to the spectator. The beauty of objects in representational forms is commonly regarded as having something to do with proportion and symmetry. When a spectator's eye drifts off out of the frame they are no longer looking at the picture. Good composition, it is said, as any photography handbook will have as an unwritten rule, is about keeping the eye of the spectator within the frame.<sup>2</sup> So long as the spectator's eye is within the frame they are looking at the picture. To do this, the scene must 'harmonize the parts to the whole'. In the picturesque (for example, a Constable painting), a conventional 'good composition' is one that enables the spectator also to recognize the scene as a scene – it is what makes the whole structure work. This pleasure in 'recognition' should not be underestimated. The beauty spot is similarly the spot to stand on for the viewer to have an (imaginary) command of the scene. In the activity of seeing, 'the drive to master' is one of the key components of looking. The picturesque is a form in which everything is supposed to be 'in its right place', organized, precisely 'composed' and controlled. The poor peasant is pictured by their hovel, or the agrarian worker is seen working in their master's field and so on. They are all 'in the right place'. Here content and form become one through 'harmony' and 'balance'. A 'good composition' in relation to the pictorial form of the picturesque gives a certain type of satisfaction and pleasure for the viewer which results in the spectator having an experience of the beautiful. 'Good composition' satisfies the composure of the viewing subject.<sup>3</sup>

In Freudian psychoanalysis it is the ego which constantly attempts to organize the human subject, it keeps the mass of drives functioning as a coherent (if imaginary) 'person'. The ego is the 'seat of composure', it is as an agency of control. Composure of a person then, the subduing of various parts to a whole, is just like composition in a picture; it is a way of organizing and containing excitement, since adult life is mostly about containing, binding sexual excitement into sublimated forms. The pleasure derived from the composition of picturesque beauty is a pleasure in the recognition of order, precisely what the ego wants: a unity and organization of the (imaginary) coherent 'self'. It is as if



someone says to themselves, ‘this order and harmony that I see in the picture is the order and harmony that I wish in myself’. The organization of the picture is identified with a corresponding internalized sense of satisfaction of the ego in the human subject: ‘I have finally organized everything into a unity, it is all in the right place.’ If this structural relation between the composure of the human subject and the composition of the pictorial object sounds preposterous, just think of the way that when someone *loses* a love object, a ‘person’ or thing, their composure and self-value can crumble or be damaged. Someone can quite literally ‘go to pieces’ at the loss of a loved thing, thus *losing* their composure. What is externally lost is reciprocated internally as the lost property of the ego. Conversely, a badly composed picture may well invoke a sense of distress, but for the reason that it fails to provide a seat for composure. Or alternatively, someone who suddenly cries when they see a picturesque scene may well be, unconsciously, recognizing their own lack of composure. Such remarks obviously require a form which *invites* composure through a narcissistic identification with, and mastery of, the organized scene. The picturesque offers an image for potential ‘fullness’. So when someone says ‘this picture is for me’ or it is ‘just my sort of picture’, they are recognizing themselves in, as belonging to, identifying with, the organization of the scene. These sorts of argument are already intuited in the way that picturesque beauty is so despised and maligned by critics. In contrast with the sublime, it is hard to find contemporary cultural critics advocating the picturesque as a radical or interesting form. Discussion of the picturesque is mostly in negative terms, but this underestimates the extent to which it can be valued positively, as something that gets you through a situation, something that enlists you into a composure, but one which may nevertheless be complacent.

In fact, the issue of the politics of this pleasure becomes much clearer and more acute when considered in relation to particular issues, for example, when landscape is invoked by discourses of nationalist fervour, male sexual or class anxiety (expressed as a fear of social disorder), or in struggles of property rights, ecology and during wars. So when ‘the land’ is invoked as something to be protected as the ‘blood and soil’ of a nation or specified ‘race’ (rather than of the entire community of different ethnic groups, etc) as has so often been the case in the historical uses of landscape imagery, the idea of ‘composure’ (a narcissistic unity to the exclusion of others) becomes a real problem; it elicits, invites, a violent process of cleansing the ‘contaminating’ elements, that is, the unwelcome debris of people’s ‘rubbish’, from the otherwise ‘pure’ scene. It is precisely in the idea which says that someone or something ‘does not fit in the picture’, that the composure of an ‘us’ is constituted at the same time as an ‘ideal’ picture is construed by the exclusion of a ‘them’ or ‘that’. Or, in the so-called cultural identity ‘crisis’ of who ‘we’ are or what ‘we’ identify with, a picturesque landscape responds reassuringly that ‘this picture represents what we believed had been lost, whatever that is, Englishness perhaps, which this image also makes present again here and now’. This is why

landscape is so often associated with a contemplative mood akin to melancholia, ‘a pleasure’ or satisfaction derived from longing for something past or lost. Perhaps this is also why the pastoral picturesque scene has, over the centuries, offered itself as a kind of solution to the discontents of civilization.<sup>4</sup> Discontent is invested in a ‘return to nature’, a hope, with ‘Nature’ as the name given to what is really an appeal to a narcissistic pleasure of completeness (psychoanalysis might say an appeal to the lost mother that every infant had) in the face of an attempt at mastery over a cultural structure which inevitably resists it.

As for the sublime, the relation to composure is clearly one of testing the capacity of the ego to tolerate excitements. This is a different kind of pleasure, one which excites desire rather than one which subdues or disarms it. Whereas beauty in the picturesque form is insensitive to outrage, the sublime revels in it, enjoys and tests capacity for pain. In the writings of Edmund Burke, who was a conservative politically, the category of the beautiful is linked with notions of ‘society’. So for Burke the picturesque suggests the harmonizing of individual passions to the whole (society) whereas the sublime is linked with anti- or asocial feelings and invokes passions which he thought isolated individuals in fearful states of self-preservation (consider this in relation to the sublime of recent car advertising images). Edmund Burke’s gloss on the sublime makes the rising of the passions seem like a vice not a virtue, that is, as a potential threat to a stabilized society.<sup>5</sup> It must then be obvious why ‘avant-garde’ art has so often been an aesthetic of the sublime, precisely to invoke the ‘unthinkable’ about a society. It is notable, for instance, that the work which Walter Benjamin champions in his article (quoted above) is that of John Heartfield whose photomontage work mostly uses a rhetoric of the sublime, anchored to the politics of anti-fascism.

However, I do not want to close, ‘essentialize’, the categories of picturesque and sublime by polarizing them as respectively bad and good, because the issue of beauty and pleasure derived from these forms has to be related *strategically* to the particular goals and issues of the work – I’m assuming of course, as Benjamin did, that a producer does have a commitment to ‘something’ in their work. In recent years artists and photographers have been working, consciously or not, both with the sublime and the beautiful in ways which challenge the assumptions in both. The picturesque has been ‘quoted’ in order to critique it (parody, irony, allegory) while the sublime has been used in feminist critique, in relation to representations of sexual difference and relations to nature, as well as ecological arguments.

In summary then, the aim of the beautiful (to find an ideal object and form which apprehends it) is something which can never finally be achieved, but the picturesque is one form which tries to find or, rather, *produce* it and subdue it (something which can be loved *as* mastered). The sublime is the form which shows the impossibility of this. The relation of any spectator to these depends on the way that scenes have been coded, the cultural context in which they are seen and the particular disposition of the

spectator to those feelings of composure and terror. Yet inevitably, with our ‘postmodern’ formation, the polarized oppositions which sustain these categories are themselves mutating, just as the classical forms of landscape which dominate its history are themselves exploding into the fragments and shards of our decentred attitude to modernity.

- 1 See Mark Cousins’ essay, ‘The Ugly’ in *AA Files* [London: Architectural Association], 28, Autumn, 1994.
- 2 See ‘Looking at Photographs’ in Victor Burgin [ed.], *Thinking Photography* [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982].
- 3 See the essay ‘On Composure’ in Adam Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored* [London: Faber & Faber, 1993].
- 4 A whole separate argument can be developed here around the issue of landscape, beauty and mourning. This is certainly relevant for an understanding of landscape in relation to nationalism as an identification with something that is ‘being lost’. The relation of beauty to lost objects is explored by Freud in his 1917 essay ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ [*On Metapsychology*, Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 11] and in his short 1916 essay ‘On Transience’ [*Art and Literature*, Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 14]. See also the short essay by Julia Kristeva, ‘Beauty: The Depressive’s Other Realm’ in Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1989].
- 5 See Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime* [London and New York: Routledge, 1992].

David Bate, ‘Notes on Beauty and Landscape’ in Liz Wells, Kate Newton and Catherine Fehily [ed.], *Shifting Horizons: Women’s Landscape Photography Now* [London: I.B. Tauris, 2000] 34–38.



# ARTISTS’ BIOGRAPHIES

Vito **ACCONCI** [b. 1940, New York] lives in New York. Initially a poet, from 1969 he extended his work conceptually to explore individual and social interaction, through actions related to everyday situations. From 1974 his work progressed to the construction of architectural environments. He was included in ‘Information’, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1970] and Documenta 5, 7 and X [1972; 1982; 1997]. Solo shows include Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [1978] and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago [1980].

Dennis **ADAMS** [b. 1948, Oes Moines, Iowa] lives in New York. Since 1978 he has made publicly sited works which often include recontextualized photographic images, revealing aspects of unconscious political meaning in specific urban contexts. He has made museum installations and public projects in cities in the USA, Europe, Canada and Israel. Retrospectives include Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston [1994].

Mac **ADAMS** [b. 1943, Brynmawr, Wales] lives in New Jersey. Since the early 1970s his work has ranged from photography and sculpture to architectural design. He has also conceived a number of publicly sited projects such as the New York Korean War Memorial [1991]. His work has been exhibited in museums internationally including The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Ludwig Museum, Cologne. Retrospectives include Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston [1994].

