

From Social Criticism to Art World Cynicism:

1970–1980

CHARLES DESMARAIS

Were it not for the clock and the calendar, one could make a fair argument that the seventies never happened. Certainly, the decade never took on its own cohesive identity as a cultural era. In fact, the political/cultural/social movement we think of as the The Sixties actually came to full flower (so to speak) in the early seventies. And the new conservatism represented by “the Silent Majority” and “the Reagan Revolution” appeared late in the seventies, not when Ronald Reagan was inaugurated in 1981.

The art of photography, subject to the same social forces and analyses, underwent the same kind of radical reconstruction – so quick you hardly saw it happen – as the rest of our social structures. Launched by a good-hearted humanism and a youthful glee in experimentation, the decade revealed a previously unknown critical audience and a viable, if precarious, commercial market, only to end in a cynical critique of the very idea of originality or quality. Paradoxically, this decade with no character of its own, no tidy intellectual construct to hold it together, also saw some of the most profound changes the medium had yet undergone.¹

Surely the most significant of these was the acceptance by the publishing and museum establishments of photography as a medium for serious expression. Prices, galleries, and individual artists may have had their ups and downs during the decade, but once the major communication lines were accessible, photographers could share ideas among themselves and with a wide audience. Photography has not been the same since.

The End of the Sixties: Setting the Stage

As America entered the seventies, Richard Nixon was at the height of his powers, the Vietnam war dragged on, and the Ohio National Guard had not yet made its fateful assault on Kent State University student protesters. Young men were wearing their hair longer than ever before in this century, and the memory of the “Woodstock Music and Art Fair” was but eighteen weeks old.

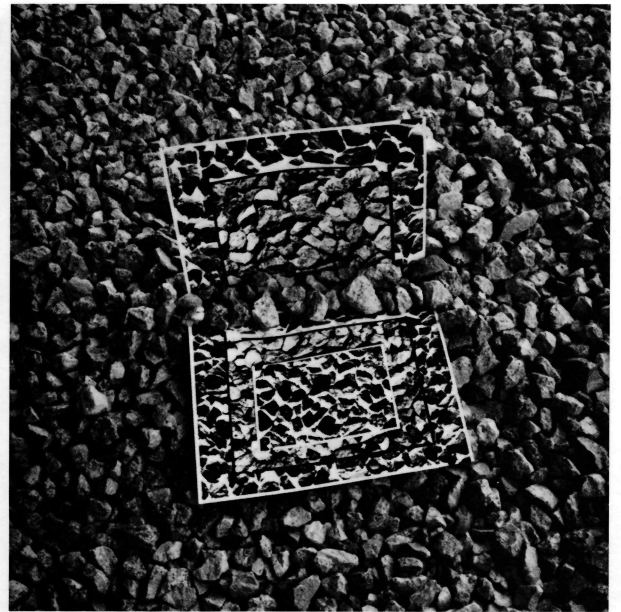
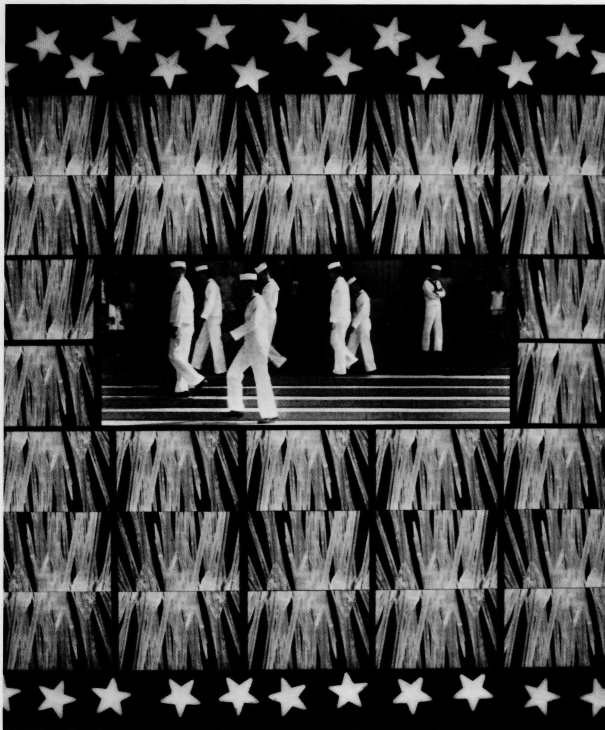
In photography the dominant artists were classic formalists whose work had survived, despite the deprivations of an art world that did not need them, in little magazines, coffeehouse galleries, and a few adventurous universities and museums. Among themselves they had sustained a tenuous network of contacts and launched a few fledgling training programs to foster the early growth of a new field of the visual arts.

For the most part, these mature artists were, despite the conservative look of their pictures, rebels. Their isolation had made them proudly individualistic, and their activity as artists had sharpened their social-critical skills. Now, as the curtain rose on a new decade, they and their friends, colleagues, students, and acolytes formed the backdrop against which photography’s new role as an art medium would be played.

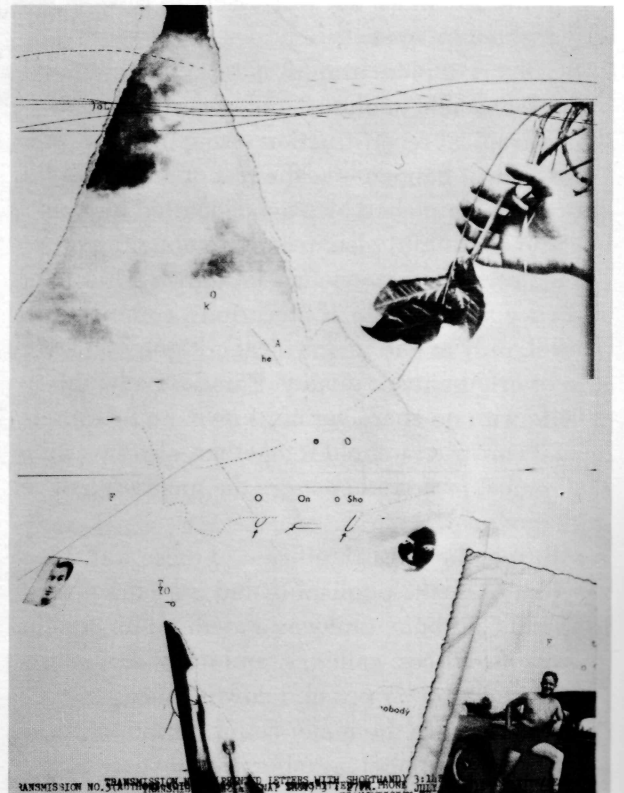
One of the most articulate of the established photographers was artist/theorist/guru Minor White. White’s *Aperture* magazine had, for nearly twenty years, been the only serious and consistent journal in the field. He used the magazine to explain and promote work he believed strove for



LINDA CONNOR, untitled, 1976, gold-toned printing-out-paper print

KENNETH JOSEPHSON, *Chicago*, 1970

BARBARA CRANE, *Bicentennial Polka* [from the Baxter/
Travenol Lab series], 1975



WILLIAM LARSON, [from the Transmissions series],
1975, electro-carbon print transmitted by the Graphic
Sciences Teleprinter

the kind of “equivalence” Alfred Stieglitz had sought – work that dealt in spiritual metaphor and mysticism. Among the younger artists White had taught and helped bring to prominence in the sixties were Paul Caponigro and Jerry Uelsmann, both consummate craftsmen with an eye on the cosmos, but with wildly different technical approaches and visual sensibilities.

