

The

P H O T O

# REVIEW

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... a knowledge of  
photography is just as  
important as that of  
the alphabet. The  
illiterate of the future  
will be ignorant of the  
use of the camera and  
pen alike.

László Moholy-Nagy  
1936



Eugène Atget  
Versailles — Faune, 1921–22, albumen silver print  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001  
From "Looking at Atget" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art



**Eugène Atget:** *Small Bedroom of a Working-Class Woman, rue de Belleville, 1910.* Matte albumen silver print. Atget negative number 743 (Interiors). (The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001-62-120)

## Looking at Atget

by BARBARA L. MICHAELS

***Atget exceeded his aims, because his knack for finding beauty in everyday, unpretentious scenes has long fueled the imagination of other photographers.***

What would Eugène Atget make of all the attention that curators, critics, and historians have devoted to his photographs? Atget, who photographed in and around Paris from about 1898 until his death in 1927, did not call himself an artist. He meant his pictures to be visual resources for architects, designers, history buffs, painters, and archives — and they were.

Atget called his photographs documents. Today they hang in art museums largely because, in the 1920s, the collector/dealer Julien Levy and the photographer Berenice Abbott understood the originality of Atget's vision. Each bought some pictures directly from him. After Atget died, Levy's financial assistance helped Abbott to rescue about 7,000 photographs and 1,300 glass negatives that remained in his workroom. She brought these to New York, and, through Levy's exhibitions and Abbott's publications, Atget's work became known in the United States.

"Looking at Atget," the exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum, was based on its acquisition of 350 Atgets from Julien Levy's own collection.<sup>1</sup> Levy's Atgets are part of the gift/purchase of his collection of more than 2,000 images, about 200 of which were on view at the Museum from June 17 to September 17, 2006, in "Dreaming in Black-and-White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery." Because Levy's Atgets form a significant, coherent group, they deserved an exhibition of their own. That exhibition and its accompanying catalogue have enhanced our understanding of Atget by contrasting the ways that Atget, Levy, and Abbott approached his work.

In the first part of the exhibition you learned that Atget conceived his pictures, including a group of Parisian interiors from 1910, as saleable documents. You saw the annotated paper album in which he had placed the interior views he sold to major Parisian institutions. Despite its unprepossessing appearance (compared to the leather-bound volume of interiors he created for the Bibliothèque Nationale), the



**Eugène Atget:** *Shop, Les Halles, 1899-1900.* Printed by Berenice Abbott, c. 1930, gelatin silver print, Atget negative number 357 (The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001-62-320)

captions in Atget's album reveal that several images show his own modest apartment, including his workroom and parlor. Captions that Atget wrote for the public versions he sold say that those rooms belonged to a working-class man, a merchant, and a dramatic artist (not far from the truth, since Atget had been an actor and his lifelong companion was an actress).

Whether he was photographing Versailles, Parisian streets, architectural details, or interiors, Atget geared his work to the needs of artists, designers, and archivists. In the exhibition, you saw how a magazine illustrator turned Atget's view of an actress's stylish drawing room into the background of a witty cartoon. In fact, Atget exceeded his aims, because his knack for finding beauty in everyday, unpretentious scenes has long fueled the imagination of other photographers. As I looked at Atget's interiors in Philadelphia, I wondered: Would Walker Evans have created as many poignant photographs of bedrooms had he not seen Atget's examples?



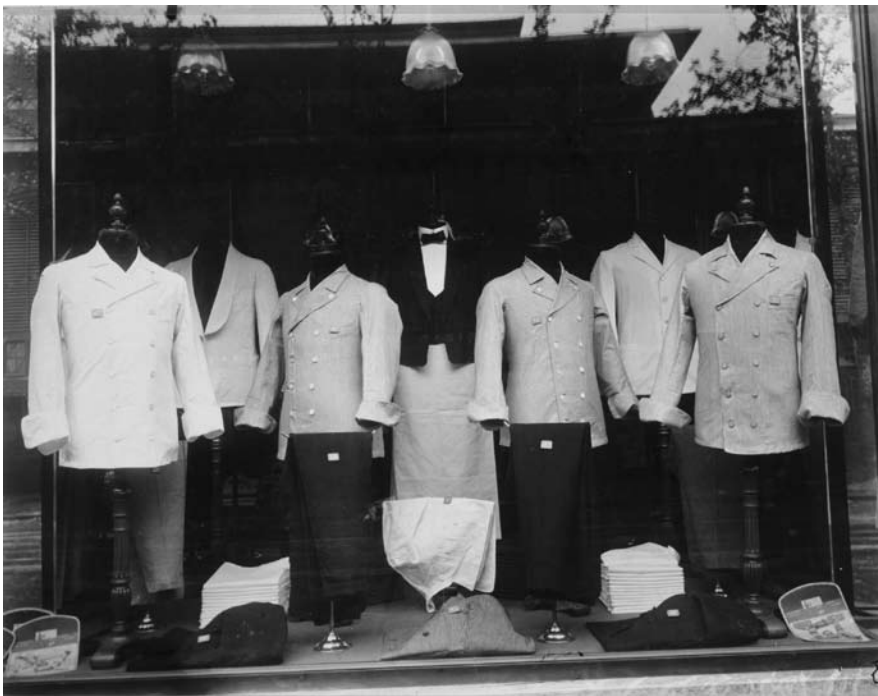
**Berenice Abbott:** *Kosher Chicken Market, 55 Hester Street, gelatin silver print (Gift of E. M. Benson, 1945)*

The central section of the exhibition concerned Abbott's appreciation of Atget and her self-appointed role as custodian of his work. Years ago, in an interview, Abbott told me that, for her, taking care of the Atgets was a responsibility like taking care of an elderly, ailing father. She felt she always needed to be available to show Atget's photographs. The exhibition illustrated how she promoted Atget's work by publishing two books of his photographs and by printing portfolios of photographs from his negatives. Some of her prints were on display alongside original Atgets, demonstrating that Abbott was partial to Atget's shop fronts, carriages, trees, and streetscapes. When Abbott returned to New York she adopted (and adapted) Atget's approach to photographing a city in flux, finding interest in scenes that others might consider too humble or humdrum to record. In the exhibition, her *Kosher Chicken Market, 55 Hester Street*, in New York City was compared to one of Atget's Parisian market scenes.

For Abbott, Atget was a consummate realist. Julien Levy, a devotee of Surrealism, gravitated toward the disquieting elements in Atget's images. The last part of the exhibition showed his preference for Atgets with surreal overtones, such as deserted stairways and headless mannequins in a shop window. Levy favored pictures that defied conventional elegance, like the fuzzy image of a doorway in Rouen (resulting from an accidentally shaken camera), scenes of cluttered rag pickers' quarters, and Atget's unglorified versions of prostitutes and nudes. There were pictures that Levy found personally significant, like two views of the church, St. Julien le Pauvre. As the exhibition's curator, Peter Barberie, writes in the catalogue, "one of the most engaging aspects of Levy's involvement with photography in the 1930s and afterward" was that "he was resolutely undogmatic about what the medium was for."<sup>2</sup>

The scholarly catalogue is a helpful introduction to the Museum's Atget collection and a noteworthy supple-





**Eugène Atget:** *Les Halles*, 1925, gelatin silver chloride print. (Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001)

ment to the Atget literature. Barberie puts new information and insights into a discussion of the Atget bibliography.<sup>3</sup> The catalogue contains more than 125 reproductions in brown and gray tones that are close to, though often redder than, the originals. In a brief essay, Beth A. Price and Ken Sutherland tell how hi-tech methods allowed them to discern just what emulsions and toning Atget and Abbott used.

I would like to add a fourth view of Atget, based on my own discovery of Atget and the pleasure I had in cataloguing and studying his pictures at the Museum of Modern Art between 1973 and 1976. I think that my experience helps to explain why so many people have found Atget's work compelling. It also suggests how far we have come in understanding his pictures and how much effort has gone into the interpretation and recreation of his world. After so many publications about Atget's work, it's hard to realize how primitive was our understanding of his goals around 1970.

I discovered Abbott's prints of Atgets at the Witkin Gallery, soon after it opened in 1969. I had just become interested in photographic history, and, with the critical eye of a modernist

who believed that objects should be true to their materials, I thought that Atget's work was pure photography. His shop front filled with hourglass-shaped corsets delighted me, partly because the blur of lingerie swinging in the doorway showed how cameras could capture the motion of an object over time.