Faisal **ABDU’ALLAH** [b. 1969, London] lives in London. He addresses social issues of representation and identification through staged photographs in which he or friends and family are often the models. These transform imagery such as the styles of hip-hop and rap into complex images, open to interpretation. Group exhibitions include The Photographers’ Gallery, London [1993; 1996], Victoria & Albert Museum [1996] and Turin Biennale [2002]; Solo shows include 198 Gallery, London [1993] and The Agency, London [1999; 2000; 2001].

Bas Jan **ADER** [b. 1942, Winschoten, The Netherlands, d. c. 1975, Atlantic Ocean] lived in California from 1963. His works from 1970-75 record actions which explore existential vulnerability. As part of his

final work, *In Search of the Miraculous* [1975], he set sail alone from Cape Cod to England. The boat’s wreckage was found in 1976; his body was never recovered. Solo shows include ‘In Search of the Miraculous’, Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles [1975]. Retrospectives include the University of California, Irvine [1999].

**AJAMU** [b. 1963, Huddersfield] lives in London. Since the early 1990s he has set out, through personal self-exploration and risk-taking, to extend and transgress the boundaries of contemporary theoretical debates on race, sexuality and representation, ‘from the diasporic perspective of a black queer subject’. Group exhibitions include Brixton Art Gallery [1990; 1991], ‘In Visible Light; Photography and Classification’, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford [1997] and tour. Solo shows include Camerawork, London [1994].

Eleanor **ANTIN** [b. 1935, New York] lives in California. Since the late 1960s, much of her work has examined social meanings via constructed personae placed in tableaux documented in photograph/text or video formats. She was included in ‘Video Art USA’ and the São Paulo Bienal [1975]. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1973] and Los Angeles County Museum of Art [retrospective, 1999].

Janine **ANTONI** [b. 1964, Freeport, Bahamas] lives in New York. Antoni uses her own corporeality in relation to traditional media in order to intervene in and disrupt male-centred art historical forms. She was included in the Venice Biennale [1993]. Solo shows include ‘Slumber’, Anthony d’Offay Gallery, London [1994] and ‘Swoon’, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1998].

Dieter **APPELT** [b. 1935, Niemegegk, Germany] lives in Berlin. Since the late 1950s, his work has explored the relationship of the artist to his physical and cultural space, experimenting with extended and multiple exposures, creating the illusion of manifold dimensions in a single image. He was included in the Venice Biennale, 1999. Retrospectives include Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [1986] and the Art Institute of Chicago [1994].

Keith **ARNATT** [b. 1930, Oxford] lives in Wales. In his photographic, video and text works of the late 1960s he developed an incisively witty critical dialogue with the tenets of conceptualism. In his later colour photography he has focused on waste and detritus, objects at the margins between industrialised society and nature. He was included in ‘When Attitudes Become Form’ [London version], Institute of Contemporary Arts, London [1969] and ‘Mysterious Coincidences’, The Photographers’ Gallery [1987]. Solo shows include Gallery of Photography, Dublin [1997].

John **BALDESSARI** [b. 1931, National City, California] lives in California. Initially a painter, in the mid 1960s he incorporated texts and photography into works on canvas to question the status of painting, which he rejected entirely in 1970. His works use photography and text or audio-visual media to investigate meaning and symbolism in everyday cultural signs. He was included in ‘Information’, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1970]. Retrospectives include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [1990].

Lewis **BALTZ** [b. 1945, Newport Beach, California] lives in Paris. He came to prominence in the late 1970s as part of the ‘New Topographic’ movement in photography. His work proposes a ‘counter-aesthetic’, in its objective recording of desolate landscapes and urban environments. His exhibited and published works include *The New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California* [1974], *Nevada* [1978] and *San Quentin Point* [1986]. Retrospectives include Oes Moines Art Center [1992].

Thomas F. **BARROW** [b. 1938, Kansas City, Missouri] lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His work invokes multiple references to contemporary culture, art and literature, using diverse techniques and processes including photomontage, xerox, lithography and photograms. Retrospectives include San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1986] and tour, and University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque [2001].

Uta **BARTH** [b. 1958, Berlin] lives in Los Angeles. Her images of interiors, architecture, urban or natural environments are

blurred almost to abstraction; subject matter is pushed to the edge of recognition, engaging viewers in oscillating sensory and cognitive perceptions. She was included in ‘Painting – The Extended Field’, Rooseum, Malmö, Sweden [1996] and ‘Photography – An Expanded View’, Guggenheim Museum, SoHo, New York [1999]. Solo shows include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [1995] and Henry Art Gallery, Seattle [2000].

Bernd & Hilla **BECHER** [Bernhard Becher, b. 1931, Siegen; Hilla Wobeser, b. 1934, Potsdam] live in Ousseldorf. Since 1959 they have collaborated on a rigorously objective photographic documentation of types of industrial and vernacular buildings. They were included in ‘Information’, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1970] and Documenta 6, Kassel [1977]. Retrospectives include Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven [1981], and IVAM Centro Julio Gonzalez, Valencia [1996].

Cindy **BERNARD** [b. 1959, San Pedro, California] lives in Los Angeles. Her photographic and digitally-based works reflect upon the interrelationships of location, memory and representation. She was included in the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1989] and ‘Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945’, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [1997]. Solo shows include Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona [1993] and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [2001].

George **BLAKELY** [b. 1951, Long Beach, California] lives in Florida. Since 1978 he has taught at Florida State University, Tallahassee. Expanding the field of photography in sculptural projects, he has also explored photographic archives, environmental and social issues. He was included in ‘Convergence; Six Directions in Photography’, Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, California [1976] and ‘Proof: Los Angeles and the Photograph, 1960-1980’, Laguna Art Museum, California [1992]. Solo shows include San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1980].

Rut **BLEES LUXEMBURG** [b. 1967, Germany] lives in London. Using long exposures she photographs poetically



evocative scenes discovered in journeys through the nightttime city. She was included in ‘Remix; Images Photogra-phiques’, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes [1998], and ‘Where are We? Questions of Landscape’, the Photographers’ Gallery, London [2001]. Solo shows include Laurent Oelaye Gallery, London [1997; 1999; 2000] and Kunstraum Trier [1998].

**Anna and Bernhard BLUME** [both b. 1937, Germany] live in Cologne and Hamburg. At the Dusseldorf Art Academy [1960-65] they encountered Joseph Beuys, and after studying philosophy at Cologne University [1967-71] Bernhard Blume sought to synthe-size philosophical ideas with photography and performance. Since the 1980s the Blumes have collaborated on an ongoing photo narrative which explores relation-ships between art and the everyday, and the legacies of Romanticism. They were included in Documenta 6, Kassel [1977] and the Venice Biennale [1980]. Solo shows include Museum Folkwang, Essen [1982] and The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1989].

**Mel BOCHNER** [b. 1940, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania] lives in New York. An artist and theoretical writer on art, he explores relationships between thinking and seeing, measurement and counting. He curated ‘Art in Series’, Finch College, New York [1967] and was included in ‘Information’, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1970]. Retrospectives include Baltimore Museum of Art [1976] and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut [1996].

**Christian BOLTANSKI** [b. 1944, Paris] lives in Paris. Since the 1960s he has made works using film, sculpture, found objects, photographs and artist’s books, which present both real and fictional evidence of people’s existence from the Second World War to the present. Since 1986 much of his work has taken the form of large installa-tions. He was included in Documenta 5, Kassel [1972] and ‘Kunst Mit Fotografie’, Natonalgalerie, West Berlin [1983]. Solo shows include Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1976; 1981] and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid [1988].

**Victor BURGIN** [b. 1941, Sheffield] lives in London. An artist and theoretical writer, during the 1970s he was a key influence in the introduction of semiological, Marxist, psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives within conceptual art. He was included in

‘When Attitudes Become Form’ [London version], Institute of Contemporary Arts, London [1969] and Documenta 5, Kassel [1972]. Retrospectives include Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona [2001].

**Geneviève CADIEUX** lives in Montreal. Her work in both photography and video develops theories of film and visual representation into complex investigations of psychological and corporeal states. She was included in ‘The Time of Our Lives’, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1999] and ‘Found Wanting’, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, Georgia [2000]. Retrospectives include Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal [2000].

**Sophie CALLE** [b.1953, Paris] lives in Paris. In photo-texts and installations, she documents diverse lived situations that evidence desire and loss. She was included in ‘Autoportraits’, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1981], and ‘Oubletake: Collective Memory and Contemporary Art’, Hayward Gallery, London [1992]. Solo shows include ARC Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1991], and Museum Fridericianum, Kassel [2000].

**Elinor CARUCCI** [b.1971, Israel] lives in New York. Her acclaimed monograph *Closer*, published in 2002, exemplifies her intimate, diaristic approach, focusing on the smallest details of shared family life. She was included in ‘Israeli Photography Today’, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem [1998] and the John Kobal Photographic Portrait Award, National Portrait Gallery, London [2001]. Solo shows include The Photographers’ Gallery, London [1998] and ‘Closer’, Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York [2002].

**James CASEBERE** [b. 1953, Lansing, Michigan] lives in New York. His uncanny Cibachrome photographs of small monochrome models of architectural environments invite reflection upon issues such as the history and social conditions of institutional spaces. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1995]. Solo shows include Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego [1990] and Museum of Modern Art, Oxford [1999].

**Mohini CHANDRA** [b. 1964, Canvey Island, England] lives in London. An artist, writer and curator, she engages in cross-cultural dialogues with disciplines such as history, anthropology and geography, to

suggest new ways of mapping cultural experience through personal memory. She was included in the Johannesburg Biennale [1995]. Solo shows include ‘Travels in a New World’, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool [1997].

**Chuck CLOSE** [b. 1940, Monroe, Washington] lives in New York. A pioneer of Photo-Realist painting in the mid 1960s, Close has progressively explored relationships between portraiture, photography and painting in both paintings and photographic works. He was included in Documenta 5, Kassel [1972] and the Venice Biennale [1993; 1995]. Retrospectives include Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden [1994] and The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1998] and tour.