At the end of the sixties, White curated two influential exhibitions at the Hayden Gallery of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *Light*⁷ (1968) and *Be-ing Without Clothes* (1970). While controversial because the work of the individual photographers seemed to be subordinated to White’s themes,² these exhibitions and their catalogs pointed to a “new equivalence” compatible with the idealism and rebelliousness of the era, and introduced many previously unpublished photographers.

Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind had worked together (along with Arthur Siegel) from the early fifties to the middle sixties at Chicago’s Institute of Design. They expounded an aesthetic of experimental formalism first promulgated by the Institute’s founder, László Moholy-Nagy. But though they might encourage such a proto-conceptual artist as Kenneth Josephson or a photographic iconoclast like Keith Smith, their own work adhered to classic modernist principles related to painting.

This famous teaching team (reunited in 1971 when Siskind left the Institute for the Rhode Island School of Design, where Callahan had moved in 1964) had an enormous impact on the work and attitudes of a number of young artists. Many of these students became influential innovators in the late sixties and early seventies, including Thomas Barrow, Linda Connor, Eileen Cowin, Barbara Crane, Emmet Gowin, Joseph Jachna, William Larson, Ray K. Metzker, Charles Swedlund, Geoff Winningham, John Wood, Josephson, and Smith.

In the western United States, the photographers entering the seventies with the widest reputations formed a coterie around America’s most famous artist of the camera, Ansel Adams. Along with Adams, Wynn Bullock, Imogen Cun-

ningham, Brett Weston, and a few lesser-known artists constituted a “Carmel School” of landscape photography.³ Most of the group consisted of devoted adherents to a code of photographic purism, which – though it served them well in their own work – became a kind of Establishment symbol for young photographers. As a result, their teachings and work, promoted through a seemingly endless flow of Sierra Club books and Yosemite workshops, ultimately had little influence on the major workers of the seventies.

In fact, the new generation of California photographers in the late sixties often saw itself in apposition – even directly in opposition – to the West Coast landscape tradition in photography. This was particularly true in Los Angeles, where Robert Heinecken spent much of the sixties expanding his ideas of manipulative photography and where, in 1969, Heinecken met Adams in public debate.⁴ Heinecken’s teaching at the University of California, Los Angeles, brought him



JACK WELPOTT, *Linda in Her Birthday Suit*, 1975



JUDY DATER, *Laura Mae*, 1973

into contact with other artists of like mind, notably Darryl Curran and Robert Fichter.

At San Francisco State College, Jack Welpott was formulating an approach to the medium that, while technically less anarchic than that of Heineken, nonetheless rejected the notion of photography as necessarily straight (unmanipulated) and naturalistic. He and a group of former students and friends formed the Visual Dialogue Foundation, which by 1971 included a number of young artists who would have central roles during the decade to follow, Michael Bishop, Linda Connor, Judy Dater, and Leland Rice among them.⁵

Two photographers-turned-curators also held considerable sway at the cusp of the decades. These were John Szarkowski and Nathan Lyons.

Lyons, as curator and associate director of George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, had assembled several important exhibitions of new work by emerging photographers.⁶ In 1969 he had left Eastman House to found the seminally influential Visual Studies Workshop in a Roches-

ter loft. Szarkowski had been appointed director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1962. Destined to become the most powerful critical and curatorial presence of the seventies, he articulated his approach through a series of carefully chosen exhibitions of contemporary work and, notably, in his 1966 book, *The Photographer's Eye*.⁷

Lyons demonstrated considerably more catholic taste than his Manhattan counterpart, including, in one show or another, virtually every contemporary approach to the medium. Szarkowski chose to look at the field from a single vantage point. But both clearly admired a new, gritty, bare-boned photographic style that was to change our concept of the documentary photograph. Szarkowski did a show in which he called the pictures "new documents." Lyons referred to some of the work as "social landscape" photography. The main practitioners were Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, Larry Clark, Bruce Davidson, Danny Lyon, and the most horribly analytical photographer of the moment, the portraitist Diane Arbus. At the end of the sixties, these artists (all around forty, all with substantial exhibition records) burst into the mainstream with the force of a student riot.

The New Documentary: Strange Faces, Familiar Landscapes

In a world full of Young Turks and revolutionaries, the new documentary photographers were remarkable for their visibility and impact. Artistic offspring of Robert Frank, visual cousins to the New Journalists (then becoming known for their deeply personal written accounts of public events), these artists produced pictures that packed a near-physical wallop and that appealed to a broad audience. Though most had earlier received major grants and assignments and had numerous shows and magazine publications to their credit, only Lyon had previously published books of his personal work.

Now, in rapid succession, came some of photography's most stunning books of reportage: Winogrand's darkly humorous *The Animals*

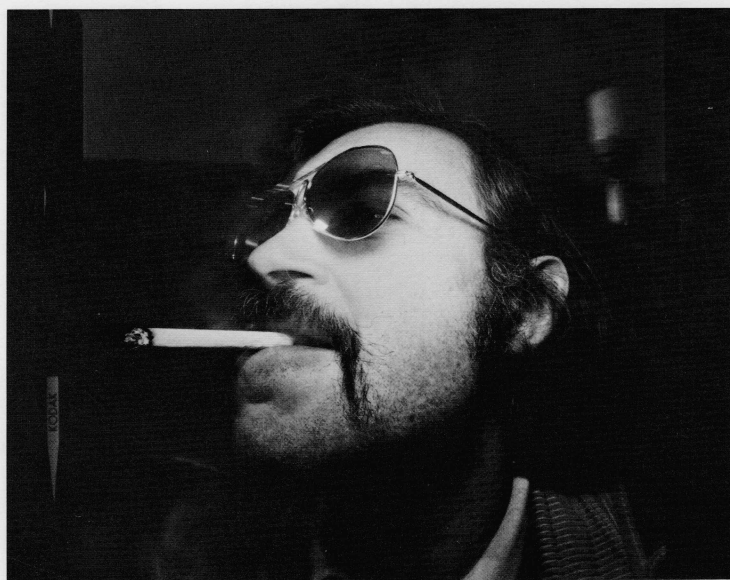
(1969), Friedlander's alienated, disjointed *Self Portrait* (1970), and Davidson's *East 100th Street* (1970), with its cover image of a modern-day crucifixion. In 1971, Danny Lyon published *Conversations with the Dead*, his chronicle of life on a Texas prison farm, and Larry Clark released his story of death and addiction to speed in *Tulsa*.

But the photographs that most shocked the art world at this time and opened vast new areas of artistic investigation were those by Diane Arbus. Beginning in 1960, Arbus had worked as an editorial and fashion photographer for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Esquire*, and other publications.⁸ She had also occasionally exhibited her work in art contexts and had received two Guggenheim fellowships. The May 1971 publication of one of her pictures as the cover of *Artforum* magazine, along with a five-page portfolio, was the contemporary art establishment's imprimatur.

Two months later she was dead, a suicide. This fact was not lost on the visitors to her posthumous exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1972. For the thousands of people who flocked to the exhibition, standing three-deep to gaze at the sad and monstrous faces staring back from big, black-bordered prints, Arbus's self-inflicted death seemed a simple corollary.