At first I knew only Abbott's prints. Because I had grown up looking at reproductions of photographs in *Fortune*, *Vogue*, and *Life*, the image concerned me more than the print. My study of art history had given me some degree of connoisseurship in the graphic arts — etching, engraving, and lithography — but I was still largely ignorant of historical photographic processes. It was enlightening to discover original Atgets in the 1969–70 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, and to learn that they were brownish and more subtle tonally than most Abbotts. By then I had begun to study photographic history in earnest. I haunted the Museum's photography study room, often looking at boxes of Atgets from that first comprehensive exhibition which had been organized by John Szarkowski, who was then Director of the Photography Department. (His recent death is a loss to

the photography world. We owe him much for his acquisition of the Atget archive, for later making so much of it accessible to the public, and particularly for writing about Atget and other photographers with such perspicacity.)

I was taken by surprise when John asked me to catalogue the Museum's more than four thousand Atget photographs. And so my adventure began. I became one of the privileged few who has had a chance to see virtually all of Atget's photographs.

My job was to invent a system for cataloguing the pictures and then to catalogue them. I began by surveying the photographs that were already partially sorted. Making sense of the uncatalogued Atgets was like doing a gigantic jigsaw puzzle — one in which you had no idea what picture you were assembling. However, a knowledge of French art and architecture and weeks spent in France some years before helped me to find my way.

I thought about the pictures at work and at home. As I was also busy with family matters, I even hoped that, while sleeping, I might have a great insight into a cataloguing scheme! (After all, the chemist Friedrich Kekulé, had grasped the chemical



**Eugène Atget:** *Prostitute on Her Shift in Front of Her Doorway, rue Asselin, La Villette, March 7, 1921*, 1921. Printed by Berenice Abbott, 1921 (negative); c. 1930 (print), gelatin silver print, (Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001).

composition of the benzene ring in a dream.) Eventually, it was clear that the pictures should be identified both by place and by subject, so that a viewer could find, for instance, all the pictures of the Austrian Embassy in Paris or all the pictures of doorknockers. (One goal was to have the catalogue computerized for easy access, but that has not yet been done.) In organizing the pictures I thought not so much of the needs of Atget's clients (whose names and occupations I knew from his "Répertoire" — an address and appointment notebook that had belonged to him and had come to the Museum as part of the Abbott-Levy Atget collection), but the needs of future researchers at the Museum, including architectural and photographic historians.

My greatest pleasure was looking at the pictures. Luckily, my work was also an exercise in connoisseurship. In addition to cataloguing, I sorted out duplicate prints, deciding which should be catalogued for the Museum's collection. Not an easy job: there were often two fine prints of an image. The images themselves were captivating. Who knew that doorknockers could come in so many permutations? What about the variety of stair railings, doorways, courtyards? And what made Atget change his emphasis after World War I, when he made those gorgeous pictures of the parks at St. Cloud and Sceaux, pictures that have greater breadth and formal beauty than the majority of his earlier, more detailed and specific images?

I had come to the project with a love of architecture, and became seduced by Atget's parks and gardens, with their great silhouetted trees, patterned reflections and evocative statuary. Atget's pictures pull you in. They invite imaginative reflection. Sometimes I'd look at his storefronts and think: What vegetables would I have bought from that greengrocer? Don't those cauliflowers look glorious! Other days I'd yearn to discover what was down a narrow street or wish I could enter an alluring antique store.

But eventually his pictures lead you out. Various obligations prevented my continuing Atget research after

my work at the Museum was done, but when I finally got to Paris again, Atget's itineraries became mine. Right off the plane, I dragged two jetlagged boys and a somewhat less weary husband to see what was left of Atget's Ile St. Louis (a lot, it turns out). Later there were trips to the gardens and reflecting ponds at St. Cloud, to Versailles, and Rouen. I followed Atget's path through the fourth and fifth arrondissements of Old Paris, (including St. Julien le Pauvre with its imaginatively carved capitals), and let others follow those explorations by writing a *New York Times* travel article about them.<sup>4</sup>

Looking back, I see that I approached Atget as a modernist, a scholar, and a romantic. How are we to look at Atget today? Clearly there is no single way. Looking at his pictures hard and long for several years, I was never bored. Each of us is bound to find different things to admire. Atget once told Abbott that nobody knew what to photograph.<sup>5</sup> Even as he was earning a living at it, Atget *did* know what and how to photograph, and for those art lovers and photographers who find themselves on his wavelength, his pictures continue to captivate and inspire.

## NOTES

1. The Atgets that had been in Abbott's possession were sold to the Museum of Modern Art in 1968. A large number have been shown in four major exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues written by John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg and published by the Museum of Modern Art. The catalogues are *The Work of Atget: Volume I, Old France* (1981), *Volume II, The Art of Old Paris* (1982), *Volume III, The Ancien Régime* (1983), *Volume IV, Modern Times* (1985).

2. Peter Barberie, with an essay on the photographic materials by Beth A. Price and Ken Sutherland, *Looking at Atget*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2005, p. 95.

3. Barberie is particularly indebted to Molly Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums*,

New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992.

4. Barbara L. Michaels, "Seeing Paris with Atget," *New York Times Travel Section*, October 3, 1982, pp. 10, 27. The article was timed to coincide with the exhibition "The Work of Atget: The Art of Old Paris" at the Museum of Modern Art.

5. Barberie, p. 56, citing Abbott, *The World of Atget*, p. viii.

"Looking at Atget" was exhibited at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from September 10 – November 27, 2005.

## OF RELATED INTEREST

**Dreaming in Black and White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery.** By Katherine Ware and Peter Barberie (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), 336 pages, 324 color illustrations, \$65 hb., \$45 sb.

Julien Levy was ahead of his time in his wide-ranging taste for photographs. Luckily for us, a huge group of photographs that he collected has been acquired by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in part as a gift from Levy's widow, Jean Farley Levy, and with a major contribution from longtime Philadelphia residents and philanthropists Lynne and Harold Honickman. *Dreaming in Black-and-White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery*, which accompanied the Museum's exhibition of the same name, illustrates about 300 photographs from the approximately 2,000 that the Museum received. Two essays do credit to Levy's eclectic eye and his devotion to diversity in photography. Katherine Ware's "Between Dadaism and MoMA-ism at the Julien Levy Gallery," discusses Levy's biography and the varied exhibitions that he held at his New York gallery between 1931 and the 1940s. They included work by Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, Atget, Berenice Abbott, Man Ray, Joseph Cornell, Lee Miller, Charles Sheeler, Paul Strand, other members of the Stieglitz circle, and French classics like Nadar. Peter Barberie's



**Umbo: Uncanny Street I (Unheimliche Strasse I),** 1928, gelatin silver print, 11 5/16"x9" (Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of The Julien Levy Collection, 2001)

"Found Objects, or a History of the Medium, to No Particular End" considers Levy's appreciation of "found treasures, applied commercial work, and ephemeral pictures of every sort." Barberie shows that Levy's penchant for vernacular and offbeat pictures was related to his taste for Surrealism, which had been fostered by his friendship with Marcel Duchamp and his contact with other advocates of Surrealism, including the collector and writer James Thrall Soby.

**New York Changing: Revisiting Berenice Abbott's New York.** By Douglas Levere, with texts by Douglas Levere and Bonnie Yochelson, foreword by Paul Goldberger, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press and Museum of the City of New York, 2005), 192 pages, 170 duotones, \$40 hb.

Between 1997 and 2002 Douglas Levere rephotographed sites from Berenice Abbott's *Changing New York*. He used a camera like hers and placed himself precisely where she had stood.

The resulting book, published in connection with an exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York, reproduces Abbott's and Levere's work

on opposite pages. It allows us to study the vast changes in the city. As Levere writes: "A single photograph gives the illusion that time stops. A re-photograph lifts that illusion. In this tangling of the old and the new, the different and the same, lies the truth that Berenice Abbott understood well. All is flux; change is the only permanence."

Yochelson notes that the city's mood, as well as its architecture, has changed: "Despite the difficulties of the Depression, Abbott's New York evokes the boundless optimism of the 1920s building boom" while "Levere's New York, marred by decades of often indifferent architecture and shaken by the destruction of the World Trade Center is decidedly less heroic: His photographs offer an unsettling critique of modern urban life."

This engrossing book does ample credit to both photographers.

**Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama.** By Carol Ockman and Kenneth E. Silver, (New York: The Jewish Museum and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 232 pages, 122 color illustrations, \$50 sb.

We don't know whether Atget met Sarah Bernhardt, but he might have. Their circles certainly overlapped. Atget's friend, the playwright Victorien Sardou, wrote melodramatic theatrical vehicles for her during a twenty-year collaboration. Another friend, Andre Calmettes, directed the Bernhardt film *La Dame aux Camelias*. As the executor of Atget's estate, he provided Abbott with invaluable biographical information about him.