**Lynne COHEN** [b. 1944, Racine, Wisconsin] lives in Ottawa. After working as a Minimalist sculptor, since 1972 Cohen has photographed interiors, empty of people, in a wide variety of environments, ranging from private rooms to public, corporate and institutional spaces. Group exhibitions include ‘Rooms’, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1977]. Solo shows include F.R.A.C. Limousin, Limoges [1992] and a retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa [2001] and tour.

**James COLEMAN** [b. 1941, Ballagha-derreen, Ireland] lives in Ireland. Working in a range of audio-visual media and performance, Coleman constructs enigmatic works which draw the viewer into an interpretive position in which the role of language is highlighted. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1978]. Retrospectives include Dia Center for the Arts, New York [1994], and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1996].

**Hannah COLLINS** [b. 1956, London] lives in Barcelona and Davis, California. Since the mid 1980s she has explored relationships of bodies, objects and spaces in both films and large-scale photographs. She was included in ‘Une Autre Objectivité’, Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris and Centro per l’arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy [1989]. Solo shows include Matt’s Gallery, London [1986] the Istanbul Biennale [1992] and The Turner Prize, Tate Gallery, London [1993].

**John COPLANS** [1920-2003] lived in New York. Trained as a painter, he exhibited his work from 1961. Also a critic and

curator, he co-founded *Artforum*, where he was Editor in Chief in the early 1970s. From 1984 onwards his series of black and white photographic portraits of his own naked body were a continuous project. Retrospectives include Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1994] and P.S.1, New York [1997].

**Gregory CREWDSON** [b. 1962, Brooklyn, New York] lives in New Haven, Connecticut, where he is a Professor of Photography at Yale University. His carefully staged photographs evoke tensions between natural forces and the urban everyday. He was included in ‘La Belle et la Bête’, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1995] and ‘Gothic’, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston [1997]. Solo shows include Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid [1998] and Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York [1995; 1997; 2000].

**Donigan CUMMING** [b. 1947, Danville, Virginia] lives in Montréal. In his ambitious collaborative projects such as *Reality and Motive in Documentary Photography* [1982-86], Cumming questions the authenticity and realism of reportage photography. He was included in ‘Un si grand âge’, Centre National de la Photographie, Paris [1987] and tour. Solo shows include Centre National de la Photographie, Paris [1986] and The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago [1990] and tour.

**Robert CUMMING** [b. 1943, Worcester, Massachusetts] lives in Connecticut. Rather than using conceptual photography only as a document, he explores the medium’s own fluctuation between scientific objectivity and illusionistic deception. He was included in ‘The Artist and the Photograph’, Israel Museum, Jerusalem [1976] and ‘Photography and Art 1946-86’, Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1987]. Solo shows include Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane [1979] and tour, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1986].

**Max DEAN** [Canadian, b. 1949, Leeds, England] lives in Toronto. His work combines photography and technology to explore participatory relationships between the artist, spectators and the artwork. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1999; 2001]. Solo shows include Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto [1996] and National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa [2002].



Jan **DIBBETS** [b. 1941, Weert, The Netherlands] lives in Amsterdam. His photographs investigate the constructed nature of perception, focusing on architectural space, perspective, temporality and conditions of light. He was included in 'Fotografie als Kunst/Kunst als Fotografie', Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdnandeum, Innsbruck [1979] and tour, and Documenta 8, Kassel [1987]. Solo shows include Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven [1971; 1980; 1985] and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis [1987].

Philip-Lorca **DICORCIA** [b. 1953, Hartford, Connecticut] lives in New York. Since the late 1970s he has adapted and updated genres such as street photography, to explore the self-preserving subjectivity of individuals in the contemporary city. He was included in the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1997]. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1993] and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid [1997].

John **DIVOLA** [b. 1949, Los Angeles] has since 1988 been Professor of Art at the University of California, Riverside. He produces serial bodies of work which reflect on the evidential status of photography in forming perception. He was included in 'Photography as Artifice', California State University, Long Beach [1978] and tour, and 'Made in California: Art, Image and Identity 1900-2000', Los Angeles County Museum of Art [2000]. Retrospectives include Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery [1985].

Willie **DOHERTY** [b. 1959, Derry, Northern Ireland] lives in Derry. Since the early 1990s he has used the visual language of documentary film and photography in a conceptual framework to highlight media constructions in representations of people, places and events. He was included in 'NowHere', Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; and 'Face à l'Histoire 1933-1996', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1996]. Solo shows include Matt's Gallery, London [1990] and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin [2003].

William **EGGLESTON** [b. 1937, Memphis, Tennessee] lives in Memphis. One of the first serious photographers to explore the potential of colour, Eggleston influenced younger photographers from the late 1970s onwards. His first significant group

exhibition was 'Straight Color', Rochester Institute of Technology, New York [1974]. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1976], 'The Democratic Forest', Corcoran Gallery, Washington [1990] and Hayward Gallery, London [retrospective, 2002] and tour.

Jason **EVANS** [b. 1968, Holyhead, England] lives in Brighton. He works as a photographer in and out of the media, contributing to various outlets in the style and music industry producing portraits, documentary, advertising and fashion images as well as engaging with the gallery system. In 2001 he was included in 'Century City', Tate Modern, London, and 'Imperfect Beauty: The Making of Contemporary Fashion Photographs', Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Valie **EXPORT** [b. 1940, Linz] lives in Vienna and Cologne. She is a Professor at the Kunsthochschule für Medien, Cologne. Her 1960s street actions and later video and photographic works investigate the body and gestures as signifying forms. She was included in Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany [1977]. Solo shows include 'Psycho-Prognose', Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen, Germany [1998].

Rotimi **FANI-KAYODE** [b. 1955, Ife, Nigeria, d. 1989, London] came from a prominent religious and political Nigerian family who emigrated to England after the 1966 military coup. In his work he combined his African spiritual heritage with a gay black political consciousness. He was a founding member of Autograph [the Association of Black Photographers]. He was included in 'Ecstatic Antibodies', Battersea Arts Centre, London [1990] and tour. Retrospectives include 198 Gallery, London [1990].

**FISCHLI & WEISS** [Peter Fischli, b. 1952, Zurich; David Weiss, b. 1946, Zurich] live in Zurich, where they began collaborative work in 1979. In assemblages, videos or series of photographs, they subtly and wittily analyse and transform the mundane world of banal objects and images. They were included in Documenta 8, Kassel [1987]. Solo shows include Kunstverein Düsseldorf [1992] the Swiss Pavilion, Venice Biennale [1995] and ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1999].

Coal **FLOYER** [b. 1968, Karachi] lives in London. She has written of her minimal

interventions: 'I want the manifestation of my ideas to be life-sized, not only regarding their scale, but also in terms of their relevance to their situation or medium. Then they're more like the ideas behind something.' She was included in the Venice Biennale and Istanbul Biennale [1995] and 'Life/Live', ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1996]. Solo shows include Kunsthalle Bern [1999] and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham [2001].

Joan **Fontcuberta** [b. 1955, Barcelona] lives in Barcelona. His surrealist works of the 1970s progressed in the 1980s to his theory of 'countervision', where altered plants or creatures are represented as contradictions to prevailing concepts and ideologies. He was included in 'On the Art of Fixing a Shadow', Art Institute of Chicago [1989] and tour. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1988] and Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid [2000].

Lee **FRIEDLANDER** [b. 1934, Aberdeen, Washington] lives in New York. Since the 1970s he has been recognised as a master of a deceptively casual style of urban photography of populated or empty streets, monuments and parks, and reflections in storefront windows. He was included in 'Photography and Art 1946-1986', Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1987]. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1972; 1975; 1991] and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1991].

Adam **FUSS** [b. 1961, London] lives in New York. Using large format Cibachrome paper he redefines the process of the photogram, working with organic and non-organic subjects to explore the coming together of objects and their representation. He was included in 'Abstract Photographs', Baltimore Museum of Art [1995], and 'This Is Not a Photograph', Pace University Gallery, New York [1999] and tour. Solo shows include Tolomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland [1999] and tour.

Luigi **GHIRRI** [b. 1943, Fellegara, Reggio Emilia, Italy, d. Roncolesti, Reggio Emilia, 1992] developed a form of colour photography which was highly reflective upon its own condition as a bearer of signs and meaning in the contemporary world. He was included in 'Photography as Art/Art as Photography', Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Chalon sur Saône [1976] and tour. Solo shows include Galleria CSAC,

Parma [1979] and tour, and Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna [1992].

Nan **GOLDIN** [b. 1953, Washington] lives in New York. Since the early 1970s, Goldin has created a photographic diary of the lives and experiences of herself and her intimate friends from the alternative scenes of New York, Paris, Berlin and other cities. Her work has been widely influential on younger generation artists. Retrospectives include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1996].

Della **GRACE** [now Del LaGrace Volcano, b. 1957, Kansas City] lives in London and California and exhibited and published as the queer, lesbian photographer Della Grace in the 1980s and early 1990s. Del LaGrace Volcano now works from the position of a 'gender terrorist', subverting and destabilising binary gender systems. Group exhibitions include 'Rose is a Rose is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography', Guggenheim Museum, New York [1998]. Books include *Sublime Mutations* [2003], showing major projects from the 1990s.

Dan **GRAHAM** [b. 1942, Urbana, Illinois] lives in New York. First associated with early Minimalism, from 1966 he operated outside recognized art systems, inserting photographic and text works into general circulation magazines. His work explores individual and group consciousness and the limits of public and private space; from 1976 onwards his projects have been architecturally based. He was included in Documenta 5, 6 and 7, Kassel [1972; 1977; 1982] and the Venice Biennale [1976]. Solo shows include Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [2001].