The simultaneous opening of the Arbus exhibition and publication of a full-scale monograph⁹ – one of the best-selling photography books of all time – was the single greatest influence on the medium of photography in the early seventies. In some cases, that influence was superficial, as photographers turned their cameras on the malformed of their own neighborhoods, or modified their enlargers to achieve the characteristic Arbus black border. But the great impact of Arbus and her art was her apparently dispassionate examination of a world others would rather ignore. This wasn't the *real* detachment of, say, the photorealist painters of her time, or the news photographers whose technical limitations she elevated to an artistic style. It was, instead, a despair of ever making more of a difference than merely to point – at events from which we ordinarily averted our eyes; at people we had learned to look straight through.

Paul Diamond and Larry Fink, each in his



PAUL DIAMOND, *Man Smoking (Larry)*, New York, 1974

own way, assimilated and put to extraordinary use the essentials of this “New Journalism” of photography. Diamond's aggressive camera – his style gives new meaning to the photographic term “shoot” – poked at the scab of normalcy to find another reality beneath. Fink's pictures of classy parties revealed these events as stilted rituals performed on shallow stage sets.

An underlying hopelessness is also what separates Arbus from some of her “new documentary” contemporaries. Lyon, Clark, and Davidson had specific points to make, which they conveyed through the texts of their books and the visual narratives they constructed. Their work of the time assumes a cause of the effects they documented. The work Friedlander and Winogrand were doing then (over time Friedlander has proven capable of greater subtlety and range) instructs through metaphors that, we know, are not to be taken literally.

The early pessimism of Friedlander and Winogrand gave way over the course of the decade to more complex responses. Winogrand became a central symbol of a kind of pure photographic formalism, a master at snatching gestures from the ballet of life around him. Friedlander's pictures of the middle to late decade are philosophical, even



BILL OWENS, [from the Suburbia series],
ca. 1973

celebratory. His American Bicentennial contribution, *The American Monument*, is consciously Whitmanesque (the book begins with a quotation from the poet), and *Flowers and Trees* (1981) explores the aesthetically risky edge of Pretty. Still, no photographer of the decade produced a more consistent or widely respected body of work than the enigmatic Friedlander.

The most advanced social documentary photography of the seventies gradually revealed a change of approach. Young photographers began to think of their work not in terms of the alienation of, say, a Larry Clark, but in terms of the detachment of Arbus. Bill Owens was one such new artist. He claimed that his book *Suburbia* (1973) took no point of view, other than to show the simple reality of life in a Northern California suburb, and he included his own family as a demonstration of his ingenuousness. Like Diane Arbus, however – like any photographer, for that matter – he chose to point to specific aspects of his subject, and the cover image of a family sitting on lawn chairs in their driveway (“in the evenings we sit out front and watch the traffic go by”) reveals his agenda.

Lynne Cohen, a Canadian, took a similar

approach in photographing mundane business interiors. The unpeopled environments she described symbolized the emptiness and ennui of life in a dead-end, bourgeois job.

Two books, both published in 1978 but photographed over the entire decade, provide examples of the divergent paths available to the new documentary photographer. Eugene Richards’s *Dorchester Days* pieces together a diaristic chronicle from darkly printed fragments: extreme close-ups filling double-page spreads, crying faces providing thematic continuity. The photographs in *Interior America* by Chauncey Hare, on the other hand, were taken from several steps back with a view camera on a tripod. The design of the book is simple – one picture per spread – and the printing is high key and open. As in a good novel, the strength of both books is in the handling of details, but where Richards pushes the relevant detail into our faces, Hare fills the frame with myriad elements we must take the time to inventory.

The 1975 exhibition *New Topographics* brought together ten photographers with an interest in the “man-altered landscape.” Among the group were several artists mining the new documentary vein of social criticism, whose work had remarkable influence both in the United States and abroad, and who have come to be associated as an artistic school. These were Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Joe Deal, Frank Gohlke, and Stephen Shore.¹⁰ The show was organized by William Jenkins for the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House (where Deal, who had considerable influence on the exhibition concept, also worked).

New Topographics had an important precedent – a link in the chain from *Toward a Social Landscape*, the Eastman House exhibition of 1966 – in a less well known exhibition organized by Fred R. Parker in 1971. *The Crowded Vacancy*, presented at the University of California, Davis, and the Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, included one of the *New Topographics* artists, Lewis Baltz (as well as Anthony Hernandez and Terry Wild), and outlined some of the issues. Baltz also produced a major book of his minimalist work the year before *New Topographics* opened, *The*

New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California, which had an impact far beyond its sales on artists here and in Germany, where it was simultaneously released.

The photographers of *New Topographics* continued to figure prominently in the contemporary scene. Robert Adams published four books between 1974 and 1980. Shore was a leader in the acceptance of color among serious photographers and museums. Deal and Gohlke each produced fascinating contemplations of disaster, Deal photographing innocuous-looking housing tracts perched on the infamous, and mostly invisible, San Andreas fault, Gohlke turning his camera to the terrible changes wrought by tornadoes and volcanic eruptions.

A more traditional documentary project bearing the mark of the new style was published in 1978 as *Court House*. This corporate-funded record of county courthouses across America, edited by Richard Pare, took three years and involved some twenty-five noted photographers.

Personal Narrative: True Stories

If a Diane Arbus photograph is a social document, it is also an intensely, uniquely personal response. On this level, the effect of a typical Arbus photograph can be compared to that sought by a completely *antidocumentary* group of her contemporaries, such as novelistic, neosurrealist photographers as Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Les Krims, and Arthur Tress. Certainly, her work's acceptance helped gain a wider audience for their sometimes disturbing images.

Meatyard, who lived and worked far from the urban setting that engulfed Krims and Tress, brought to photographic reality the disturbing visions we think we experience on dark country roads and in deserted houses. Though he had shown at various venues in the sixties and published a small monograph in 1970, his work did not receive wide attention until the 1974 release of an Aperture monograph.¹¹

The work of Krims and Tress caused great controversy when released in their first books in



LEWIS BALTZ, *Nevada 33, Looking West*, 1977



JOE DEAL, *Brea, California*, 1979

1972,¹² but its implausibility (the pictures seem “phonied up”) has become more apparent and more problematic as time has passed. Perhaps sophisticated photographic technologies and ever more outrageous mainstream film and video have stripped them of their specialness. (Krims continued throughout the seventies to make new work, which was widely shown and published, though the unabashed misogyny of his *Fictcryptokrimso-*

graphs, published in 1975, and other work undermines his inventiveness.)

Treading some of the same spooky ground at this time, Duane Michals worked with a unique sequential technique borrowed from film and the comic strip. Michals's early work was published in several popular small books.¹³ Unlike his neo-surrealist colleagues, Michals got better with time, giving up the sequential format for individual word/picture combinations. *Homage to Cavafy*, his 1978 "coming out" as a homosexual, is his best book, perhaps because it is personal without being idiosyncratic.

Ralph Gibson's *The Somnambulist* was based not on the filmic sequence but on that of the book form itself.¹⁴ When it appeared in 1970 it had a strong and immediate impact. Many of the pictures were strikingly enigmatic, presenting faceless figures and disembodied hands and arms. Others, in a different context, would seem mundane: a corner of a room, for example. Assembled in book form, however, they showed photography to be a medium well suited to recording dreams – real enough to be believed, but so incomplete as to make no linear sense.