Coincidences aside, the Bernhardt catalogue is appealing because it presents an array of classic and little-known photographs of this star. These include: three velvety portraits of her as a young girl by Felix Nadar; kitschy cabinet cards (including one by Melandri of her posing in a coffin); a puzzle made of postcards of Sarah Bernhardt in a variety of roles;

and work by Disdéri, Paul Nadar, and Napoleon Sarony. In addition to its excellent texts, the book includes a photographic essay on "Bernhardt in the New World."

Most of the photographs were on loan from the Bibliothèque Nationale, where they are seldom on public display. The book also reproduces wonderful posters by Alphonse Mucha and sculptures by the talented Bernhardt herself.

**Paris Changing: Revisiting Eugène Atget's Paris.** By Christopher Rauschenberg, with essays by Clark Worswick, Alison Nordström, Rosamond Bernier, and Christopher Rauschenberg, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 192 pages, 172 illustrations, \$40 hb.

Christopher Rauschenberg was so smitten with Atget's photographs that, during three trips to Paris in 1997 and 1998, he rephotographed 500 of Atget's sites, using Atgets in French collections as his guides.

This book, produced in connection with an exhibition organized by George Eastman House, pairs 75 Rauschenbergs with Atgets. It also reproduces pictures Rauschenberg says he took "in Atget's shoes." These reflect a close understanding of Atget's eye and sensibility, yet have a whimsical flavor of their own. As Allison Nordström notes, Rauschenberg's rephotographic project is atypical. Most photographers redo a scene to emphasize time's changes; Rauschenberg fascinates by finding spots that a century has scarcely touched.

In size and format *Paris Changing* is a companion to *New York Changing*, but its texts are neither as pertinent nor as stimulating. Clark Worswick rehashes recent Atget scholarship, but overlooks Julien Levy's role in popularizing Atget in the United States. Rosamond Bernier's reminiscence of mid-twentieth century Paris serves neither Atget nor Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg's work is beautiful on its own and engrossing in tandem with the Atgets. Rauschenberg writes soundly about his own work, but his project deserves more astute analysis than this book provides. ■

## Facing Sculpture

### Ricardo Barros

by NANCY BROKAW

The tale of how Ricardo Barros came to photograph sculptors is one of serendipity. A freelance photographer, Barros was commissioned in 1992 by Grounds for Sculpture, a sculpture garden and museum in Hamilton, New Jersey, to make catalogue portraits of some of the sculptors exhibiting there.

But the pictures he made went beyond the usual PR shots: a brooding Isaac Witkin, posed outside, under a stormy sky, before several of his pieces; the redoubtable Marisol next to her "anti-monument" of the Venezuelan dictator General Juan Gomez; an elegantly insouciant Magdalena Abakanowicz in what was essentially

a grab shot taken on the grounds of the sculpture park.

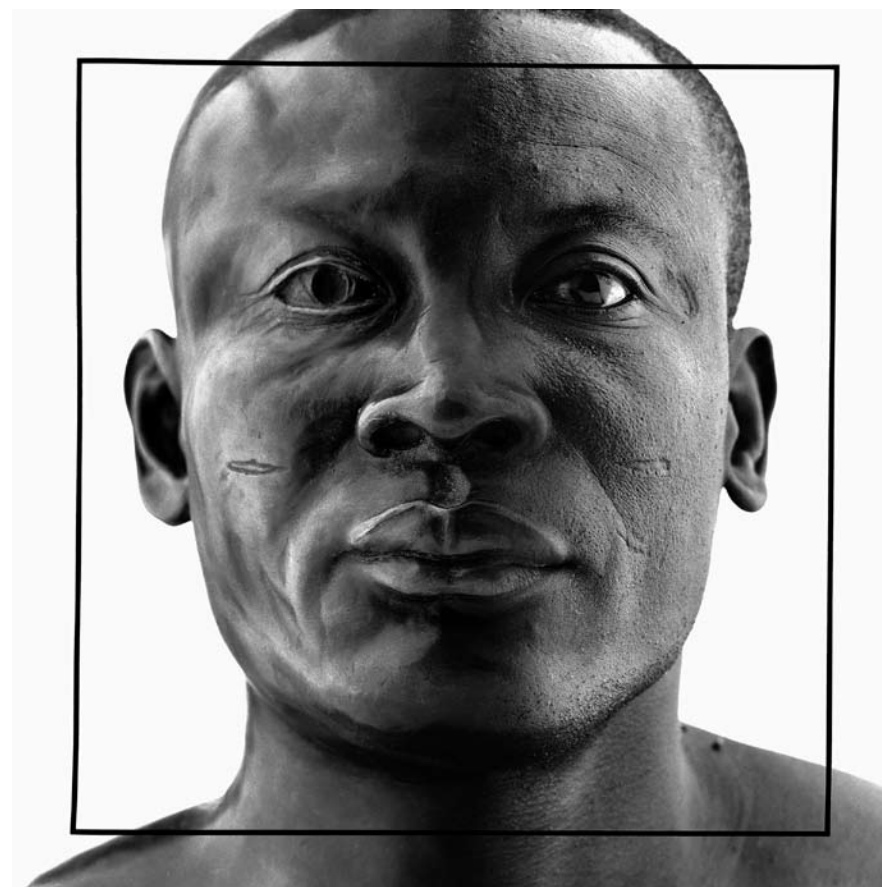
The more Barros hung around Grounds for Sculpture, the more intrigued he became with the people who made the work it displayed. That interest got a kick start in 1997 when GFS Curator Brooke Barrie invited him to exhibit his portraits of sculptors at the museum. Barros jumped at the offer. The only problem was that he had less than a handful of images to show.

Ricardo Barros had to get down to work.

#### Form or Content?

Very little that had come before in his photographic output could anticipate the portraits he ended up making — selections of which appear in his book *Facing Sculpture: A Portfolio of Portraits, Sculpture and Related Ideas*. His first serious pictures, starting in the late 1970s, were landscapes, a subject he would return to again and again. He followed up with two documentary projects — one an exquisite series of still lifes inside an old-time machine shop slated for demolition in 1982 and the other a social documentary of small-town life in Lambertville, New Jersey, also in the 1980s. In rapid succession, he produced a still life series of domestic scenes taken in his house and a suite of figure studies of family and friends. By the late 1980s, Barros was alternating between the landscape and the human figure — but always with the exacting eye of a formalist.

Look closely at an image like *Canyonlands Floor (Where's Bruce?)*, *Utah*, 1993 or *Nude, Folded Leg*, 1987, and you can discern the same guiding sensibility, one fascinated by the action of light, concerned with form and line, and tending toward ab-



**Ricardo Barros: Joseph Acquah, Half-Bronze**



*Canyonlands Floor*

straction. Every now and again, a picture that conveys personality sneaks in; an individual face and character or an identifiable place leaps out. But for the most part, Barros favored the formal qualities of his medium — more its visual qualities than its descriptive ones.

That predilection makes the strategy Barros adopted for the sculptors series all the more notable. Not that long ago, his principal concern lay primarily with the art of photography, or, as he once explained, “I wanted people to look at the pictures and care about the pictures.” But as he set about making his sculptor portraits, he found himself compelled less by the idea of the picture than by the person before his lens.

A typical sitting for Barros takes just four hours. Most times, he doesn’t know the sculptor he’s about to photograph and he may not be familiar with the artist’s work. He arrives at his subject’s doorstep, camera and equipment in tow, and sits down for a cup of coffee and a get-to-know-you conversation. And he looks, searching for connections between the artist he’s just met and his or her work, trying to capture the particular spirit of both.

At its best, conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking: it is what happens between people, each stopping to hear — and absorb — what the other has to say.

The making of a portrait can be just such a transaction — a mute conversation, the picture left behind the visible evidence of what transpired between the two participants. Describing his process, Barros explains, “I don’t want to photograph [my subjects] all in exactly the same way. I look for something in them and in their environment that relates to their work and that I can relate to visually.”

### **I’m Not Collecting Specimens**

As you might expect of a series of artist portraits, many of Barros’s pictures refer directly to the artist’s work — although rarely through the time-honored device of posing the subject in front of a finished piece. Many of these bring to mind the work of legendary photographer Arnold Newman, whose considerable body of work



*Isaac Witkin*

included a raft of celebrity portraits of artists. Confronted with artists as disparate as Tony Smith and Lucas Samaras, Barnett Newman, and Francis Bacon, Newman constructed images that called into play the sensibilities of each particular subject.