Paul **GRAHAM** [b. 1956, Stafford, England] lives in London. His work transforms classic pictorial and photographic genres to invite cultural and political engagement with his subjects. He was included in 'The Future of Photography', Corcoran National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. [1987]. Solo shows include 'Beyond Caring', The Photographers' Gallery [1984], 'Troubled Land', Cornerhouse, Manchester [1987], Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg, Germany [1995], and Tate Gallery, London [1996].

Andrew **GRASSIE** [b. 1966, Edinburgh] lives in London. Since the late 1990s he has worked on photorealistic drawings of



gallery installations of art. His work comments on both the public context of images and artworks and the process and significance of documentation. He was included in 'Postcards on Photography: Photorealism and the Reproduction', Cambridge Darkroom, Cambridge, 1998, and 'Realistic Means', The Drawing Center, New York [2002]. Solo shows include 'Why Paint Spacemen?', Jason & Rhodes Gallery, London [1997] and Mobile Home, London [2000].

**Andreas GURSKY** [b. 1955, Leipzig] lives in Ousseldorf. Taught by Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Staatliche Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf, he extends their objective, typological approach in large, often digitally altered images which explore the architectural environments of late capitalist culture. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1990]. Solo shows include Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, Texas [1998] and The Museum of Modern Art, New York [2001] and tour.

**Susan HALLER** [b. 1949] lives in Los Angeles. Having studied with Robert Heinecken and worked closely with Edward Ruscha as his assistant from 1969, in the early 1970s she explored ideas of the photograph as a trace and feminist notions of art-making, before these notions gained currency. She was included in 'Women Photographers', Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1977] and 'Proof: Los Angeles and the Photograph, 1960-1980', Laguna Art Museum, California [1992].

**Richard HAMILTON** [b. 1922, London] lives in Oxfordshire. Transcriber of Marcel Ouchamp's 'Green Box' and one of the chief instigators of British Pop art in the 1950s, he remains one of the most influential artists to explore the interface between figurative art, mass media and new technologies. He was included in 'This Is Tomorrow', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London [1956] and Documenta X, Kassel [1997]. Retrospectives include Tate Gallery, London [1992].

**Jitka HANZLOVÁ** [b. 1958, Nachod, Czech Republic] lives in Essen, Germany. Working in series of prints where muted and saturated hues are carefully juxtaposed, she seeks out chance encounters with her subjects - often women living in cities - focusing on her subjects' interactions with their urban context and the camera. She was included in Manifesta 1, Museum Chabot, Rotterdam [1996] and 'Near and

Elsewhere', The Photographers' Gallery, London [1999]. Solo shows include Frankfurter Kunstverein [1996].

**David HAXTON** [b. 1943, Indianapolis, Indiana] lives in New York. He is an experimental filmmaker, photographer and installation artist. Since the late 1970s much of his work has explored colour, light and abstract form. He was included in 'Invented Images', Santa Barbara Museum of Art [1979], and 'This Is Not a Photograph', Ringling Art Museum, Sarasota, Florida [1987]. Solo shows include State University of New York [1981] and University of Central Florida Art Gallery, Orlando [1998].

**Robert HEINECKEN** [b. 1931, Denver, Colorado] lives in Los Angeles and Chicago. Trained in printmaking, from the mid 1960s onwards Heinecken has been a major pioneer of politicised, reconfigured photography, combining its evidential and subjective, artificial aspects together to create new dialogues. He was included in 'Altered Images', Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona [1981] and 'Proof: Los Angeles and the Photograph, 1960-1980', Laguna Art Museum, California [1992]. Solo shows include Focus Gallery, San Francisco [1968] and Pace MacGill Gallery, New York [retrospective, 1989].

**Anthony HERNANDEZ** [b. 1947, Los Angeles] lives in Los Angeles. Exploring the intersections of the natural and the man-made, he has photographed landscape for a number of years, first documenting places where the homeless reside, then the Idaho landscape, and finally focusing on the city, depicted as abstracted details. He was included in 'Documents and Beyond', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid [2001]. Solo shows include Sprengel Museum, Hannover [1995] and Centre National de la Photographie, Paris [1997].

**John HILLIARD** [b. 1945, Lancaster] lives in London. His influential work investigates perceptual phenomena and devices in relation to photography as a social medium of representation. He was included in Documenta 6, Kassel [1977] and 'Kunst mit Fotografie', Nationalgalerie, West Berlin [1983]. Solo shows include Frankfurter Kunstverein [1984] and Kunstmuseum Hannover [1997].

**Candida HÖFER** [b. 1944, Eberswalde, Germany] lives in Cologne. A former pupil

of Bernd Becher, she has focused since 1979 on colour photographs of public or semi-public interiors, working with a small camera, a wide angle lens and available light only. Her work departs from the Bechers' neutrality by responding to incidental, individual characteristics. She was included in 'Typologies; Nine Contemporary Photographers', Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California [1991]. Retrospectives include Kunsthalle Nürnberg [2000].

**Roni HORN** [b. 1955, New York] lives in New York and Iceland. Her photographs are part of a wider practice where sculpture, drawing and language play an equal part in exploring the involvement of perception with objects, phenomena and environment. She was included in the Venice Biennale [1997]. Solo shows include 'Earths Grow Thick (Works after Emily Dickinson)', Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland [1994] and tour, and 'You Are the Weather', De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands [1998].

**Douglas HUEBLER** [b. 1924, Ann Arbor, Michigan, d. 1997, Truro, Massachusetts]. From the late 1960s onwards he made work stating the existence of things in terms of time and/or place; as their interrelationships are beyond direct perceptual experience, the works rely on documentation. Retrospectives include F.R.A.C. Limousin, Limoges [1992] and Camden Arts Centre, London [2002].

**Peter KENNARD** [b. 1949, London] lives in London. His photomontages use easily recognisable, iconic images to render their power unacceptable. He was included in 'Photography into Art', Arts Council of Great Britain touring [1973] and 'Art into Society', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London [1978]. Solo shows include 'Despatches from an Unofficial War Artist', County Hall, London [1982] and tour, and 'Photomontages for Peace', United Nations, Palais des Nations, Geneva [1989].

**Karen KNORR** [b. 1954, Frankfurt am Main, Germany] lives in London. Working predominantly in photography, sometimes in collaboration with other artists such as Olivier Richon, she has investigated and critiqued the institutionalized spaces of privileged patriarchal elites. She was included in 'Beyond the Purloined Image', Riverside Studios, London [1983], the Fifth Sydney Biennale [1985] and 'Other

Than Itself', Cambridge Darkroom, Cambridge, England [1989].

**Joseph KOSUTH** [b. 1945, Toledo, Ohio] lives in New York. A key artist and theorist in conceptual art practice, he has exhibited works since 1967 which examine the relationship between linguistic definitions and their referents. He was included in Documenta 6, 7 and IX [1977; 1982; 1992]. Solo shows include Museum of Normal Art, New York [1967] and Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven [1978].

**Barbara KRUGER** [b. 1945, Newark, New Jersey] lives in New York. An artist and critical writer on contemporary culture, since the early 1980s she has used photomontage to recontextualize fragments of images from media sources with texts that subvert the manipulations of corporate capitalist culture. Retrospectives include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [2000].

**Louise LAWLER** [b. 1947, Bronxville, New York] lives in New York. In much of her work she has photographed or recreated arrangements of works of art in private or public collections, inviting consideration of the political dimensions of display and reception of artworks. She was included in 'A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation', The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [1989]. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1987].

**Zoe LEONARD** [b. 1961, Liberty, New York] lives in New York. She has worked in photography, site specific installation, performance, film and video. Her work aims to bring to the surface that which is excluded or repressed by society and institutions of power. She was included in 'In a Different Light', University Art Museum, Berkeley, California [1996]. Solo shows include Centre National de la Photographie, Paris [1999].

**Sherrie LEVINE** [b. 1947, Hazleton, Pennsylvania] lives in New York. In her work of the 1980s she reproduced and re-appropriated artworks by canonical artists and photographers, drawing attention to contextual frames. She was included in 'Difference: On Sexuality and Representation', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1984]. Solo shows include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [1995].



**David LEVINTHAL** [b. 1949, San Francisco] lives in New York. Using meticulously constructed studio set-ups, often with models and dolls, he addresses various predominantly dark themes via constructed scenarios. He was included in 'Photography and Art, 1946–1986', Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1987] and ‘Fabrications’, International Center of Photography, New York [1987]. Solo shows include International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester, New York [1978] and Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona [1994].

**Sol LEWITT** [b. 1928, Hartford, Connecticut] lives in Connecticut and Spoleto, Italy. From the mid 1960s his structures, drawings and grid-based photographic works were formative in bridging the gap between conceptual art and the formal abstraction of Minimalism. He was included in Documenta 4, 6 and 7, Kassel [1968; 1977; 1982]. Retrospectives include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1978] and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [2000].

**Yve LOMAX** [b. 1952, Dorset] lives in London. A photographer and theorist, Lomax investigates the implications of theories of, for example, cinematic narrative, on photographic representation. She was included in ‘Three Perspectives on Photography’, Hayward Gallery, London [1979], and ‘Difference: On Representation and Sexuality’, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1984]. Solo shows include The Photographer’s Gallery, London [1989]. Her books include *Writing the Image; an Adventure with Art and Theory* [2000].

**Richard LONG** [b. 1942, Bristol, England] lives in Bristol. His work centres on the activity of walking, documented through photographs, maps and text. He was included in Documenta 5 and 7, Kassel [1972; 1982]. Retrospectives include Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York [1986].

**Ken LUM** [b. 1956, Vancouver] lives in Vancouver. In works that often combine lifesize colour photographs and equal sized corporate style text panels, Lum explores everyday dialogues between private subjectivity and the environments of the contemporary city. He was included in the Sydney Biennale [1992] and the Sao Paulo Biennial [1998]. Solo shows include Winnipeg Art Gallery [1990] and tour, and

Stadtische Galerie in Lembachhaus, Munich [1993] and tour.