Two other personal narratives were autobiographical projects that also expanded ideas of the book form. Gaylord Oscar Herron's *Vagabond* (1975) combined painting, writing, Bible quotations, and photographs in a Tulsa odyssey of a different sort than Larry Clark made several years earlier. *Trunk Pieces* (1978), a limited-edition book by Jacki Apple, through its elegant scrapbook format and compelling story of failed love, transformed ordinary snapshots into relics of a contemporary life.

A kind of "photobiography," whether fictional or based on fact, was the recurring theme of a number of photographers working in the seventies. Early in the decade, Eleanor Antin had her performances as a Crimean War nurse, a ballerina, and other characters photographed to look like nineteenth-century images. William DeLappa's 1974 series, *Portraits of Violet and Al*, was a convincing, yet completely fabricated, post-Korean war snapshot album chronicling the courtship and

separation of a typical American couple. And in 1978, Marcia Resnick produced a hilarious and sexy story of a bad girl, produced as *Re-visions* by Toronto experimental printer/publisher Stan Bevington at his Coach House Press.

In 1971 conceptualist Douglas Huebler began a biographical project of a different sort: his *Variable Piece #70: 1971* committed him to "photographically document, to the best of his ability, the existence of everyone alive." His work throughout the seventies consisted of subsets of that overall piece.

Lucas Samaras produced his famous "auto-polaroids," a bizarre and self-obsessed document published as *Samaras Album* in 1971, over the two-month period December 1969–January 1970. He published the book as "auto-interview, autobiography, autopolaroid" and continued to make altered Polaroid self-portraits (as well as paintings, quilts, and other objects) throughout the decade.

Emmet Gowin sees everyday life as a series of epiphanies and is one of few artists who successfully makes photographs intended as spiritual metaphors. Somehow Gowin avoids the cliché, and though the pictures – portraits of family members and vignettes of the world close by his Virginia home – are replete with sentiment, they are believable because they precisely balance their spirituality with a bold sensuality.¹⁵

Some artists were challenged by their inability to delve deeply into personality and biography through the single, unaltered photograph and sought alternative means. Among these were Mark Berghash, Wendy Snyder MacNeil, Esther Parada, Barbara Jo Revelle, Meridel Rubenstein, Keith Smith, and Alex Traube. All of this group was included in a 1980 exhibition, *The Portrait Extended*, which examined the photographers' varying approaches, ranging from serial imagery (Berghash, MacNeil) and word/picture combinations (Rubenstein, Traube) to installation (Revelle, Parada) and hand-reworking (Smith).¹⁶ These approaches, sublime failures in that the results (the pictures) can never replicate or replace their subjects, nevertheless rationalize the highly emotional process of picturing love.

Recycling Photography's Past

At no time since photography's first public announcement one hundred thirty years earlier did the field pay so much attention to its own history than in the seventies. As the photography fad spread, those involved became immediately aware of a huge gap in the historical record. Artists pored over old photographs, collected postcards and anonymous snapshots, and reinvented early processes. Scholars republished long-out-of-print texts, and a whole new area of art collecting sprang up virtually overnight.

Thus, the decade opened upon another major arena of artistic investigation: the work of a number of photographers who incorporated mass media images and reinvestigated historical photographic processes.

Certainly the best-known artists working in this area were Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol, who, beginning in the sixties, extensively explored the reuse of photographic images in their silk-screen prints. Their groundbreaking ideas brought on a reflexive era in photography, as well as in other media. Though they worked with photographic images, they were relatively uninvolved with photographic processes (in fact, most of the technical photographic work was carried out by assistants and technicians). Moreover, the context within which they exhibited and were considered was the world of painting, in major galleries and museums: they seemed distant from the picture-maker trained in photographic techniques and concepts.

A number of photography-trained workers of similar bent were associated with UCLA professor Robert Heinecken, whose own work dealt extensively with the impact of popular electronic and print media. Committing simple acts of artistic vandalism, Heinecken pointed up the incongruity of a conservative culture selling sex and violence. One of his most famous pieces, for example, is *TV/Time Environment*, 1970. For it, he covered an ordinary television screen with a black-and-white positive transparency of a nude woman. The chance juxtapositions of broadcast television – whether commercial messages or TV-version



ROBERT FICHTER, untitled, June 1976

human affairs – with the overlaid soft-core porn reveals the silliness and emptiness of both. At the same time, it makes explicit the implicit sexual messages of supposedly innocuous media hyperbole.

Other Heinecken work made even more direct reference to photography, as in his *Documentary Photograms* (1971) of daily meals, his enormous enlarged filmstrips and film data sheets (1972–1974), and his ongoing use of photographic techniques such as double exposure.¹⁷

The social-critical attitude evidenced by Heinecken's work and a corresponding irreverence for the traditions of straight, unmanipulated photographic printmaking were shared by Robert Fichter. Though he had studied photography with Jerry Uelsmann and Henry Holmes Smith, Fichter was also a painter and printmaker. From 1968 to 1971 he held faculty positions at UCLA and experimented with such nontraditional art/photography techniques as cyanotype, Verifax, and gum bichromate, and with hand-coloring and collage. In 1972 he returned to his home state to teach at Florida State University.

Their jobs teaching in large art departments at major universities certainly exposed both



TODD WALKER, *Chris, Veiled*, 1970, solarized gelatin silver print

Fichter and Heinecken to then-current ideas in the arts. Both were aware of the pop artists of the sixties and their interest in advertising and mass communication, and the renewed use of collage and mixed-media techniques. Other photographic artists, subject to the same direct influences, simultaneously launched their own investigations; many were, in effect, “given permission” by these prolific and charismatic leaders to pursue new directions. Through their teaching (at their own schools and at workshops nationwide) and their work, Heinecken and Fichter encouraged formal and technical experimentation and a reanalysis of the role of communications media in American life.

This experimentation and analysis involved a range of strategies, many of them reflexive upon photography’s history, characteristics, and practice.¹⁸ These strategies included the rediscovery and reuse of early printing techniques, the appro-

priation of popular and mass-media images, solarization, chemical toning and staining, collage and mixed media, and hand-drawing and -coloring. Many of the artists who first attracted notice during this exhilarating period continued to exert influence throughout the decade. Among these were Thomas Barrow, Michael Bishop, Ellen Brooks, Lawrie Brown, Eileen Cowin, Darryl Curran, Fichter, Robbert Flick, Benno Friedman, Betty Hahn, Jerry McMillan, Roger Mertin, Joyce Neimanas, Bea Nettles, John Pfahl, Douglas Prince, Naomi Savage, Evon Streetman, and Todd Walker.

Peter Bunnell curated an exhibition in June 1970 at the Museum of Modern Art that was important for its recognition of the value of inter-media experimentation. *Photography into Sculpture* looked at various means for expanding the flat paper photograph into three dimensions, presenting more than twenty artists, including Brooks, Curran, Heinecken, McMillan, Nettles, and Prince.¹⁹

Formal Considerations

From an era of experimentation and manipulation emerged an attitude of freedom from tradition and standard practice. A new interest in materials and in the nature of photography led to an examination of the specific and special qualities of photography and related media.

Some photographers pursued a “new formalist” aesthetic, finding visual pleasure in inelegant subject matter. Michael Bishop, for instance, in the first half of the decade made large, bold close-ups of road signs and industrial equipment, transforming the mundane into the monumental and pointing up its rough, sculptural beauty.²⁰ Gary Hallman reduced the world before his camera to mere hints of landscape or figure in big, almost-white photographs. Mark Cohen focused camera and strobe on a child’s gum bubble – huge and round and shiny – or on ants in a sidewalk crack, or on fragments of bodies frozen in motion.