Likewise, Barros incorporates into many of his portraits the visual ideas that consume his subjects. When he photographs Jonathan Shahn, who encloses his plaster busts inside claustrophobia-inducing plaster boxes, Barros pictures him in his studio, metaphorically boxed in by his own creations. In certain chameleon images, Barros pushes Newman’s notion even further, constructing portraits that break with conventional photographic form and seem to grow organically from the subject’s own work. Thus, the scribbled line drawing portrait of Niki Ketchman mimics her own use of line to describe three-dimensional space and the portrait of Joseph Acquah is a merging of the artist’s face and a bronze self-portrait.

But Barros doesn’t limit himself to a singular, predetermined technique. Or, as he puts it, “I’m not trying to collect specimens.” Rather than producing a portfolio with a uniform look, he lets each image “go where it needs to go.”

So there’s no hard-and-fast rule that each image must refer directly to the artist’s work. Some images, like

that of the formidable Luis Jimenez, are pure portraiture — nothing more than a man’s face, weathered by time and care, staring out at you. Others stray into the psychological realm: the four-panel portrait of Sydney Blum first shows her standing in a lush landscape, back to camera; in the next frame, she moves slightly closer, her head still averted. Shifting to an interior space, the final frames catch her in close-up, but her gaze remains off camera. The effect is disquieting: the first panels trace her wandering, untethered, through the landscape while in the final ones she’s lost in introspection, hardly aware of the camera’s presence. Somehow in its pacing and framing, this extended portrait echoes perfectly the tone of Blum’s art, recreating the quality of grief that so interests her.

Elsewhere Barros leads you into the land of fairy tale. In one fabulist shot, a man stands in a barren, snow-covered field. Back to the camera, he looks out at a shining city that rises

before him. He has paused in the snow to contemplate the great towers that beckon him on. Slung over his shoulder, peering out at the viewer, is a gnomish figure. The image depicts sculptor Vladimir Kanevsky carrying one of his whimsical figurative pieces as he stands in a snowbound Liberty Park, just across from lower Manhattan and the World Trade Towers.

### **The Heart of the Matter**

And then there is the image of Martha Posner. An expressionist tour de force, this picture depicts the artist, cast into shadow and engulfed by seeming flames. She watches over an indecipherable object she holds in her hands, while streaks the color of dried blood course down the page from her outstretched arms. With so much of the image obscured, your gaze is drawn to her face, calm and self-possessed, attentive only to her mysterious charge.

Like the story of the series itself, the tale behind this particular image



*Martha Posner (original in color)*

— one that seems to have become emblematic to Barros — is one of happenstance.

In their first session, Barros made a sensitive portrait: gazing out at the viewer, a thoroughly self-possessed Posner is bathed in an exquisite, late-afternoon light. Portrait in hand, Barros lingered to browse through Posner’s watercolors. Struck by one in particular in which color — a brilliant red — bled down and off the page, he was dumbfounded to hear that she had achieved the effect by holding a finished painting under a running tap. Unperturbed at the idea of losing what she had, she had gambled “on the chance that [she] could make it better.”

As Barros writes, “At that moment, Martha raised my standards for artistic integrity.” Convinced that the portrait he had just made was too safe, he asked for another sitting. The second time around, he shot Posner at work, sticking feathers into the wax skin of a new piece, and when he got into the darkroom, he used a destructive bleach and redevelopment technique that, in itself, is difficult to control. Then he upped the ante by dabbing the print, held nearly vertical, with a developer-saturated paper towel. Like the running water that streaked Posner’s watercolor, developer ran down the surface of the print in unpredictable streaks.

To one way of looking, the final image — a burst of color in a largely black-and-white realm — is anomalous, completely unrelated to the images that come before and after it. To another, it is the heart of the matter: a high-stakes image — the action of the bleach and developer is virtually uncontrollable — made in wholehearted response to an encounter between two artists.

### **Facing Sculpture: A Portfolio of Portraits, Sculpture, and Related Ideas.**

By Ricardo Barros, Introduction by Nick Capasso (Image Spring Press, 2004), 168 pages, 150 duotone and four-color reproductions, \$45 hb. + s&h, available at [www.ricardobarros.com](http://www.ricardobarros.com). ■



# Interview: Wendel White

by LYNN KEYSER

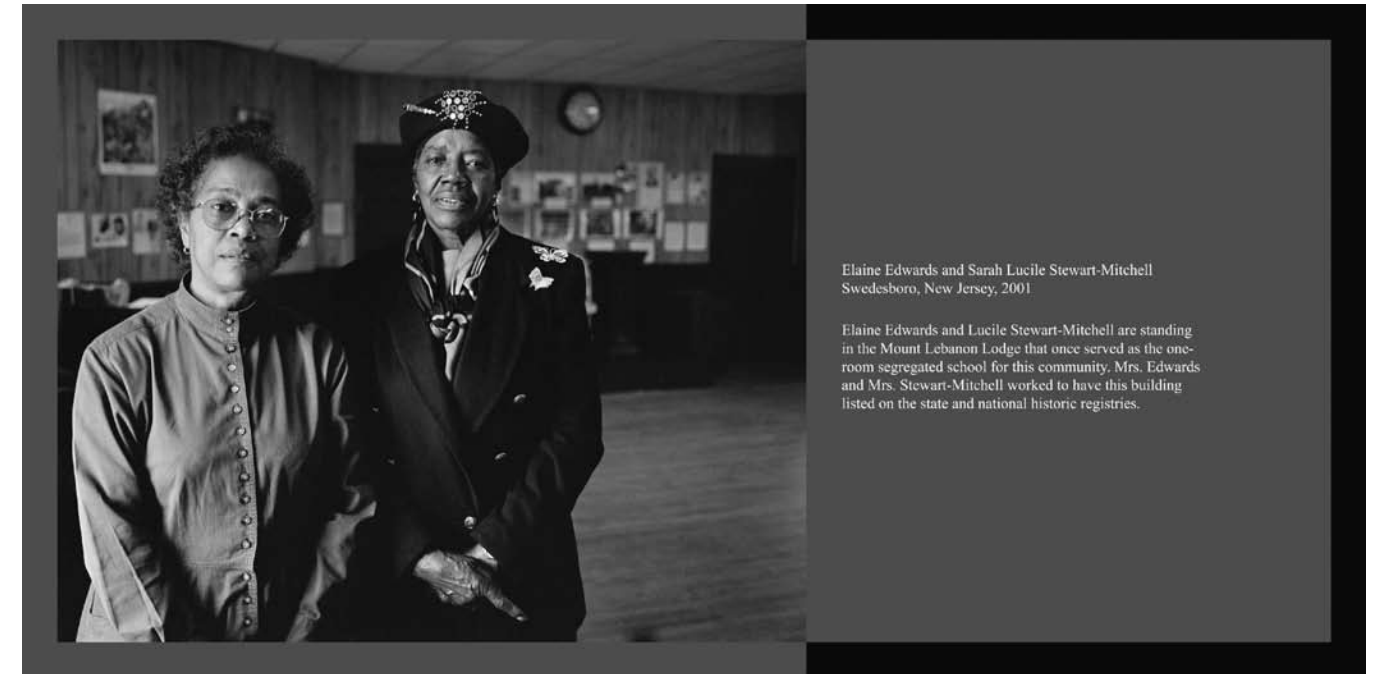
**T**hirteen years in the making, Wendel A. White's "Small Towns, Black Lives: African American Communities in Southern New Jersey" documents unique communities, some of which are more than 200 years old. White photographed the descendants of some of the original townspeople and listened to their stories. His black-and-white images are poignant, his oral histories, fascinating. White took his first photographs for the project in Whitesboro, a town founded by former slaves from North Carolina who wanted to escape the oppression of the post-Reconstruction south. But the photographer soon discovered there was more than "meets the eye." What began as a pictorial essay of the African-American experience in the late 19th century became a personal journey of discovery. White, a professor of art at Stockton College of New Jersey, has recently received a Guggenheim Fellowship.

**Lynn Keyser:** What prompted "Small Towns?"

**Wendel White:** A friend of mine told me about a small, black community, Whitesboro, where she spent summers as a child. It took me two years to get around to visiting it. That was in 1989. My first conversation was with Rev. George Thompson of the First Baptist Church. Our discussion led to contacts throughout Whitesboro, and I began making photographs inside homes and businesses.

**LK:** What other communities did you visit?

**WW:** Port Republic, Morris Beach, Newtonville, and Adat Beyt Mosheh in Atlantic County; Chesilhurst and Lawnside in Camden County; Small Gloucester and Elsmere in Gloucester County; and Springton and Gouldtown in Cumberland County.