**Urs LÜTHI** [b. 1947, Lucerne, Switzerland] lives in Zurich and Munich. Since the late 1960s his work has explored and extended photographic self-portraiture to explore different ambiances of psychological and gender representation. He was included in ‘Transformer’, Kunstmuseum, Lucerne [1974], ‘Autoportraits’, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1981] and ‘Kunst mit Fotografie’, Nationalgalerie, West Berlin [1983]. Retrospectives include Kunstverein, Bonn [1993] and tour.

**Wendy MCMURDO** [b. 1962, Edinburgh] lives in Dundee. Blending traditional photography with digital imaging she investigates contemporary issues of perception through portraits of children in uncanny scenarios such as encounters with their doubles. She has collaborated with the Science Museum, London, and the Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh. Solo shows include Centro de Fotografía, Salamanca, Spain [1998].

**Mari MAHR** [b. 1941, Santiago de Chile] emigrated to Hungary in 1948 and settled in England in 1973. In her constructed scenes she evokes the complex processes of recollection and visualisation whereby we interconnect dreams, memories and lived experience. She was included in ‘Photography as Art/Art as Photography’, Fotoforum, Kassel [1980] and tour, and ‘Constructed Photography’, Padiglione d’Arte Contemporanea, Milan [1991]. Retrospectives include Universidad de Salamanca, Spain [1996].

**Sally MANN** [b. 1951, Lexington, Virginia] lives in Lexington, Virginia. In 1984 Mann began documenting the everyday life of her three children as they passed into adolescence, using a large format camera and nineteenth-century printing techniques. The local landscape environment was always as important as her human subjects and has become the focus of later work. She was included in ‘Mothers and Daughters’, Aperture Foundation, New York [1987] and tour. Solo shows include Museum of Photographic Art, San Diego [1989].

**Robert MAPPLETHORPE** [1946–1989, New York] lived in New York. With a classical approach to composition and lighting, his portraits, figures and still life studies investigated the iconography of power and

eroticism. He was included in Documenta 6, Kassel [1977], and ‘Fotografie als Kunst/Kunst als Fotografie’, Frankfurter Kunstverein [1979] and tour. Retrospectives include Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia [1988] and tour.

**Gordon MATTA-CLARK** [b. 1942, New York, d. 1978, New York] lived in New York. After studying architecture, from 1970 he developed an interventionist approach towards urban sites, which he named anarchitecture. This involved making sections through buildings, removals, or other strategies which highlighted site specific context in unprecedented ways. Retrospectives include Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago [1985] and IVAM Centro Julio González, Valencia [1993].

**Ana MENDIETA** [b. 1948, Havana, Cuba; d. 1986, New York] lived in Iowa and New York. Her work of the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by ritual; she staged tableaux or inscribed her silhouette into natural environments. Her work addressed issues of violation and displacement. She was included in 'Inside the Visible', Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston [1998]. Retrospectives include New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1987].

**Annette MESSEAGER** [b. 1943, Berck, France] lives in Paris. She works with photography and installation. In the mid 1970s her own body was her principal medium. Later works explore hidden, often painful facets of women’s daily existence. She was included in ‘Feminin/Masculin: le sexe de l’art’, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1995]. Retrospectives include ARC Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1995] and tour.

**Joel MEYEROWITZ** [b. 1938, New York] lives in New York. In the mid 1970s he made a transition from black and white street photographs to works which focus on clarity, stillness and nuances of light and colour. He was included in ‘Photography and Art, 1946–1986’, Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1987]. Solo shows include ‘Cape Light’, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [1978], ‘St. Louis and the Arch’, City Art Museum, St. Louis, and ‘After September 11: Images from Ground Zero’, City Museum of New York [2002] and tour.

**Duane MICHALS** [b. 1932, McKeesport, Pennsylvania] lives in New York. Since the late 1960s he has been an innovator in

using documentary images and text in imaginatively structured sequences. He was included in ‘Fabrications: Staged, Altered and Appropriated Photographs’, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University [1988]. Retrospectives include Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego [1990] and tour.

**Boris MIKHAILOV** [b. 1938, Kharkov, Ukraine] lives in Kharkov and Berlin. Since the 1970s, when he was associated with other Soviet artists such as Ilya Kabakov, he has documented the disintegration of the Soviet utopia in works which since the early 1990s have reached a worldwide audience. He was included in ‘Contemporary Russian Photography’, Kunstakademie, Berlin [1995]. Solo shows include Portikus, Frankfurt am Main [1995], and Centre National de la Photographie, Paris [1999].

**Richard MISRACH** [b. 1949, Los Angeles] lives in California. In 1979 his landmark publication *A Photographic Book*, which presented nighttime images of the Mojave Desert, signalled his transition from documentary photography to communication through isolating significant images. He was included in ‘Visions of America: Landscape as Metaphor in the Twentieth Century’, Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado [1994] and tour. Solo shows include ‘Richard Misrach: Desert Cantos’, Houston Center for Photography, Houston, Texas [1986], and The Photographers’ Gallery, London [1990] and tour.

**Pierre MOLINIER** [b. 1900, Agen, France; d. 1976, Bordeaux] lived in Bordeaux. His photographic work depicts an autoerotic relationship with his own body, costumed and made up as a woman. He was included in ‘Transformer: Aspekete der Travestie’, Kunstmuseum, Luzern [1973]. Solo shows include ‘L’Etoile Scellée’, at André Breton’s Surrealist gallery, Paris [1956], and a retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1979].

**Vik MUNIZ** [b. 1961, Sao Paulo, Brazil] lives in New York. His work refers to drawing, sculpture, painting, design and to the role of photography in relation to these other media, inviting viewers to re-evaluate ways of looking at the photograph as an object and as a presence. He was included in the Sao Paulo Biennial [1998] and the Venice Biennale [2001]. Retrospectives include ‘Seeing Is



Believing', International Center of Photography, New York [1998] and tour.

**Bruce NAUMAN** [b. 1941, Fort Wayne, Indiana] lives in New Mexico. Originally a sculptor, from the mid 1960s he has explored conceptual ideas in diagrams, photographs, sculpture, performance and film. He was included in 'The Artist and the Photograph', Israel Museum, Jerusalem [1976]. Retrospectives include Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1972] and tour, and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1998].

**Shirin NESHAT** [b. 1957, Qazvin, Iran] lives in New York. Since the 1980s she has made photographs and film and video works which explore the evolution of both feminine and masculine roles in modern Islamic societies. Her video work *Rapture* [1998] was included in the Venice Biennale [1999]. Solo shows include Serpentine Gallery, London [2000].

**Catherine OPIE** [b. 1961, Sandusky, Ohio] lives in Los Angeles. Working primarily in photography, she is concerned with the representation of urban context and the individual portrait, often working in collaboration with subjects who are exploring diverse gender identities. She was included in 'Femininmasculin', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1995] and 'Rose is a Rose is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York [1997]. Solo shows include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [1997] and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis [2002].

**Gabriel OROZCO** [b. 1962, Jalapa, Veracruz, Mexico] lives in New York. Giving equal weight to a wide range of media including photography and assemblage, he extends the idea of site-specificity into the realm of transitory encounters with the ephemeral and everyday. He was included in 'Cocido y Crudo', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid [1994] and Documenta X, Kassel, Germany [1997]. Solo shows include ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1995] and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles [2000].

**Bill OWENS** [b. 1938, San Jose, California] lives in California. A former news photographer, Owens pioneered self-publishing by photographers with *Suburbia* in 1973. It was followed by other studies of American suburban life captioned with

quotations from the subjects. He was included in 'Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960', The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1978], and 'Photography in California, 1945-1980', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1984] and tour. Solo shows include Oakland Art Museum, California [1973], and California Museum of Photography, Riverside [2000].

**Giuseppe PENONE** [b. 1947, Garesio Ponte, Italy] lives in Turin. His work explores notions of empirical knowledge and experience, focusing on gestures such as touching, shaping or moulding. He was included in 'Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, Land Art', Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Turin [1970], Documenta 5, Kassel [1972] and the Venice Biennale [1978; 1980]. Retrospectives include Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Galicia [1999].

**Steven PIPPIN** [b. 1960, Redhill, England] lives in England and Berlin. For a decade from the mid 1980s he constructed pinhole camera devices out of receptacles ranging from bathing huts to washing machines. The resultant images, evidencing little beyond their own process, form a nostalgic meditation on the technologies of representation which he has since expanded into television and video based works. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1993]. Solo shows include Institute of Contemporary Arts, London [1993] and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1998].

**Ingrid POLLARD** [b. 1953] lives in London. Since the late 1980s she has exhibited and taught photography. Her work focuses particularly on framing, the construction of *mise-en-scènes* and of subjects, drawing on a wide range of influences from cinema to graphic novels. She was included in 'D-Max', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham [1987] and tour, and 'Counter Cultures', Photo-International, Rotterdam [1996]. Solo shows include BBC Billboard Art Project, London [1992] and 'Bursting Stone', Beacon Gallery, Cumbria [1997] and tour.

**Richard PRINCE** [b. 1949, Panama Canal Zone] lives in New York. Since the late 1970s his methods of appropriation and re-presentation of images from advertising and magazines, as well as his writings, have been widely influential in postmodern theory and practice. He was included in 'Image Scavengers', Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia [1982] and Documenta IX, Kassel [1992].

Retrospectives include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1992].

**Charles RAY** [b. 1953, Chicago] lives in Los Angeles. In sculptures, installations and occasional photographic works he creates uncanny modulations in perception of objects, models and environments, induced by devices such as alteration of scale. He was included in 'Face-Off: The Portrait in Recent Art', Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia [1994]. Retrospectives include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1998] and tour.