Thomas Barrow, influential as artist, curator, and teacher throughout the decade, produced his important series *Cancellations* between 1974 and 1978. Barrow consciously scratched and tore his

8 x 10-inch negatives, adding a strong formal element to otherwise bland pictures and contradicting the windowlike illusion of the photographic print, while at the same time commenting on the art market value of prints and photographs.²¹

Color photography, widely used by commercial photographers and amateurs since the thirties, had not been fully accepted by artists and editorial photographers prior to the seventies. (Among the rare exceptions were Marie Cosindas and Eliot Porter, whose best work since the early sixties was in color.) Perhaps one reason for this resistance was color's very acceptance by the commercial and amateur worlds – worlds the art photographer disdained. Color was also more expensive than black-and-white, more difficult to reproduce, and more likely to fade. But these factors became moot during the sixties and early seventies as the photographic-materials market changed, magazines adopted color almost exclusively, and more stable color processes appeared.

Though a number of people had begun working in color early in the decade, it was the Museum of Modern Art and John Szarkowski who, as they had done many times before, both signaled and spurred a major shift. The 1976 MOMA exhibition of William Eggleston's color photographs and – even more important – Szarkowski's introduction to the accompanying book²² announced the respectability of color for serious work. Though some were outraged at Szarkowski's pronouncement that Eggleston's pictures were “perfect,” the very fact of his edict and the serious debate that followed brought color squarely to the fore.

Michael Bishop had made the move to color in 1974, incorporating yet another element into his painterly approach to subject matter. Joel Meyerowitz had expanded the range of his much-praised black-and-white street photography with a palette full of intimations of intense heat and cold. Stephen Shore's straightforward views of American streets used color mainly for its descriptive powers. William Christenberry made modest snapshots in the manner of Walker Evans – and of the intelligent tourist amateur on a trip to the South. Eggleston's work in the 1976 show,

actually shot around 1971, vaguely anticipated all these approaches but never embraced any of them – thereby hinting at the kind of ingenueness Szarkowski has never been able to resist.

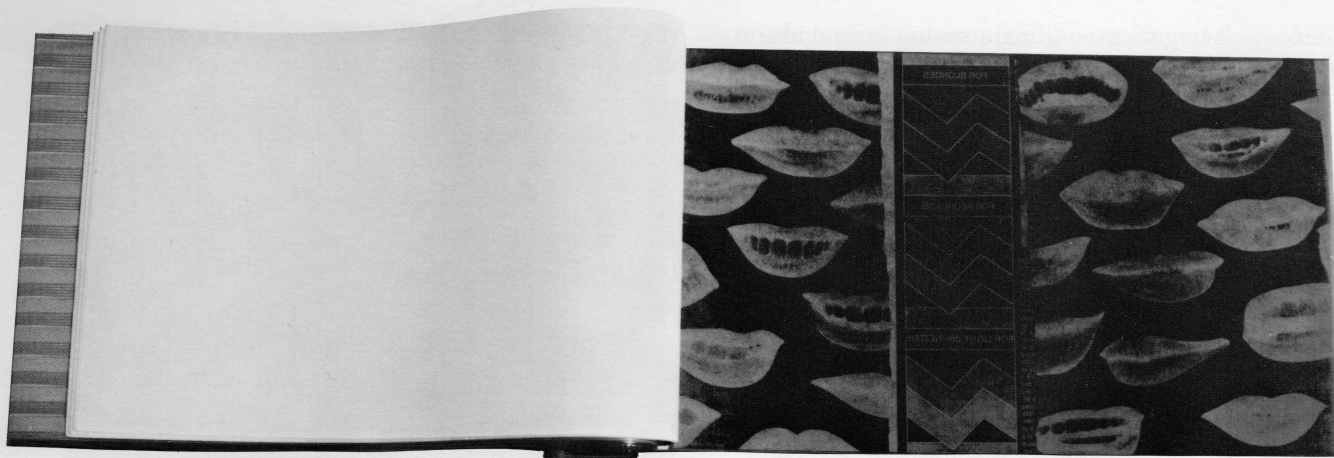
Language, Bookworks, and Generative Systems

At the same time as these formal investigations were taking place, other artists were dealing with photography's uses in cultural contexts, rather than with the look of their pictures. The 1976 book *Photography and Language*, edited by Lew Thomas, brought together more than thirty artists working with the interactions/interrelationships of photographs and words. Many others who had not entered the juried show on which the book was based were also working in this area. In fact, probably no innovation of the seventies was more ubiquitous than the incorporation of words into pictures by some means or other.

More specific to individual artists (and overlapping media other than photography) was the burgeoning interest in bookworks, or artists' books, and in what has been called “generative systems.”

The idea of the artist's book is at least a hundred years old, dating to nineteenth-century original-print illustrations for *livres d'artiste*. But today's artist's book is generally a low-cost, artist-controlled production. Crucially, the book itself is the original; it is not a collection of reproductions or an illustrated text, but a final work of art in its entirety.

Dick Higgins and the Fluxus group in the early sixties may have launched the new obsession with the book as artistic medium, but it was late in that decade that the photographic artist's book made a serious appearance. Los Angeles artist Ed Ruscha made a series of pioneering and influential photographic books in the sixties, among them his classic *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*.²³ (The title describes the book perfectly.) Todd Walker, who eventually bought his own offset press and has developed strikingly beautiful technical innovations, also began work in the medium at about the same time.²⁴



THOMAS BARROW, untitled, 1973, verifax

The distinctions between the work of Walker and Ruscha are worth noting here: Walker, the consummate technician (he had been a successful commercial photographer), is most concerned with the physical form of the book – its printing quality, color, paper, and design. Ruscha, though a fine craftsman as a painter and printmaker, sees the book more as a conceptual tool; his books are simply designed and cheaply printed and generally photographed by someone else. The differences between these two artists and their books symbolize the two basic approaches to the book apparent throughout the coming decade.

The seventies saw enormous growth in the development of the book as an art medium,²⁵ and photographically derived productions were particularly in evidence. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of artists worldwide took up the form, if not exclusively, then for a single project. Among the central figures of the craft-oriented approach were several people who led independent presses, helping other artists produce work in the difficult medium, new to them, of offset lithography (the technology used to print most books): Joan Lyons at the Visual Studies Workshop Press, Stan Bevington at Coach House Press, Michael Becotte at Tyler School of Art, and Conrad Gleber at Chicago Books. Also important as experimenters were Keith Smith, whose one-of-a-kind and multiple works numbered nearly a hundred different books at decade's end, and Scott Hyde, who popularized the notion

of “original” offset photolithographs and published such works in several journals.

Often overlooked as a major photographic statement of the seventies is Canadian artist Michael Snow's *Cover to Cover* (1975), a richly complex investigation of the nature of the book, the sequence, pictures, and the act of picturing. Others working with the book form as a conceptual vehicle were John Baldessari, George Blakely, Miles DeCoster, Lew Thomas, and innumerable others.