Elaine Edwards and Sarah Lucile Stewart-Mitchell  
Swedesboro, New Jersey, 2001

Elaine Edwards and Lucile Stewart-Mitchell are standing in the Mount Lebanon Lodge that once served as the one-room segregated school for this community. Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Stewart-Mitchell worked to have this building listed on the state and national historic registries.

*[T]he photographer soon discovered there was more than "meets the eye." What began as a pictorial essay of the African-American experience in the late 19th century became a personal journey of discovery.*

**LK:** What kind of camera do you use?

**WW:** My two primary cameras are a digital camera, the Canon 1DS, and my film camera is a 4"x5" Horseman. Throughout the project and over the years, I used a Wista, which is a 4"x5" wooden camera. I used that for a lot of the pictures that are reproduced in the book. I've used medium format cameras quite a bit, and a lot of the images reproduced in the exhibition catalogue are medium format.

**LK:** Do you always shoot black-and-white?

**WW:** For this project. I certainly work in color. I've had a project that's extended over 20 or so years of landscape photographs, and they started in black-and-white, but then as I began to work on the computer, I began to use color more and more because I really had the opportunity to control color on a computer in a way that interested me. In this project, I have experimented with images in color. They just haven't taken hold. But I haven't closed the door on the possibility that at some point this "Small Towns" project could be in color. They're in black-and-white because that's what works for me right now.

**LK:** Can we talk about some of your images. One of the ones that struck me was of three women in a funeral home.

**WW:** I knew at one point in the project, I wanted to pay attention to certain aspects of culture in the community. The idea of black entrepreneurship was what prompted my contacting the funeral home. The youngest woman in the photograph, who was an apprentice funeral director, will be the sixth generation in the family to become a funeral director. I didn't know the three of them were coming. So a lot of it was a spur of the moment engagement.

**LK:** Do you ever take a photo, taking something you think you're seeing at the time, and then after it comes out, you have something different?

**WW:** Oh yes, I think that's a common experience.

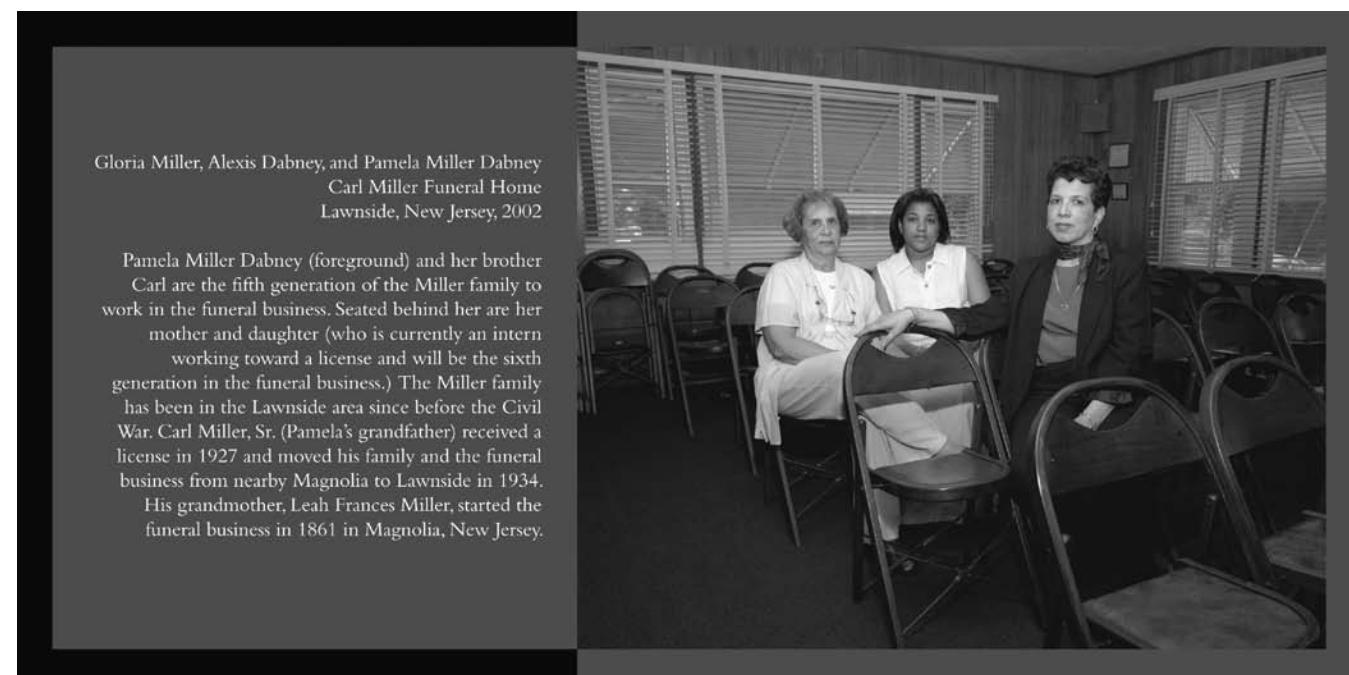
**LK:** Did that ever happen during this series?

**WW:** I would say one of the more remarkable ones is the portrait of Elaine Edwards and Lucile Stewart-Mitchell. We were in the Richardson Avenue School [in Swedesboro]. I had met

them that day just to interview them because I needed some extra background information about the school. I had photographed the building and I had photographed events there. I had only my camera with me. I didn't have a light or anything like that. I just thought I'd like to do a photograph of them inside the school. We moved some stuff away from the window to get a little more light coming through. I didn't have a tripod with me. The shutter speed was rather slow. The negative was underexposed. All of those kinds of things. But the result is a photograph I feel is one of the more engaging. But at the time I took it, I had very low expectations for the outcome.

**LK:** Another one I was very touched by was of an elderly gentleman sitting on a couch.

**WW:** Oh yes, Paul Reynolds. The powerful thing there was the way in which he talked. He told me this really touching story about his wife and how she had died, and she was buried on the day of their 51st wedding anniversary. He sat on the couch and he put his arm on the couch as if he was putting his arm around someone who was there.



Gloria Miller, Alexis Dabney, and Pamela Miller Dabney  
Carl Miller Funeral Home  
Lawnside, New Jersey, 2002

Pamela Miller Dabney (foreground) and her brother Carl are the fifth generation of the Miller family to work in the funeral business. Seated behind her are her mother and daughter (who is currently an intern working toward a license and will be the sixth generation in the funeral business.) The Miller family has been in the Lawnside area since before the Civil War. Carl Miller, Sr. (Pamela's grandfather) received a license in 1927 and moved his family and the funeral business from nearby Magnolia to Lawnside in 1934. His grandmother, Leah Frances Miller, started the funeral business in 1861 in Magnolia, New Jersey.



Paul Reynolds  
President, Male-Tones Gospel Singers  
Whitesboro, New Jersey, 1989

Paul Reynolds moved to Whitesboro in 1965 with his wife, Mary Ruth. Mrs. Reynolds died in 1984; her funeral was on the day of their fifty-first anniversary.



Fredric Minus  
Mount Zion A.M.E. Church  
Small Gloucester, New Jersey, 2001

After the ceremony re-dedicating the Mount Zion cemetery, Fredric Minus discusses the role of black soldiers during the Civil War.

**LK:** Did you notice that before or after?

**WW:** After. And I noticed it a lot after. It really only became poignant to me when I realized I had two or three photographs of people, widowed, who did exactly the same thing.

**LK:** I can understand people, but how to you evoke a feeling from a building?

**WW:** It has something to do with the place — to photograph it in such a way as there's a sense of the human presence even though there is no one in the photograph. As we move into

the 21st century, I think we're seeing the disappearance of the 19th century, in a real palpable sense, in America. There's still a sense of what it was like to have lived in the 19th century. But there's just a little of that presence left, and that's one of the things that interests me.

**LK:** Do you find one era more interesting than another to record through photographs?

**WW:** Not really. But for me, obviously, for black Americans, the 19th century is the dividing point between the more formalized version of slavery and the Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction, and the hope that was there in the Reconstruction era and how that gives way gradually to Jim Crow and segregation. There's a fascinating evolution, I think, that takes place.

**LK:** Any favorites in the "Small Towns" project?

**WW:** There's a dugout house in Newtonville. And, to me, there's something just remarkable about that way of living life. The idea of creating a hole in the ground and building your basement and putting a roof on your basement and saying, "Okay, I'm going to live underground."