**Olivier RICHON** [b. 1956, Lausanne, Switzerland] lives in London, where he is Head of the Department of Photography at the Royal College of Art. Since the early 1980s he has been influential both as a theoretical writer and as a creator of staged colour photographs which allude to and invite an open dialogue with the histories of painterly representation. He was included in 'Beyond the Purloined Image', Riverside Studios, London [1983]. Solo shows include Espace d'Art Contemporain, Lausanne [1991] and Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Nantes [1993].

**Gerhard RICHTER** [b. 1932, Dresden] lives in Dusseldorf. One of Germany's most influential painters of the post-war period, he has engaged in a dialogue between painting and photography since he began his *Atlas* project in 1962. This archive of found photographs, photographic studies and sketches is both a source for his many paintings derived from photographs and an artwork in itself. He was included in Documenta 5, Kassel [1972]. Retrospectives include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [2002] and tour.

**Sophie RISTELHUEBER** [b. 1949, Paris] lives in Paris. Her work, often presenting images whose relative scale and identity is difficult to register, focuses on relationships between memory, presence and representation. She was included in the Venice Biennale [1993] and the Johannesburg Biennale [1997]. Solo shows include Magazin, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble [1992] and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [2001].

**Martha ROSLER** [b. 1943, Brooklyn, New York] lives in New York. An artist and writer, she works in photography, video, performance and installation, engaging in the analysis of society, politics and the

media. She was included in 'Difference: On Representation and Sexuality', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1984]. Retrospectives include Ikon Gallery, Birmingham [2000] and tour.

**Georges ROUSSE** [b. 1947, Paris] lives in Paris. Originally trained in architecture and advertising, he first experimented with installation art and photography in the 1970s, building up an extensive body of work that fuses architecture, painting and photography. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1988] and 'Photographie Contemporain en France', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1997]. Solo shows include Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1993] and Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, Santiago de Compostella, Spain [2000].

**Thomas RUFF** [b. 1958, Zell, Germany] lives in Ousseldorf. After studying under Bernd Becher from 1977-85, Ruff has created serial works that include *Portraits* [1986-91], *Stars* [1989-92] and *Night Pictures* [1992-95]. These extend the formal discipline of the Bechers' emphasis on documentary objectivity to explore a questioning of photography as a medium of representation. He was included in 'Aura', Wiener Secession, Vienna [1994]. Retrospectives include Centre National de la Photographie, Paris [1997].

**Edward RUSCHA** [b. 1937, Omaha, Nebraska] lives in Venice, California. A key figure in Pop art, he has explored relationships between word and image, in paintings and drawings, often of words themselves, and in photography in artist's books he produced from 1963 to 1972. He was included in Documenta 5, 6, 7 and IX, Kassel [1972; 1977; 1982; 1992]. Retrospectives include San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1982] and the Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. [2000] and tour.

**Lucas SAMARAS** [b. 1936, Kastoria, Greece] lives in New York and has worked in a wide range of media. His photographic work is informed by his performative explorations of portraiture and protean transformation. He was included in 'One of a Kind: Polaroid Color', Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. [1979] and tour, and 'La Photo Polaroid', ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1980]. Solo shows include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1973], and The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1992].



**Tokihiro SATO** [b. 1957, Sakata, Japan] lives in Omiya, Saitama Prefecture, Japan. Originally trained as a sculptor, he has been exploring light and shadow since the late 1980s, using various techniques including the use of a penlight and mirrors to reflect sunlight into the camera lens during long timed exposures. He was included in the Asian Art Biennale, Bangladesh [1999]. Solo shows include Sakata City Museum of Art, Yamagata, Japan, and the Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan [1999].

**Richard SAWDON SMITH** [b. 1963] lives in London. Closely allied both with his medical research and personal experience, his work explores positive and negative imagery of the human subject. Group exhibitions include Belem Cultural Centre, Lisbon [1998] and La Calcografía Nacional, Madrid [1999]. Solo shows include the John Kobal Portrait Award, National Portrait Gallery, London [2002].

**Joachim SCHMID** [b. 1955, Balingen] lives in Berlin. From 1986 to 1995 he built up the body of work titled *Archiv*, which collects and presents, in a standard format, found archival material from diverse sources, inviting reflections upon memory, history and culture. He was included in 'Privat', Fotomuseum im Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich [1995] and 'Fragments of Document and Memory', Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography [1999]. Solo shows include Museum voor Fotografie, Antwerp [1998] and Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago [2001].

**Carolee SCHNEEMANN** [b. 1939, Fox Chase, Pennsylvania] lives in New Paltz, New York. A central figure in 1960s performance and body art, in her works she centred on her own body and her position as female subject and object. Retrospectives include 'Carolee Schneemann: Up to and Including Her Limits', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1998]. Her books include *The Body Politics of Carolee Schneemann* [2000].

**Irene SEGALOVE** [b. 1950, Los Angeles] lives in Venice, California. Since the early 1970s she has worked in a range of media including writing, photography, film and video, examining contrasts between reality and mediated images. She was included in 'The Altered Photograph', P.S.1, New York [1979], 'Identity: Representations of the Self', Whitney

Museum of American Art, New York [1989] and 'Prool: Los Angeles and the Photograph, 1960-1980', Laguna Art Museum, California [1992]. Solo shows include 'Why I Got Into IV and Other Stories', Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California [1990] and tour.

**Allan SEKULA** [b. 1951, Erie, Pennsylvania] lives in Los Angeles. He is an influential practitioner, teacher and theorist of photography as a form of social representation. His books include *Photography Against the Grain; Essays and Photo Works, 1973-1983* [1984]. He was included in 'Art and Ideology', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1983] and Documenta 11, Kassel [2002]. Solo shows include Folkwang Museum, Essen [1984] and Lour, and Vancouver Art Gallery [1991].

**Andres SERRANO** [b. 1950, New York] lives in New York. He constructs pared-down colour still lifes and portraits which bring together pure or sacred associations with a sometimes shocking viscerality. He was included in 'The Photography of Invention', Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [1989]. Solo shows include Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia [1994] and Lour, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1994].

**Cindy SHERMAN** [b. 1954, New Jersey] lives in New York. With her *Untitled Film Still* series [1977-80], shown at The Kitchen [1978] and Metro Pictures [1979], New York, she established an *oeuvre* built on photographing herself in diverse guises and settings to portray aspects of the image of woman in contemporary culture. She was included in 'Pictures', Artists' Space, New York [1977]. Retrospectives include Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [1992] and Lour, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1998] and tour.

**Stephen SHORE** [b. 1947, New York] lives in New York. Since the early 1970s he has developed a detached style of colour photography which portrays semi-desolate or banal scenes using sophisticated picture-making skills. He was included in 'New Topographics', International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester, New York [1975]. Solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York [1976], and Sprengel Museum, Hannover [1995].

**Katharina SIEVERDING** [b. 1944, Prague] lives in Düsseldorf. Her early photographic work featured large-scale, close-up self-portraits with many variations. In the mid 1970s she began making monumental photographic tableaux which combine image and text and refer to political events. She was included in 'Transformer: Aspekte der Travestie', Kunsthalle, Lucerne [1973]. Retrospectives include Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [1998].

**Lorna SIMPSON** [b. 1960] lives in New York. She is a leading African-American practitioner in the use of photography and text to explore issues of cultural identity. She was included in 'The Body', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1986] and the Venice Biennale [1990]. Retrospectives include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [2002].

**Robert SMITHSON** [b. 1938, Rutherford, New Jersey, d. 1973, Amarillo, Texas] was from the mid 1960s a central figure in the intersections between conceptual art, Minimalism and Land art, both as an artist and as a writer. Much of his work offered a critique of current practice as well as extending its boundaries. He was included in 'When Attitudes Become Form', Kunsthalle Bern and Institute of Contemporary Arts, London [1969], Documenta 5 and 6, Kassel [1972; 1977]. Retrospectives include Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1982] and Centro Julio González, Valencia [1993].

**Michael SNOW** [b. 1929, Toronto] lives in Toronto. His work in photography, film, sound and digital media investigates the aesthetic and philosophical processes which are particular to the medium of representation. He was included in 'Anti-Illusion: Procedures and Materials', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York [1969]. Solo shows include Venice Biennale, Canadian Pavilion [1970], and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto [1970; 1994].

**Jo SPENCE** [1934-1992] lived in London. Originally a portrait photographer, Spence was an influential teacher, writer and practitioner who used photography to explore issues of class, gender, medicine and self-recovery. With Terry Oennett she founded the Photography Workshop [1974] and *CameraWork* journal. The diagnosis in 1982 of breast cancer led to her therapeutic photo series, in collaboration

with Rosy Martin, and book, *Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiography* [1986].

**Hannah STARKEY** [b. 1971, Belfast] lives in London. Briefly a fashion photographer, she photographs her subjects in precisely chosen locations and lighting conditions yet the interactions portrayed remain suspended and enigmatic. She was included in 'Telling Tales: Narrative Impulses in Recent Art', Tate Gallery, Liverpool [2003]. Solo shows include Nederlands Foto Instituut, Rotterdam [1999], and Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin [2000].

**Jemima STEHLI** [b. 1961] lives in London. In her predominantly naked self-performances for the camera, she brings into play the fields of exhibition, voyeurism, objectification and the power structures of institutions and technologies of representation. Group shows include City Racing, London [1998] and Cultural Institute for Modern Art, Calcutta [2002]. Solo shows include Chisenhale Gallery, London [2000], and Lisson Gallery, London [2002].

**Joel STERNFELD** [b. 1944, New York] lives in New York. Exploring colour photography of urban subjects since 1968, in the 1980s he began to employ distance, disjunction and humour in series such as *American Prospects* [1987], which form a highly researched study of regional people and places in states of transition. He was included in 'Color as Form', International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester, New York [1982]. Retrospectives include Museum of Fine Arts, Houston [1987] and tour.