The generative systems movement was founded single-handedly by Chicago artist Sonia Landy Sheridan, who realized the potential of copy machines such as those made by 3M and Xerox, and of the imaging processes and materials developed along with the machines. A few other artists had made “copy art” in the sixties (notably Linton Godown, Bruno Munari, and Esta Nesbitt), and a great many people worked with the various machines and processes throughout the seventies, including Thomas Barrow, Ellen Land-Weber, Keith Smith, and Peter Hunt Thompson.

Sheridan, however, saw the role of the artist working with new technologies not as mere picturemaker but as a kind of Philosopher King, leading by virtue of his knowledge. These new artists would be concerned not with product but with process; they would be facilitators to the masses, who, provided with art-making tools and techniques developed by artists, scientists, and engi-

neers, could make their own pictures, exactly to their liking.

Photography as Political Action

Sonia Sheridan was not alone in her belief that photography and related media could serve a political function, nor was she the most vocal spokesperson for that point of view. In fact, Marxist and feminist theory became central elements of a major wave of photographic practice that originated late in the decade and was still building force as the eighties dawned.

This new wave had its origins in the writings of a German critic of the thirties, Walter Benjamin; in the photographic agitprop of Benjamin's countryman and contemporary John Heartfield; and in the modern writings of John Berger and other British critics. Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"²⁶ is certainly this century's most influential writing on photography. Heartfield's work, though rarely imitated in style, is exemplary for its specific and direct criticism of a repressive political and economic system. Berger's writing on society and seeing is some of the clearest and most convincing contemporary criticism.

In the United States the new political awareness did not come easily. Allan Sekula, Martha Rosler, Fred Lonidier, and Philip A. Steinmetz, working in San Diego in the political art climate of the University of California campus there, developed an activist photographic vocabulary relying upon "fictions" (photographs) to explain "facts" (repressive social structures).

Sekula and Rosler wrote some of the strongest political critiques of the medium,²⁷ but though their articles appeared in venues widely accessible to artists, there was considerable resistance to their ideas. The 1978 national conference of the Society for Photographic Education, the main academic organization in the field, saw the first public confrontation of the issues when both critics lectured to hostile houses and a group of women organized a boycott of a politically objectionable presentation.

Within a few years, however, two serious jour-

nals, *Afterimage* and *Exposure*, would have strong feminist editorial philosophies, and new theorists and artists would be identified, including Catherine Lord, Jan Zita Groover, Deborah Bright, and Martha Gever.

Boom and Bust

If the time period between 1970 and 1980 had no readily identifiable aesthetic character, and thus cannot be seen as a cohesive artistic "era," the same can hardly be said of the decade's photo/art-world economy. Though it is impossible to measure how many art photographs were made at different points in the ten-year continuum, the responses of the audience and the market can be gauged.

A chart of photography's popularity in the seventies would reveal a steep rise from 1970, when the famous Strober auction at one of New York's most prestigious houses revealed strong interest in photography among collectors,²⁸ through the 1973 appearance of National Endowment for the Arts photography grants and Susan Sontag's first writing on the subject in the *New York Review of Books*. The photography boom peaked at mid-decade, with the establishment of gallery and museum programs around the country (including Light Gallery and the International Center of Photography in New York), an *Art in America* magazine symposium on "Collecting the Photograph"²⁹ and ever-higher auction prices, and the establishment of at least eight major journals and magazines. By 1976, however, the popular (and profit-oriented) newspaper *Photograph* had failed, and by the late seventies political and post-modernist critiques of photography were revealing major weaknesses in the structure of the "photography world." As the eighties dawned, many of the most potent symbols of the decade were being dismantled as galleries closed, auction prices fell, and upscale art photography magazines ceased publication.

What happened to cause such traumatic shifts in the popular acceptance of photography as art? What brought about the original, near-frantic

excitement, and why did an entire field seem to fall apart in five short years?

The answers are less exciting than the questions. The fact is that there was not one, but two, for the most part separate, photography “booms.” One of these – it could be called the “commercial boom” – was ignited by rapid increases in the prices of historical photographs at auction. At a time when little was known about the rarity, history, or relative importance of old photographs, the supposed free market of the auction began to signal their economic value. There quickly developed a new breed of dealer/entrepreneur, different in motivation from the amateurs who, for the love of it, had opened early galleries like Limelight, the Underground Gallery, Carl Seimbab, and Focus.³⁰

In the early seventies you could count the photography historians on one hand; historical significance and rarity – basic building blocks of any collectibles market – had not yet been established. Moreover, what expertise existed had not yet been disseminated to the art audience. A shallow market was being built largely upon the ignorance of a buying public anxious to share in what it saw as an opportunity for fast wealth, yet unable to distinguish between a vintage Strand and a film still of a movie star.

There were many excellent and reputable dealers – conscientious scholars in their own rights. But there were also those who succumbed to the pressure to sell people what they wanted: virtually valueless snapshots of celebrities, pretty landscapes, and, most insidious of all, tax-dodge “packages.”³¹ There were even a few cynical dealers who actually tried to manipulate the market, bidding up the prices of their own holdings at auction. When the general recession of 1979–1982 came, the precarious photography market began to fall apart, taking good galleries as well as bad along with it. Among the major galleries crippled or closed were Light (Los Angeles and New York), Harry Lunn, Robert Samuel, Photograph, Jeffrey Gilbert, Focus, Kiva, and David Mancini.

Ironically, other elements of the commercial boom had taken their leadership from the galleries and dealers, and the “bust” brought down or seriously hurt several magazines (*Photograph*, *Picture*,

Camera Arts) and book publishers (Morgan and Morgan, Curtin and London, Callaway).

Another, more creditable and substantial expansion also took place in the seventies. This had to do with the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about photography, its history, and its place in our culture. To be sure, this “knowledge boom” also suffered a deflation, partly in response to the commercial bust, partly as a result of changes in government funding, and partly because the winds of intellectual fashion shifted. Education, from informal workshops to university programs in photography, was affected, as was the grant support structure for artists working in photography. Scholarly interest in photography, though, remains strong.

The single most important element contributing to the growth of the medium of photography in the seventies was government funding, embodied in a comparatively small federal agency, the National Endowment for the Arts. Founded in 1965, the NEA awarded its first grant to a photographer in 1968, to Bruce Davidson, for his East 100th Street project. In 1971, at the urging of Visual Arts Program director Brian O’Doherty, the Endowment established a special category for Photographers’ Fellowships, setting a precedent for specific support of the medium. This was followed by establishment of grant categories for Photography Exhibitions (1973), Photography Publications (1973), and Photography Surveys (1976) – all of which were eliminated or subsumed into other programs in 1981. All told, from 1973 (the first year a large number of grants was made) through 1980 some six million dollars was specifically earmarked for photography.³²

The federal government’s implied sanction of photography as fine art did not hurt the medium’s image in the eyes of the art world; in fact, some observers have argued that such recognition was more important than the money. There is little doubt, though, that the cash – along with state-level grant programs encouraged by the NEA, and matching private donations frequently prompted by the federal and state grants – had a tremendous impact.

Through the fellowships, individual photogra-

phers were freed from financial pressure to concentrate on their work. The exhibition grants enabled small nonprofit galleries and artists' spaces to present new and experimental work in photography and encouraged general museums to devote space and resources to photography shows. Marginally viable publishing projects became more attractive with the aid of publications grants, and the survey grants – an offshoot of American Bicentennial fever, meant to encourage FSA-type documentary projects – engendered a flurry of new work specifically in response to the availability of funds.³⁵

The Knowledge Boom

Alongside the 1971–1981 development of a government funding base – to a degree, perhaps, because of it – an institutional and intellectual foundation was being built. New public exhibition and collection programs were founded, and new publications, from the scholarly to the popular, flourished. A critical and theoretical dialogue was initiated, and the history of photography became a legitimate field of academic study.