**LK:** Any others?

**WW:** I'm very satisfied with most of the portraits. I'm always drawn to one of the early portraits of three girls who are sort of sitting and facing me and that was at a homecoming reunion in

Whitesboro. There's something about their directness and their willingness to allow me to photograph them without putting on false faces. I'm always drawn to that photograph. And, there's a photograph of a gentleman who was a historical interpreter doing a rededication of a Civil War cemetery. We were sitting in the basement of the church just having something to eat afterwards, and he was talking. There was just something about that moment. His appearance. His wearing his Civil War uniform. The way in which the elements came together said something to me, not just about what I was doing, but how others were interested and engaged in the notion of the history of the black community.

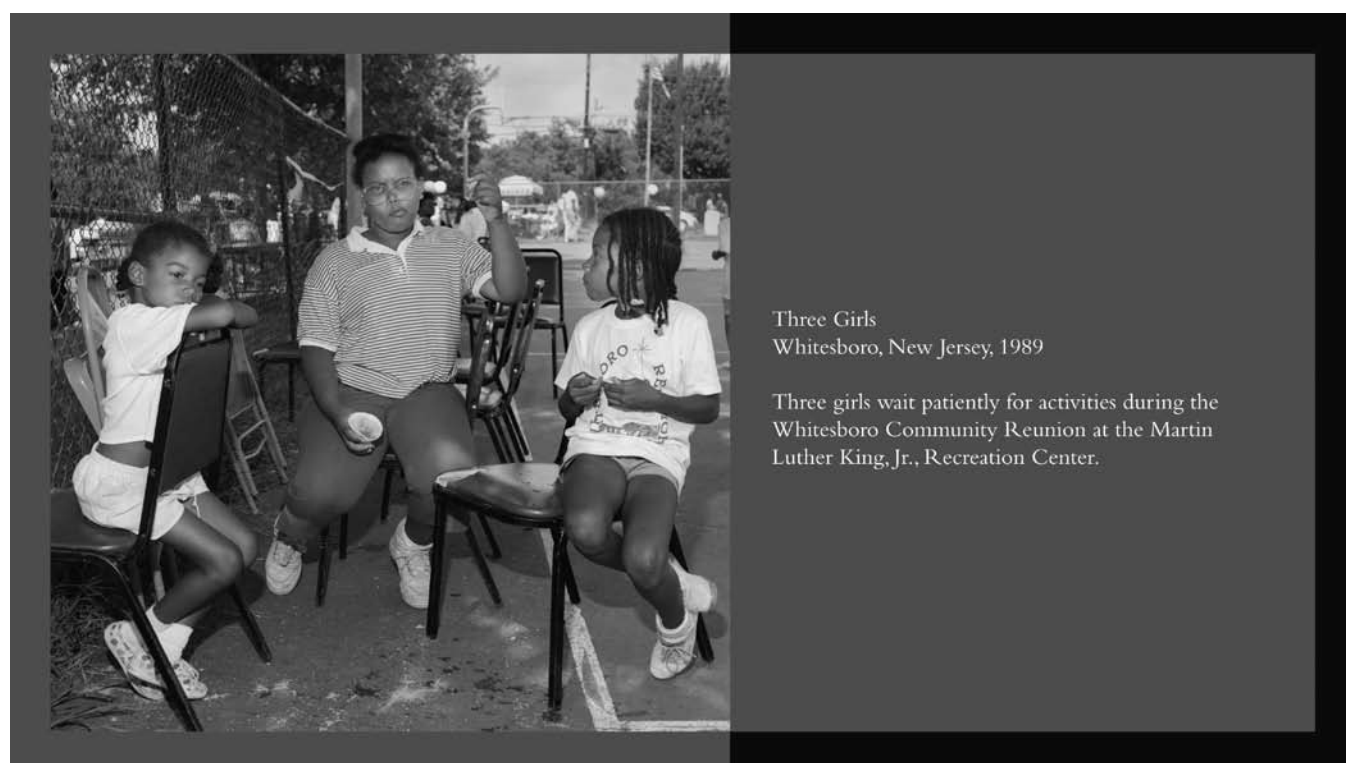
**Small Towns, Black Lives: African American Communities in Southern New Jersey.** By Wendel A. White, essays by Deborah Willis, Stedman Graham, and Clement Alexander Price, (Oceanville, NJ: Noyes Museum of Art), \$45 hb. The book is available from Amazon, Photoeye, and the Noyes Museum.

The exhibition was curated by Charles Ashley Stainback and is on loan from the Noyes Museum in Oceanville, N.J. A portion of the exhibition was on display at The Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts in Cape

May, NJ, January 13 to May 13, 2007. Before that it was seen at the Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ, February 6, 2006 to April 1, 2006; Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, September 2 to October 21, 2005; the Atwater Kent Museum, Philadelphia, PA, January 15 to April 25, 2005; the Morris Museum, Morristown, NJ, September 16 to November 23, 2003; Johnson and Johnson, New Brunswick, NJ, May 23 to July 15, 2003; and at the Noyes Museum of Art, January 18 to April 27, 2003.

In 2005 White received a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Study in the Fine Arts to support a project called "Schools for the Colored." This project is an outgrowth of "Small Towns Black Lives." It includes photographs of buildings and sites that were segregated schools before Brown v. Board of Education in the southern portion of the northern states (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois) between the Atlantic and the Mississippi. The portfolio also includes portraits of former students of the schools. White also recently received a 2009 New Jersey Council for the Arts Fellowship.

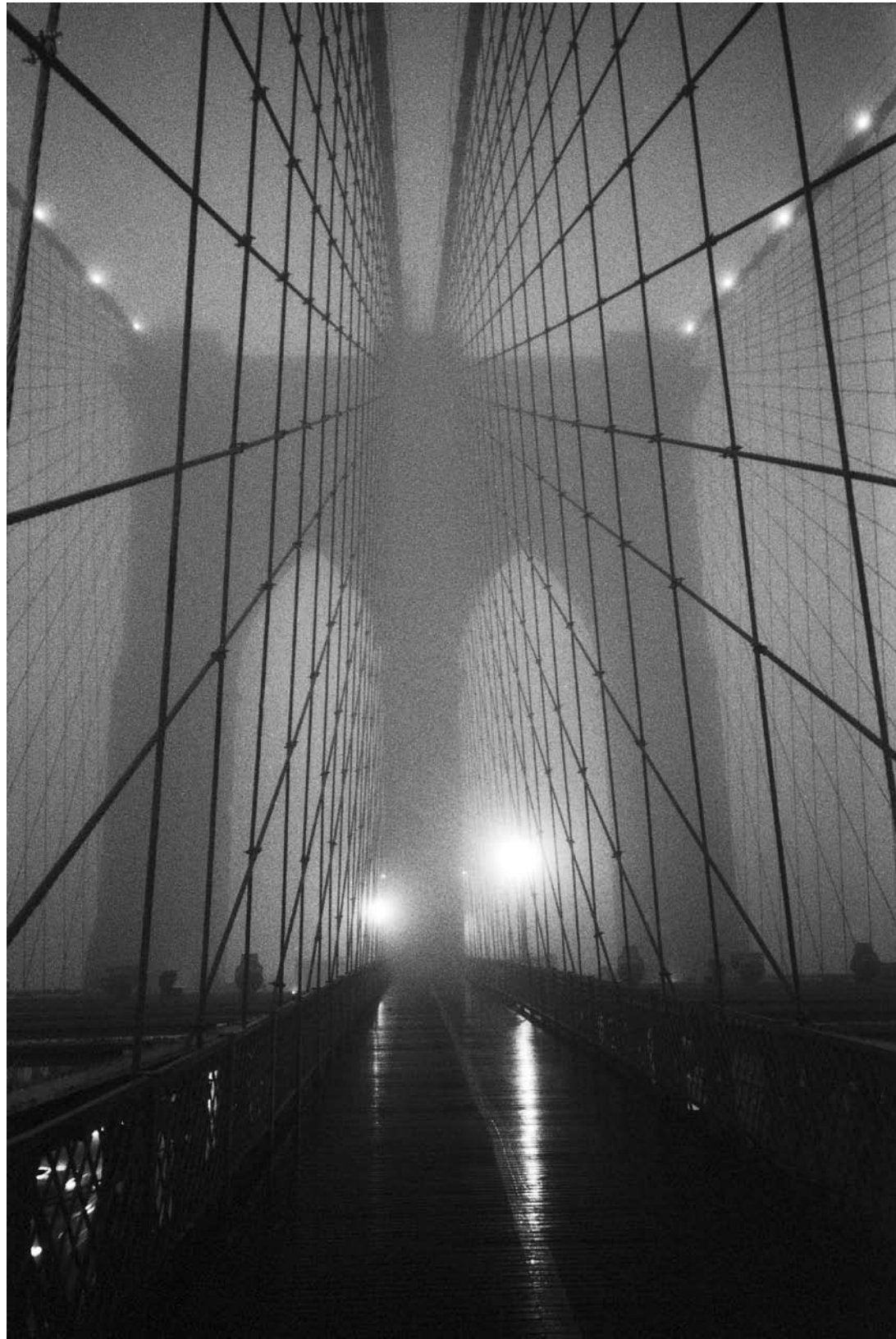
*Lynn Keyser is a freelance writer from Ocean City, N.J. She can be reached at [lynnkeyser@yahoo.com](mailto:lynnkeyser@yahoo.com). ■*



Three Girls  
Whitesboro, New Jersey, 1989

Three girls wait patiently for activities during the Whitesboro Community Reunion at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Recreation Center.

