

Faraway Feeling/ Kenneth Shorr

Much of what we have published under my editorship of *Exposure* has been critical/historical explication of pictures that were originally intended for display in contexts other than that shaped by magazines and books (much contemporary work, for example, is designed for gallery walls). But it seems to me that some of the most appropriate and exciting uses of the Society's journal are those which explore (or expand) the unique possibilities of the journal format, even while they observe its special constraints. For this reason, we have made an attempt to seek out such designed-for-the-journal photographic pieces as Harold Allen's "My Egypt" and the late Steve Sprague's "How I See the Yoruba See Themselves."

Faraway Feeling by Kenneth Shorr is, I think, one model for the ways in which the pages of *Exposure* can be transformed into an original work of art. The book as art is, of course, an interest shared by many contemporary artists. Here, Shorr extends that idea to the journal essay as art.

The piece is a series of "short stories" (each word/ picture pair) drawn from old studio portrait negatives, a clinical psychology atlas, and, says Shorr, "Conversations I have overheard. Conversations I have had. Conversations I *thought* I overheard or had."

"I am unsure of how I came to gather these elements together. I know I read the atlas and forbade A. from reading it as it would throw her into a state of depression. I know I enjoyed vandalizing the negatives and contaminating the prints. I know I wrote fragments down in my notebooks. But why? Why these elements? Why not a sociological study of suicide notes, a scrapbook, television photos?...When I look at Lesy's psuedo-history, I wonder the same. He could have collected cheery little postcards and love letters. He didn't."

Most of Shorr's work is in the same novelistic vein as *Faraway Feeling*, and evidences the same bitterly ironic humor apparent here. Perhaps best known to *Exposure* readers is *I Cried When I Took This Picture*, a performance/ slide presentation seen at the 1978 SPE National Conference, in which Shorr alternates his own persona with that of Weegee, providing us a glimpse of the torture (an appropriately melodramatic word) suffered in some recess of every human mind.

The interest of all of his work seems to be the same as that which Shorr wrote me informs *Faraway Feeling*. It is an interest in "Photographs as lies that tell the truth."

Charles Desmarais