**John STEZAKER** [b. 1949, Worcester, England] lives in London. His work draws on film and photography to explore voyeurism, spectatorship and collective fantasies. He was included in 'The New Art', Hayward Gallery, London [1972] and 'Multiple Vision', Cambridge Darkroom, Cambridge [1987]. Solo shows include Kunstmuseum, Luzern [retrospective, 1979] and Cubitt Gallery, London [1996].

**Annelies STRBA** [b. 1947, Zug, Switzerland] lives in Zurich. Her work is concerned with personal and group history and recollection. Her subjects have ranged from visits to Auschwitz and the earthquake-stricken city of Kobe to an ongoing visual diary of her family and



their home life. She was included in 'The Epic and the Everyday: Contemporary Photographic Art', Hayward Gallery, London [1994] and 'Fotografie als Geste', Bonner Kunstverein [1997]. Solo shows include Kunsthalle, Zurich [1990] and Tate Gallery, Liverpool [1999].

**Beat STREULI** [b. 1957, Altdorf, Switzerland] lives in Dusseldorf. Since the 1980s he has photographed metropolitan urban dwellers and crowds in everyday street situations, displaying the portraits in diverse formats, from street mounted billboards to slide installations. He was included in 'Lieux Communs, Figures Singulières', ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris [1991]. Solo shows include Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf [1999].

**Thomas STRUTH** [b. 1954, Geldern, Germany] lives in Dusseldorf. Like Gursky, Höfer and Ruff, Struth studied under the Bechers at Dusseldorf. His work, sharing their 'straight.' documentary objectivity and serial grouping of subjects, includes views of empty streets and buildings, portraits, family portraits, and museum interiors with their spectators. An awareness of social, environmental and psychological conditions underlying his subjects emerges through engagement with the images. He was included in 'Un Autre objectivité', Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris [1989], and 'Documenta IX, Kassel [1992]. Retrospectives include Institute of Contemporary Arts, London [1992] and tour, and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston [2002] and tour.

**Hiroshi SUGIMOTO** [b. 1948, Tokyo] lives in New York. Influenced by conceptualism and Minimalism in the 1970s, by the end of the decade he began his series of movie theatre images which record the entire duration of a film. His two other major series are of seascapes and museum dioramas. All explore dimensions of time, consciousness and the construction of the visual. He was included in 'The Art of Memory/The Loss of History', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York [1985], and 'Space, Time and Memory: Photography and Beyond in Japan', Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo [1994] and tour. Retrospectives include Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago [2003] and tour.

**Larry SULTAN** [b. 1946, New York] lives in California. In the 1970s his work ranged from the archival to billboard projects.

Since the 1980s his subjects have ranged from suburban life to adult film sets, in colour photographs that focus in on mundane details of domestic scenes and human exchanges, creating images that slowly reveal their complexity. He was included in 'Photography as Idea: Conceptual Photography of the 1960s and 1970s', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1991]. Solo shows include San Jose Museum of Modern Art [1992] and tour.

**Mitra TABRIZIAN** [b.1952, Iran] lives in London. She is a photographer and theorist whose work explores issues of race, sex and class from a feminist perspective. She was included in 'Beyond the Purloined Image', Riverside Studios, London [1983] and 'The Body Politic', Photographer's Gallery, London [1987]. Solo shows include Cornerhouse, Manchester [1988].

**Wolfgang TILLMANS** [b. 1968, Remscheid, Germany] lives in London. Working across a wide range of genres, Tillmans explores the significance of everyday life's mundane details. Often installing widely different formats and sizes of picture alongside one another, he creates dialogues between images. He was included in 'From the Corner of the Eye', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [1999]. Solo shows include Portikus, Frankfurt [1995], 'Soldiers - The Nineties', Interim Art, London [1999] and Museum Ludwig, Cologne [2002].

**Jeff WALL** [b. 1946, Vancouver] lives in Vancouver. A key practitioner since the late 1960s of conceptual photography, he has engaged as both an artist and theorist with the social dimensions of Modernism and contemporary visual representation. Solo shows include Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago [1995]; Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris [1995] and Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montréal [1999].

**Andy WARHOL** [b. 1928, Pittsburgh; d. 1987, New York] lived in New York. One of the most influential figures in late twentieth-century art, he established his New York studio as The Factory in 1962, where serial reproduction became a central feature of his work as an artist and filmmaker. Retrospectives include The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Museum Ludwig, Cologne [1989] and Tate Modern, London [2002].

**Gillian WEARING** [b. 1963, Birmingham] lives in London. Her photographic and

video work draws on documentary approaches to explore, with participants, the boundaries of public and private life. She was included in 'Incertaine Identité', Galerie Analix B & L Polla, Geneva [1994]. Solo shows include 'Western Security', Hayward Gallery, London [1995], Kunsthaus Zurich [1997] and Serpentine Gallery, London [2000].

**Boyd WEBB** [b. 1947, Christchurch, New Zealand] lives in Brighton, England. He has lived in England since the early 1970s when he produced sculptural works, making a transition in the 1980s to constructed tableaux which are transformed into large scale colour photographs. He was included in 'Spellbound: Art and Film', Hayward Gallery, London [1996]. Retrospectives include Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand [1997] and tour.

**Carrie Mae WEEMS** [b. 1953, Portland] lives in Massachusetts. Her photographic works and books focus on African-American representation, using the genres of reportage and self-portraiture. Often ironic humour is used to uncover the ideological underpinnings of attitudes both within and across cultural divides. She was included in 'Inside the Visible', Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston [1988]. Retrospectives include National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. [1993] and tour.

**William WEGMAN** [b. 1943, Holyoke, Massachusetts] lives in New York. Since the late 1960s his photographs and videos have explored staging and actions which play upon traditional notions of art's and artists' heroic status. He was included in 'Photography as an Art Form', Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida [1977] and 'The Altered Photograph', P.S. 1, New York [1979]. Retrospectives include Kunstmuseum, Luzern [1990] and tour.

**James WELLING** [b. 1951, Hartford, Connecticut] lives in New York and Los Angeles. Since the late 1970s he has explored the meaning and nature of photography through the use of constructed images and photographic techniques, pushing the boundaries of the medium both technically and conceptually. He was included in Documenta IX, Kassel [1992]. Solo shows include Sprengel Museum, Hannover [1999] and Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Columbus, Ohio [2000].

**Hannah WILKE** [b. 1943, d. 1993] lived in New York. Originally a sculptor, she invented an iconography based on vaginal imagery, using clay, latex and gum. Her own body became increasingly the focus of her work, and featured in 'performalist portraits'. Solo shows include the posthumous 'Intra-Venus', Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York [1994]. Retrospectives include Santa Monica Museum of Art, California [1996].

**Joel Peter WITKIN** [b. 1939, Brooklyn, New York] lives in New Mexico. His tableaux of disturbing figures and scenes create a claustrophobic stage where Western myths and forms of representation are subjected to anguished, transgressive transformations. He was included in 'Images Fabriquées', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris [1983] and 'Crosscurrents: Forty Years of Photographic Art', Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1987]. Retrospectives include San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [1985] and La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art [1987].

**Krzysztof WODICZKO** [b. 1943, Warsaw] lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where since 1991 he has held directorial posts at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. An industrial designer and conceptual artist in Warsaw in the 1960s and 1970s, since 1977 he has taught and worked in Canada and the USA. His writings and public projects address the politics of architecture, the military industrial complex, war and deprivation. He was included in the Venice Biennale [1986], Documenta 6 and 8, Kassel [1977; 1987]. Retrospectives include Walker Art Center, Minneapolis [1992].

**Francesca WOODMAN** [1958-1981] lived in New York and Italy. Most of her work was produced while a student at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, and while working in Rome, and features black and white photographs of her own body in decaying interiors. Retrospectives include Wellesley & Hunter College Art Gallery [1986] and Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris [1998] and tour.



# AUTHORS’ BIOGRAPHIES

**Carl**ANDRE [b. 1935, Quincy, Massachusetts] is a New York-based sculptor and poet and one of the leading figures associated with Minimalism. He was included in such defining exhibitions as 'Primary Structures', the Jewish Museum, New York [1966] and 'When Attitudes Become Form', Kunsthalle, Bern [1969]. Retrospectives include Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York [1970] and the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven [1987]. Andre has written essays on the work of his contemporaries and has also contributed to *Artforum*, *Arts Magazine* and *Art in America* on aspects of Modernism and the relation between art, culture and politics.

**Roland** BARTHES [b. 1915, Cherbourg, d. 1980, Paris] was a French critic, literary theorist and exponent of semiology. In texts such as those collected in *Mythologies* [1957] Barthes analysed the process of 'naturalization' whereby we absorb ideological values through the sign systems of cultural forms that surround us – such as film, reportage, advertising and fashion imagery. Among his works which have influenced artists internationally since the late 1960s are *Elements de Sémiologie* [Paris, 1964, trans. A. Lavers and C. Smith, *Elements of Semiology*, London, 1967] and *La Chambre claire* [*Camera Lucida*, 1980].

**David** BATE [b. Worksop, Nottinghamshire, England] lives and works in London, where he is Head of Art and Design Research at the University of Westminster. He is an artist and writer on art and photography. Solo exhibitions include 'Zero Culture', Danielle Arnaud, London [2000] and 'Zone', Tallin City Gallery, Estonia [2001] and Watershed, Bristol [2002]. He is the author of *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent* [2001].

**Jean** BAUDRILLARD lives and works in Paris. As a critical theorist he has developed an influential portrayal of a society in which all sense of the real has been replaced by simulations. In this analysis, late capitalist culture increasingly 'mediatizes' the systems of cultural signs by which we understand the world. The signs become so estranged from their referents that they produce a 'hyperreal' condition. They have become transformed into simulacra, pure simulations. His works include *Le système des objets* [1968]; *Pour une critique de*

*l'économie du signe* [1972; trans. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1981]; *Simulacres et simulations* [1981; trans. *Simulations*, 1983].