## Lynn Saville: Bridges



O harp and altar, of the fury fused,  
 (How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)  
 Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,  
 Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry—  
 — Hart Crane, from *The Bridge*

As Hart Crane knew, a bridge is more than a way to cross land or water, more even than a “wonder” of engineering. Every physical crossing we make is equally a spiritual crossing. A bridge is a wing.

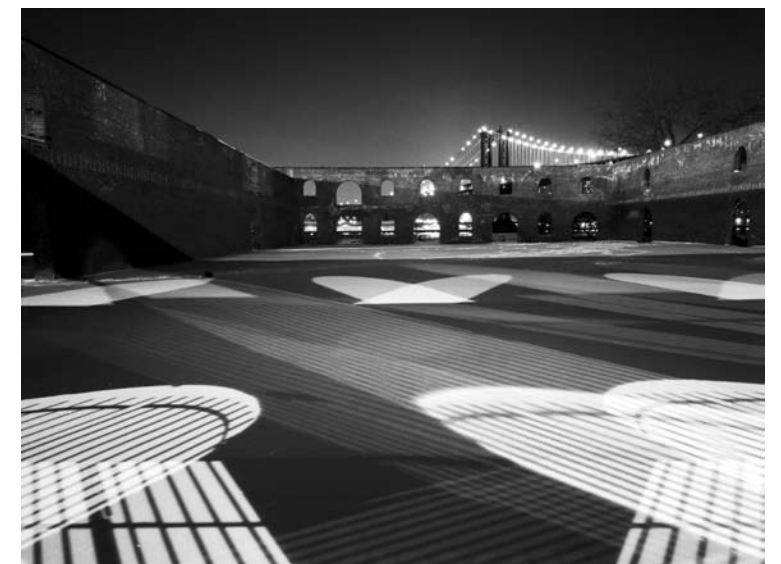
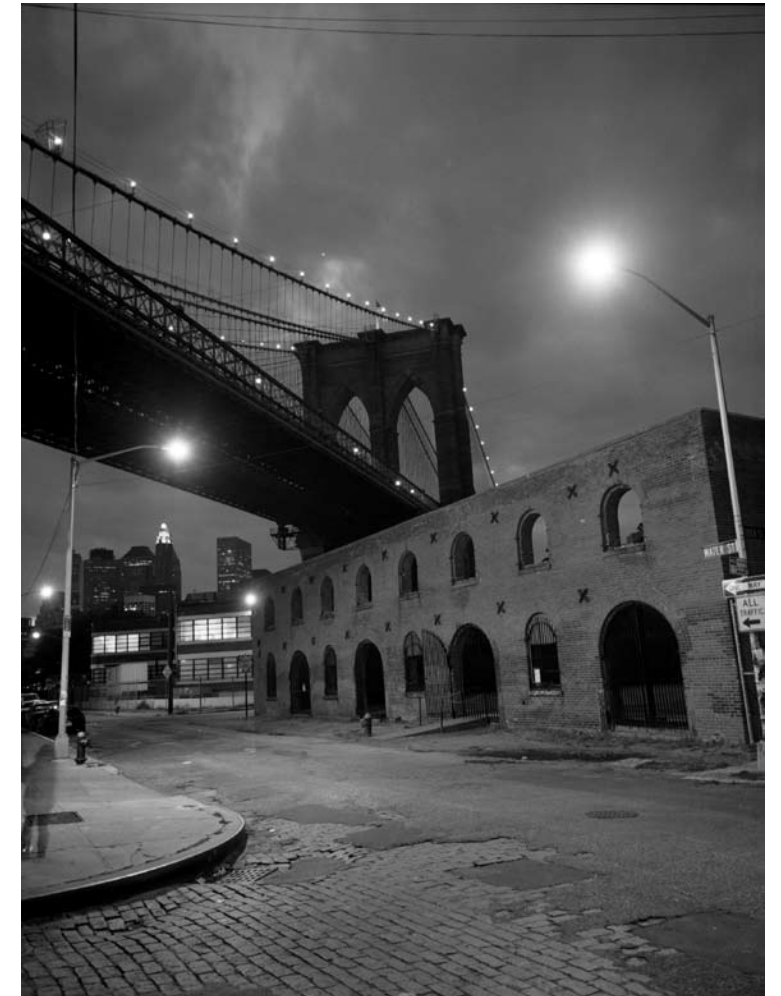
Children sense this as they travel by car or bus on family trips. I did, riding in my family's car across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge on the way to New York. Far below, the water glinted in the sun, while the bridge's tower was bearing us upward into the clouds. We were launched at the North, a new world.

Today, as a grown-up child and a photographer, I love to explore bridges from every angle and perspective. Traveling under a bridge in a boat is especially thrilling. As we approach, the curved metal quickly enlarges to an almost threatening mass. We enter the darkness beneath flight, where a lattice-like open network of struts is somehow part of this mass, where something anchored and towering upward is also constantly carried away on the moving water.

I also like to view bridges from a perspective high above them. Seen from the Eiffel Tower, the Pont d'Iena is a series of differentiated bands, stopped cars and speeding cars, stasis and motion simultaneously.