A number of art museums across the country had shown early interest in photography, including the Museum of Modern Art (the first museum to establish a department of photography), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Amon Carter Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Prior to the late sixties, however, the only museum programs specific to photography were the George Eastman House and the short-lived American Museum of Photography in Philadelphia.

In 1967, Ansel Adams, Beaumont Newhall, and others established the Friends of Photography as an exhibit center in Carmel, California, thus instituting the first artists' space in photography. No longer run by an artist board, the Friends evolved into a major photography publisher, workshop organizer, and membership organization. At about the same time, Nathan Lyons began a series of private workshops that resulted in the 1969 establishment of a permanent facility in Rochester,

New York, for the Visual Studies Workshop, which grew during the seventies into a combination school, publisher, library, and exhibit center.

An important late entry among art museums was the New Orleans Museum of Art, which in 1973 began an aggressive effort to build a distinguished collection of photographs. By the end of the decade, museum collections, even museum departments, of photography were no longer a rarity and were fast becoming the norm.

Museums devoted specifically to photography also sprang up at a rapid rate, adding the California Museum of Photography (1973), the International Center of Photography (1974), the Center for Creative Photography (1975), and the Chicago Center for Contemporary Photography (later Museum of Contemporary Photography; 1977). Noncollecting exhibit centers and artist organizations also proliferated and achieved financial stability, including, among many others, the Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies, Photographic Research Center (Boston), Lightworks (Syracuse), San Francisco Camerawork, Nexus (Atlanta), and CEPA/Hallwalls (Buffalo). This flourishing scene continued unabated throughout the decade.

Theoretical Issues

As the institutional base for the medium grew and widened, so did its intellectual base. The process first began with scattered attempts to uncover – or rediscover – its history. Important texts such as Richard Rudisill's *Mirror Image* (1971), William Stott's *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (1973), and Estelle Jussim's *Visual Communication and the Graphic Arts* (1974) appeared, along with republications of virtually every major nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century book and periodical on photography.

Nathan Lyons and John Szarkowski had already been identified as the medium's most visible and articulate critics, and A. D. Coleman started writing regular reviews for the *Village Voice* (1968–1973) and the *New York Times* (1970–1974). Some of the leading art journals, notably

Artforum and *Art in America*, began to turn attention to photography, and photography publications like *Camera* (published in Switzerland), *Creative Camera* (England), and *Aperture* expanded their critical writing.

The periodical *Afterimage* was introduced by Lyons in 1972; under managing editor Charles Hagen it grew into an important vehicle for new ideas, new critics, and new work. *Exposure*, begun as a newsletter for the Society for Photographic Education in 1968, evolved into a serious critical and historical journal beginning around 1973, and *Untitled* was founded as a quarterly organ for the Friends of Photography in 1972.

With the 18 October 1973 edition of the *New York Review of Books*, the face of photography criticism changed radically. In forty-four beautifully written paragraphs, Susan Sontag initiated a high-level intellectual discussion that would reverberate for the rest of the decade and beyond.

"Taking pictures is a soft murder," she wrote, with reference to the medium's seeming ability to turn people into objects. "To photograph people is to violate them." Her ideas upset not a few professionals in the field, but they also brought before a large audience – for the first time – some of photography's basic philosophical dilemmas. The first essay grew to six, and thence to a widely read book.

Sontag's main themes are the ubiquity of photographs and their inauthenticity. She argues: "The knowledge gained through still photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist. It will be a knowledge at bargain prices – a semblance of knowledge, a semblance of wisdom; as the act of taking pictures is a semblance of appropriation, a semblance of rape. . . . The omnipresence of photographs has an incalculable effect on our ethical sensibility. By furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is."³⁴ The implications for art, and for photographs that aspire to art, are fundamental: "As most works of art (including photographs) are now known from photographic copies, photography . . . has decisively transformed the traditional

fine arts and the traditional norms of taste, including the very idea of the work of art. Less and less does the work of art depend on being a unique object, an original made by an individual artist. Much of painting today aspires to the qualities of reproducible objects."³⁵

Sontag's articles raised the level of discourse on photography, both within the field and in the larger world of arts and letters. They coincided with – and, to some extent, caused – a concerted, serious study of other writings on photography by writers who, like Sontag, had developed their critical thought in the film and literature arenas. And that study led further to the application to photography of critical theory developed in those arenas. Walter Benjamin (to whom Sontag dedicated a chapter of her book), Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes, in particular, began to influence the thought of a whole different audience than they had originally written for, and words like *semiotics* and *deconstruction* entered the photography lexicon for the first time.

The articles also anticipated the postmodern criticism that at decade's end had risen to prominence. Championed first by the journal *October*, postmodernism by the early eighties had become a central preoccupation of several influential art magazines and theoretical journals. The movement, a theory-heavy argument for the primacy of the image over experience, was launched by two important articles, one by Craig Owens and the other by Douglas Crimp. Both writers, like Sontag, rejected the idea of originality in photography.

To quote Owens: "Photographs are but one link in a potentially endless chain of reduplication; themselves duplicates (of both their objects and, in a sense, their negatives), they are also subject to further duplication, either through the procedures of printing or as objects of still other photographs, such as [Walker] Evans's *Penny Picture Display, Savannah*, 1936."³⁶

Crimp admiringly describes a film by Robert Longo, one of the preeminent postmodernists: "Longo's movie camera was trained on a photograph, or more precisely a photo-montage whose separate elements were excerpted from a series of photographs, duplicate versions of the same shot.

That shot showed a man dressed and posed in imitation of a sculpted aluminum relief that Longo had exhibited earlier that year. The relief was, in turn, quoted from a newspaper reproduction of a fragment of a film still taken from *The American Soldier*, a film by Fassbinder."³⁷

Whether the postmodernist argument is ultimately a circular one, providing little more than wordy apologies for a cynical, dead-end fad, is an

NOTES

1.a. "Profound" is a relative term: this essay is concerned primarily with photography in an art context. As seen from other points of view, the events of the seventies might appear much less significant than those of other eras – even trivial. For example, the rise of photographically illustrated newspapers and magazines from the 1880s to the 1930s is a far more widespread and far-reaching phenomenon than any art photography event.

b. Most history is an assimilation of the "facts" as they have been recorded. Moreover, the period under discussion here was photography's most prolific, in terms of the sheer mass of published and republished books, periodicals, and other materials. Thus this essay draws heavily on books and catalogs published during or about the seventies, many of which are cited here. However, because the author was a personal witness to (and even a participant in) many of the events discussed, it relies also on personal recollection and opinion.

2. White subtitled the catalog for *Light*⁷ "Photographs from an Exhibition on a Theme," did not identify any of the pictures by their original titles, and grouped the artists' names at the back of the book rather than printing them with the individual photographs. The approach was more sensitive in the catalog to the second show, but these and White's other thematic shows of the seventies continued to draw fire.

3. The landscape purists I am thinking of were not confined to any particular geographic area, but many did live in or near Carmel, California. Many served, at one time or another, on the board of trustees of the Friends of Photography in Carmel. Among the best of them: Morley Baer, Robert Byers, Steve Crouch, Richard Garrod, Henry Gilpin, Al Weber, and Cole Weston.

