

JOSEPH JACHNA

Carmel

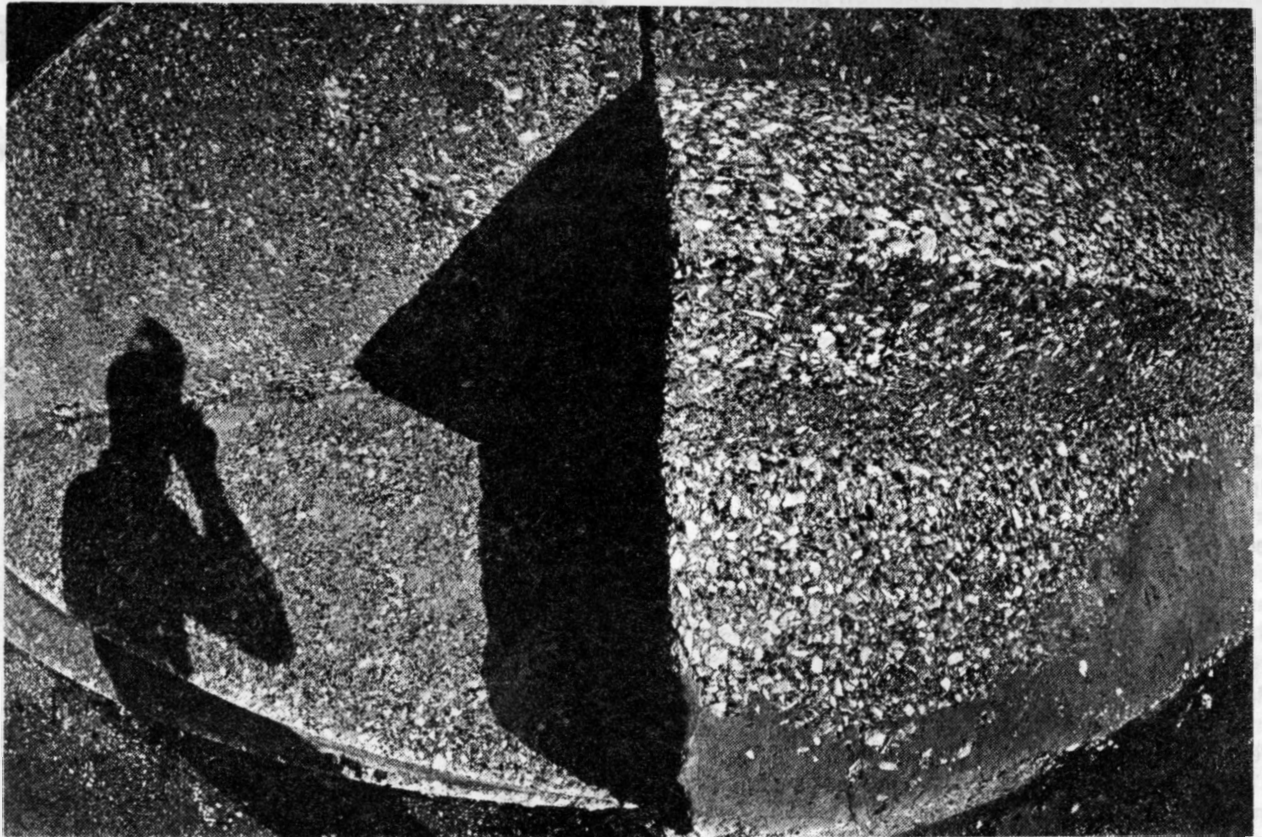
Charles Desmarais

Many photographers who have achieved a bit of fame (or notoriety) have developed what Ralph Gibson calls a "signature style," in which a certain way of seeing or a certain technique of presentation is explored, enlarged upon and perhaps belabored to the point where a knowledgeable viewer will be able to recognize a work as the product of a particular photographer by the presence of "favorite elements." There is, though, the occasional worker whose ideas, emotions and vision (and their expression) undergo such frequent change and intense growth that we cannot "pick him out." Joseph Jachna is such a worker. His current exhibition in the south gallery of the Friends of Photography, which runs through May 19, is evidence of an inquiring, ever-active imagination.

Eighty-eight prints by one person are often more than most of us can view with sustained interest in one visit. Often the signature worked out by an artist becomes more and more obvious, and we find our attention waning. But the work shown here might be divided into four important areas of experimentation, as well as a number of peripheral experiments. The effect is total involvement.

Twenty-one or so photographs of water represent Jachna's earliest work in the show. It is, in large measure, work done as a master's thesis at the Institute of Design, Chicago. As overworked as the subject may seem, this group contains a variety of rather fresh approaches. Some are straightforward in their beauty; some draw us nearer and suggest other-than-literal layers of meaning; others are even a little frightening (as Jachna himself has pointed out). Most are obviously and entirely Jachna's.

A group called *Door County Landscapes* are space and perception games played with mirrors and a wide angle lens. These props have enabled Jachna to hold chunks of sky and bits and pieces of his environment in his hands, or to float



JOSEPH JACHNA: CHICAGO, 1970. at the *Friends of Photography, Carmel.*

fragments of hands and fingers in space. Yet they are not so tied to the concept as to exclude as a consideration.

Most of the night work, though three or more years old, has never been shown before. Technically, the images are examinations of light — its limited travelling power, what it seeks out of the void. Aesthetically, they are much more.

Jachna was the recipient of the 1973 Ferguson Grant, a \$1500 award made each year by the Friends of Photography to a young photographer of exceptional talent. The exhibition is intended to show both the work which led to the grant and that which was accomplished during the grant

period. The latter consists mainly of a number of color images. These are an attempt to add a new element to what has been previously explored. Some of the same themes and techniques, especially night and distortion of space, recur, but with what most often is a logical and meaningful use of color.

It seems that the truly important workers in any medium are the ones who produce, who seek out growth. While it is not quite accurate to say that someone who works so incessantly and explores so deeply as Joseph Jachna will necessarily become an important artist, the possibility is at least suggested. □