**Walter** BENJAMIN [b. 1892, Berlin, d. 1940, Port Bou, Pyrénées Orientales, France] was a philosopher of history, literary critic and Marxist cultural theorist. Equally fascinated by European and Judaic cultural legacies and the new technologies and artforms of the Modernist era, he synthesized these concerns with an analysis of the material, productive base of art in essays such as 'The Author as Producer' [1934] and 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' [1936]. Collections of his essays include *Illuminationeh* [Frankfurt, 1961; ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, *Illuminations*, New York, 1968] and *Einbahnstrasse* [Berlin, 1928; trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter, *Dne-Way Street*, London, 1979].

**Norman** BRYSON is Professor of History and Theory of Art at the Slade School of Art, London. His previous teaching posts have included Professor of Visual and Cultural Studies, University of Rochester, and Professor of Art History, Harvard. His widely influential studies of visual representation include *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Regime* [1981]; *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* [1983]; *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* [1984] and *Looking at the Overlooked* [2001].

**Benjamin H.D.** BUCHLOH is an art historian and critic who teaches twentieth-century and contemporary art at Barnard College, Columbia University, New York. He has written extensively on the work of avant-garde artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter and conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s, with many of whom he has had a close association over a long period. He is a regular contributor to *October*. His critical writings are collected in his *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* [2001].

**Chris** BURDEN [b. 1946, Boston] lives in California. His early performances, made between 1971, when he was still a graduate student, and 1975, included *Shoot* [1971] in which he had a friend shoot him in the arm;

*Five Day Locker Piece* [1971] and *Bed Piece* [1972], in which he placed himself in isolation for long durations; *Through the Night Softly* [1973], in which he crawled through broken glass; and *Transfixed* [1974], in which he had himself 'crucified ' through the hands, outstretched on a Volkswagen car. His exploration of contemporary fear, isolation and social anxiety led to later sculptural and installation work addressing the socio-political dimensions of modern warfare and of architecture. Retrospectives include Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California [1988] and tour.

**Stanley** CAVELL [b. 1926] is the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and General Theory of Value at Harvard University. A leading figure in American philosophy, he has related his studies of linguistic philosophy and scepticism to new thinking in areas such as film studies, literary theory, romanticism, ethics, and politics. His publications include *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* [1971; revised and enlarged, 1979]; *The Claim of Reason* [1979] and *Themes out of School: Effects and Causes* [1984].

**Douglas** CRIMP [b. 1944, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho] teaches in the Visual and Cultural Studies Program at the University of Rochester. A central figure in the theorization of Postmodernism in the visual arts, he began writing art criticism for *ARTnews* in 1970 and received the first of two NEA Art Critics Fellowships in 1973. Formerly editor of *October* from 1977 to 1990, he is the author of *On the Museum's Ruins* [1993] and *AIDS Oemographics* [1990], and the editor of *AIOS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* [1988].

**Arthur C.** DANTO [b. 1924, Ann Arbor, Michigan] is Emeritus Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, where he has been a professor since 1966. His many published works include *Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations* [1995]; *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present* [1997]; and *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* [1997]. He is the art critic for *The Nation* and an editor of the *Journal of Philosophy*.

**Jacques** DERRIDA [b. El Biar, Algiers, 1930] is Professor of Philosophy and

Directeur d'Etudes at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Among the most influential late twentieth-century Continental philosophers, he has also published writings on art and aesthetics, ethnology, literature and politics. He made a major contribution to the evolution of contemporary critical theory based on linguistics and rhetoric, through his theories of deconstruction of the systems of language. These are elaborated in *De la Grammatologie* [Paris, 1967, trans. Gayatri Spivak, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore, 1976] and *L'Ecriture et la différence* [Paris, 1967, trans. A. Bass, *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, 1978].

**Régis** DURAND is a scholar, art critic and curator of photography. Since 1996 he has been Director of the Centre National de la Photographie, Paris. His published works include *Le Regard pensif: Lieux et objets de la photographie* [1989; new edition 2002]; *La Part de l'ombre – Essais sur l'expérience photographique* [1990]; *Le Temps de l'image* [1995]; and *Disparités: Essais sur l'expérience photographique 2* [2003].

**Trevor** FAIRBROTHER is an independent curator and internationally respected art historian and critic. He was most recently the Deputy Director of Art and Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern Art at the Seattle Art Museum. His published works include *In and Out of Place: Contemporary Art and the American Social Landscape*, with Kathryn Potts [1993]; and *John Singer Sergeant: The Sensualist* [National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2000].

**Clement** GREENBERG [b. 1909, New York; d. 1994, New York] was among the most influential American art critics of the post-war period. The author of such essays as 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' and 'Modernist Painting', he emerged as a principal champion of Abstract Expressionism during the 1940s and 1950s, and a leading theorist of Modernism in the visual arts. His essays have been anthologized in *Art and Culture* [1961] and *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism* [4 vols., 1986–93].

**André** MALRAUX [b. 1901, Paris, d. 1975, Paris] was a French novelist, art critic and politician. One of the most committed left-wing writers of the 1930s, he fought on the Republican side in the Spanish civil war and



later in the French resistance movement. After World War II, he served in Oe Gaulle's governments, becoming one of France's most distinguished Ministers of Culture. His influential writings on the history and perception of art include *Les Voix du silence* [1951; trans. *The Voices of Silence*, 1960].

**Mike MANDEL** is a Californian artist whose work engages with local geographical and social contexts to question the meaning of photographic imagery in popular culture. Using snapshots, advertising, news photographs and public and corporate archives, in the early 1970s he began self-publishing photo-based books as a democratic way of engaging a public outside of the exhibition circuit. Over 25 years he has collaborated on a number of projects with Larry Sultan. Since the early 1990s Mandel's projects have included large public mosaic murals using images derived from pixelated digital photographs.

**Laura MULVEY** is Professor of Film and Media Studies at Birkbeck College, London. An experimental filmmaker and theorist, she has made influential films such as *Riddles of the Sphinx* [with Peter Wollen, 1977] which used cinematic devices to investigate the repression of women's discourse in patriarchy. Her landmark essay 'Visual and Narrative Pleasure' [1973] describes how the representation of woman is structured by the Hollywood cinematic apparatus of the male gaze. She is the author of *Visual and Other Pleasures* [1989].

**Craig OWENS** [1950–1990] was an American critic whose theories are crucial to the critical debate surrounding Postmodernism. From 1979–80 he was Associate Editor at *October* and during the 1980s was Editor of *Art in America*. His seminal text, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', was originally published in *October* in 1980. A book of his collected writings, *Beyond Recognition*, was published in 1992.

**Marcel PROUST** [b. 1871, Auteuil, Paris, d. Paris, 1922] was the author of one of the most complex novels in the history of European literature: *A la recherche du temps perdu* [8 parts, Paris, 1913–27; first trans. G. Scott Moncrieff and S. Hudson, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 7 vols., London, 1922–31; now revised and retitled *In Search of Lost Time*]. A chance encounter [the taste of a *madeleine* cake dipped in

tea] returns to the narrator a moment of childhood joy; from this ensues a recreation of and meditation upon the past, a process which in Proust's conception becomes central to the function of art.

**Alain ROBBE-GRILLET** [b. 1922, Brest, Finistère, France] is a French novelist, filmmaker and literary theorist. In 1963 in the essay *Pour un nouveau roman* [trans. R. Howard, *For a New Novel*, 1966] he set out the conditions of the French *nouveau roman*, in which outmoded ideas of psychological motivation, empathy and humanising description are replaced by a focus on structure and significant objects. His novels include *Le Voyeur* [Paris, 1955; trans. *The Voyeur*, London, 1958]; and *La Jalousie* [Paris, 1957; trans. *Jealousy*, London, 1959]. Robbe-Grillet's film works include the screenplay for *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* [Last Year at Marienbad, dir. Alain Resnais, 1960].

**Ralph RUGOFF** is a curator and art critic and Director of the CCAC Wattis Institute, San Francisco. Among the influential exhibitions he has curated was 'Scene of the Crime', Armand Hammer Museum and Cultural Center, Los Angeles [1997]. He is the author/co-author of several books including *Circus Americanus* [1995], essays on contemporary visual culture; and *Scene of the Crime* [1997]. Since 1990 he has been a regular contributor to many art and cultural publications including *Artforum*, *Art Issues*, *Art and Text*, *Artpresse*, *frieze*, *The Financial Times*, *LA Weekly*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Parkett* and *Vogue*.

**Thomas WESKI** is Chief Curator of the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and an art historian and scholar of photography. His published works on photography include *Albert Renger-Patzch* [with Anne Wilde, Jurgen Wilde and Thomas Jansen, 1997]; *How You Look at It: Photographs of the Twentieth Century* [with Heinz Liesbrock, 2000]; and *Thomas Struth: Portraits* [with Norman Bryson and Benjamin H. O. Buchloh, 2001].

**Gilda WILLIAMS** [b. New York] is Commissioning Editor for Contemporary Art, Phaidon Press, London. Also an art critic and curator, she has contributed to *Parkett*, *Art in America* and *Art Monthly*. Curatorial projects include 'London Orphan Asylum', [co-curator, Milan, 2000]; *cream*; *Fresh Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture*; and *Cream 3* [Phaidon Press, 1998; 2000; 2003].

**Peter WOLLEN** is Professor in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at the University of California, Los Angeles. A highly influential British film theorist, filmmaker and writer on twentieth century art and culture, he is the author of *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* [1969; revised 1972], a key work in the application of structuralism and semiotics to cinema studies. His other publications include *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* [1993]. His films include *Riddles of the Sphinx* [with Laura Mulvey, 1977], and *Friendship's Death* [1987].



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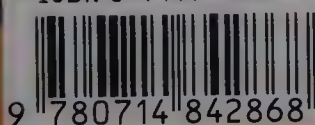
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