4. James Enyeart, ed., *Heinecken* (Carmel, Cal.: Friends of Photography, 1980), p. 139. According to Heinecken [telephone conversation with the author, 9 March 1987] the "debate" took place in conjunction with a pair of exhibitions the two had at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He does not recall if the event was billed as a debate, "but it turned into a debate."

5. *The Visual Dialogue Foundation*, Davis, Cal.: Visual Dialogue Foundation, 1971, p. 1. Other mem-

bers: Edward Douglas, Oliver Gagliani, Michael L. Harris, Timo Pajunen, John Spence Weir, Don Worth; associates: Karl L. Folsom, Steven D. Soltar.

6. The group shows had equally influential catalogs: *Toward a Social Landscape* (New York: Horizon Press, 1966); *The Persistence of Vision* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967); *Photography in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967); and *Vision and Expression* (New York: Horizon Press, 1969).

7. The approaches of these two important curators are compared in Candida Finkel, "Photography as Modern Art: The Influence of Nathan Lyons and John Szarkowski on the Public's Acceptance of Photography as Fine Art," *Exposure* 18, no. 2 (1981): 22–37.

8. Doon Arbus and Marvin Israel, eds., *Diane Arbus: Magazine Work* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1984). Southall's essay gives an excellent account of this facet of Arbus's career. Also see Patricia Bosworth, *Diane Arbus: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

9. *Diane Arbus* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1972).

10. Other participants were Bernd and Hilla Becher, Nicholas Nixon, John Schott, and Henry Wessel, Jr.

11. *Ralph Eugene Meatyard* (Lexington, Ky.: Gnomon Press, 1970); James Baker Hall, ed., *Ralph Eugene Meatyard* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1974). Also of interest: *The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater* (Millerton, N.Y.: Jargon Society, 1974).

12. Les Krims: *The Deerslayers, The Incredible Case of the Stack o' Wheats Murders, Little People of America, 1971, Making Chicken Soup* (all Buffalo, N.Y.: self-published, 1972). Arthur Tress: *The Dream Collector* (Richmond, Va.: Westover Publishing, 1972).

13. Duane Michals: *Sequences* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970); *The Journey of the Spirit after Death* (New York: Winter House, 1971); *Things Are Queer* (Cologne: A. & J. Wilde, 1973); *Take One and See Mt. Fujiyama and Other Stories* (Rochester, N.Y.: Stefan Michal, 1976); *Homage to Cavafy* (Danbury, N.H.: Addison House, 1978).

14. The book was the first in a trilogy that also included *Déjà-Vu* (New York: Lustrum Press, 1973) and

Days at Sea (New York: Lustrum Press, 1974).

15. Emmet Gowin, *Photographs* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

16. Charles Desmarais, ed., *The Portrait Extended* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1980). The show was curated by the author for the MCA in September 1980 and also included Martha Madigan, an excellent printmaker whose work does not typically deal with portraiture.

17. James Enyeart, ed., *Heinecken*.

18. A very important early survey of this work is Donald L. Werner, ed., *Light and Lens: Methods of Photography* (Yonkers, N.Y.: Hudson River Museum, 1973). Dennis Longwell's introduction makes much of the work's historical roots and references.

19. This information was provided by Joyce Carp of MOMA's Department of Photography from the exhibition checklist.

20. Michael Bishop, *Catalogue, Winter-Spring, 1974* (1974); Charles Desmarais, ed., *Michael Bishop* (Chicago: Chicago Center for Contemporary Photography, 1979).

21. Kathleen McCarthy Gauss, *Inventories and Transformations: The Photographs of Thomas Barrow* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

22. John Szarkowski, *William Eggleston's Guide* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976).

23. Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (Los Angeles: self-published, 1966). Some other Ruscha books include *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962); *Various Small Fires* (1964); *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965); *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967); [with Mason Williams and Patrick Blackwell (photographer)] *Royal Road Test* (1967); [with Billy Al Bengston] *Business Cards* (1968); *Nine Swimming Pools* (1968); *Crackers* (1969); *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970); *Babycakes with Weights* (1970); *A Few Palm Trees* (1971); [Photos by Jerry McMillan] *Records* (1971); *Dutch Details* (1971); *Colored People* (1972); and [with Lawrence Weiner] *Hard Light* (1978). One wonders how long the bibliography would run if Ruscha, a painter and printmaker, devoted his primary attention to books.

24. An early Walker effort is *A Few Poems by John Donne and Photographs by Todd Walker* (Tarzana, Cal.: Thumbprint Press, 1966).

25. Franklin Furnace Archive, a nonprofit group founded in 1976 to collect and preserve artists' books, had a collection of 11,000 books in 1984, 75 percent of them published since 1975. Joan Lyons, ed., *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (Rochester, N.Y.: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), p. 228. Though the collection is comprehensive, it is unlikely that it acquires *all* books produced. The nonprofit Printed Matter, Inc., the largest distribution outlet for artists' books, was also founded in 1976.

26. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, ed., Harry Zohn, trans. (New York: Harcourt,

Brace and World, 1968), pp. 217-251.

27. Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," *Artforum* 13 (January 1975): 36-45; "The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War," *Artforum* 14 (December 1975): 26-35. Martha Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," *Exposure* 17, no. 1 (1979): 10-25.

28. The collection of Sidney Strober was auctioned at Parke-Bernet (now Sotheby's) on 7 February 1970, bringing what were then considered to be extraordinary prices. [Amy Murphy of Sotheby's provided specifics on the Strober auction, for which I am grateful.]

29. The affair was seen at the time as a major indication that photography had "come of age" and entered the art world. For a contemporary account, see Charles Hagen, "'Collecting the Photograph': Was It Worth It?" *Afterimage* 3, no. 4 (October 1975): 2-3.

30. Since Stieglitz, the only major photography galleries prior to the seventies were the first Julien Levy Gallery (1931-1937), Limelight (Helen Gee, 1954-1961), both in New York; Focus (Helen Johnston, San Francisco), Carl Seimbab (Boston), both beginning in the sixties; and three New York galleries of the sixties: Underground, Heliographers, and Image. The Witkin Gallery opened in New York in 1969.

31. Several galleries and a few "investment advisors" developed schemes whereby investors bought photographic prints in bulk at wholesale prices, then donated the pictures to museums, writing the retail value off their taxes. The quality of the work changing hands varied greatly, depending on the knowledge and reliability of the deal's organizer. An excellent description of this legal but market-destabilizing practice, and of other aspects of the subject, can be found in David Trend, "Take the Money and Run, or, Life after the Photo Boom," *Afterimage* 10, no. 8 (March 1983): 3.

32. Paul Carlson, National Endowment for the Arts, Visual Arts Program, telephone conversation with the author, 10 February 1987. A useful analysis of the role of the NEA in the photographic art of the seventies is found in Merry Amanda Foresta, *Exposed and Developed: Photography Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), pp. 6-12.

33. The Photography Surveys category had an NEA-funded prototype in a 1974 project, conceived by James Enyeart, to document aspects of Kansas. The results were published in James Enyeart, Terry Evans, and Larry Schwarm, *No Mountains in the Way* (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Museum of Art, 1975).

34. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 24.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

36. "Photography *en abyme*," *October* 5 (Summer 1978): 85-86.

37. "Pictures," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 83.