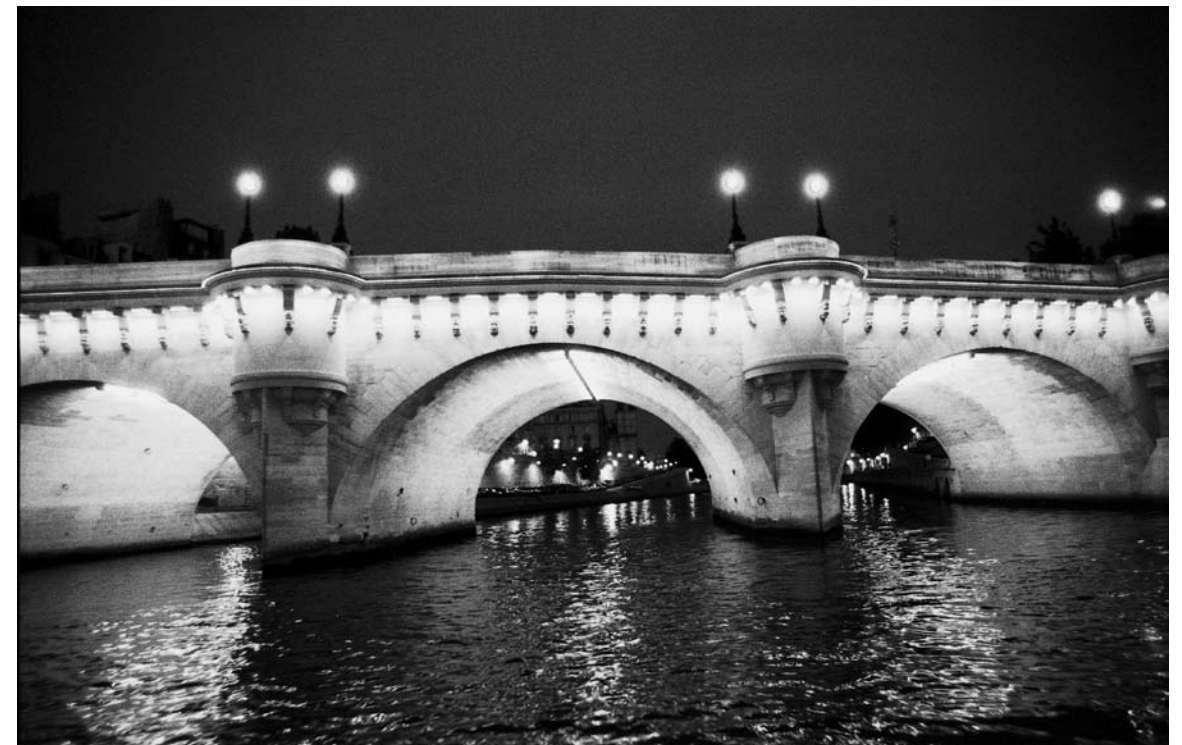
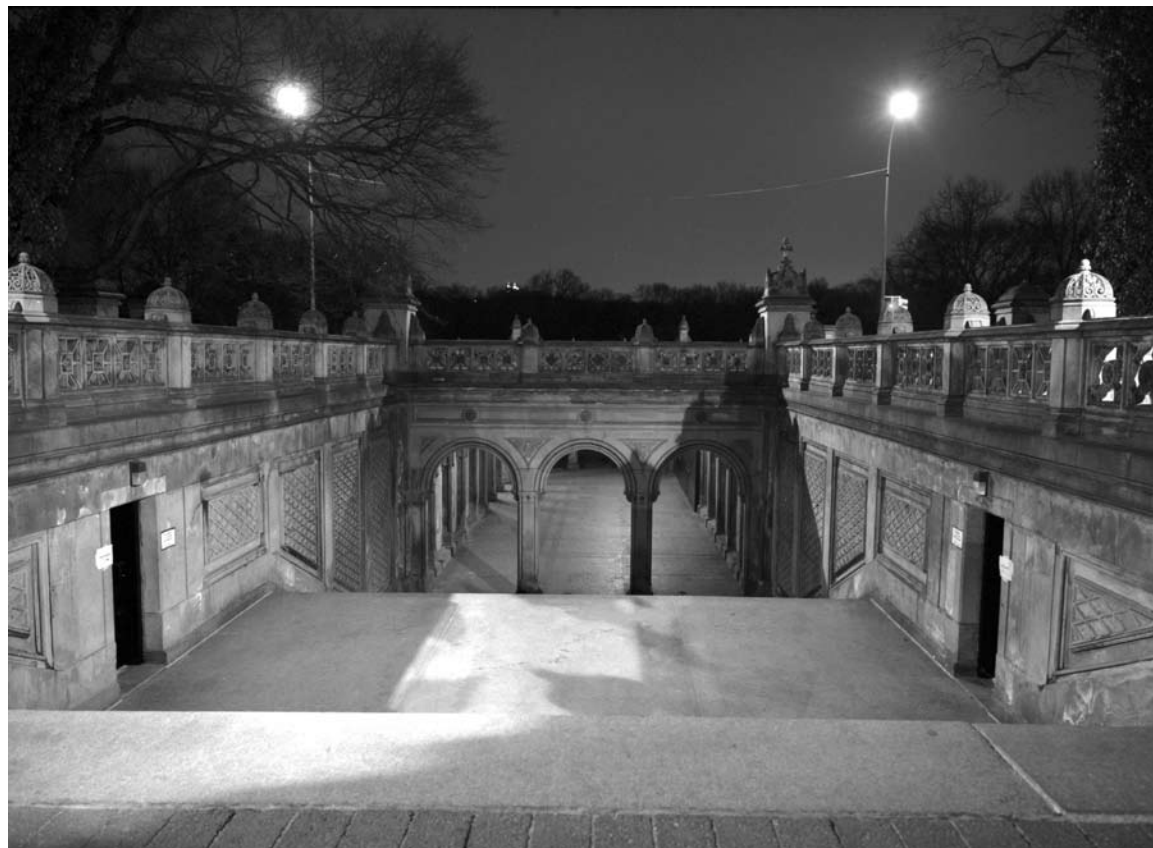
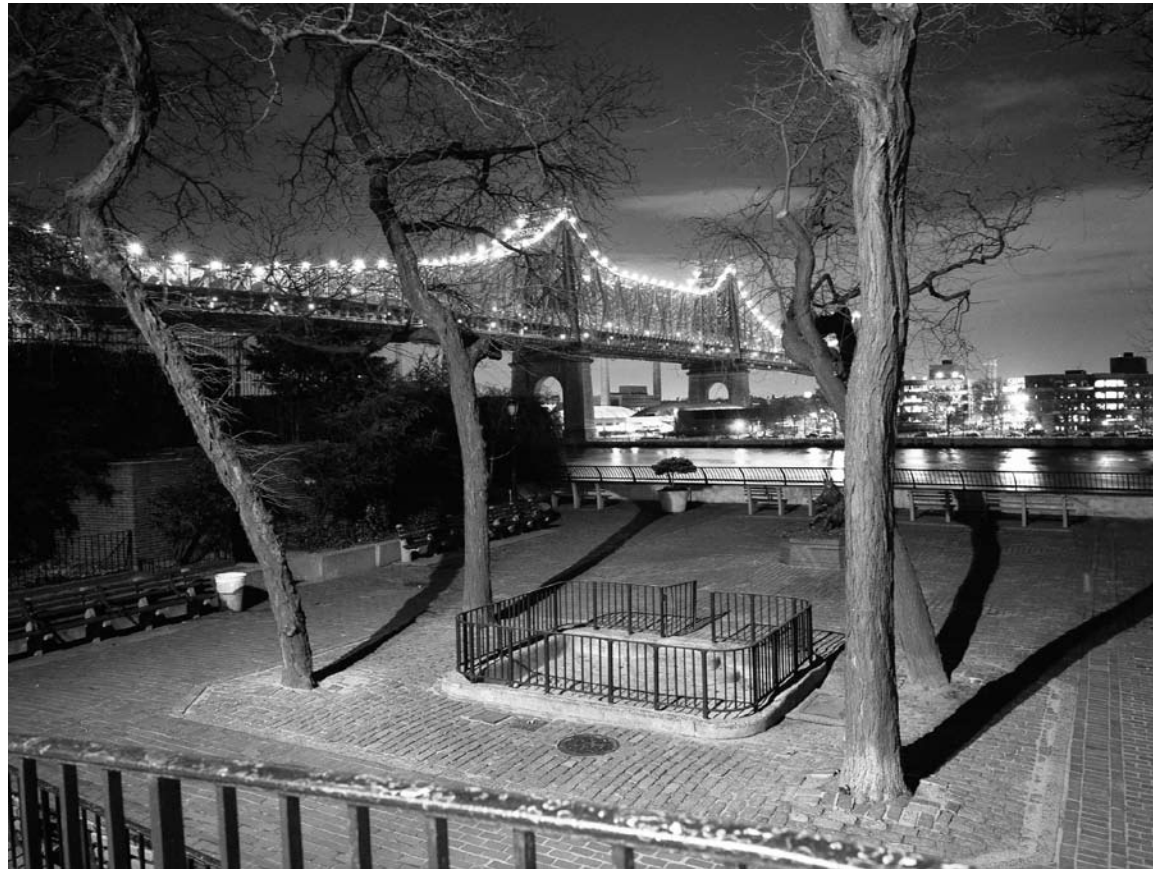
Viewed from just below the “harp” of cables, or at a greater distance, from the open spaces of a roofless tobacco warehouse, or through the “dancing” trunks of trees, bridges remain an inexhaustible source of wonder — a crossing from childhood into the world, and back.

Lynn Saville



Opposite Page: *Brooklyn Bridge in Fog*  
 Above: *Brooklyn Bridge from Front Street*  
 Below: *Fulton Landing Warehouse*





Opposite Page Above: *Sutton Place*  
 Opposite Page Below: *The Terrace Bridge*  
 Above: *Pont d'Iena*  
 Below: *Pont Neuf*

# Charles Sheeler: Across Media

by BLAKE GOPNIK

Every last move an artist makes — every last move — has social and political implications. Draw a female nude and you're not just depicting an attractive chunk of biomass. You're invoking the entire history of gender politics, and how that has panned out in art. Choose to paint in watercolor, and you're not just working in a pretty medium. You're calling to mind a whole bunch of associations that wa-

tercolor has with decorous gentility. You can fight those associations; your work might even manage to shout them. But you can't pretend such social realities, or your struggle against them, simply aren't present in your art.

This notion had special traction in "Charles Sheeler: Across Media," an interesting exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington, DC. It showed one of this country's leading artists working in photography, film, drawing and painting, sometimes rendering precisely the same image in each medium. And it showed how much social baggage each one had, and has.

A master of the pen, brush and camera, American modernist Charles Sheeler has been the subject of many art exhibitions. But "Charles Sheeler: Across Media" was the first to explore the connections between the artist's work in all art forms.

Until relatively recently, Sheeler was best known as a painter, one of the leaders of the precisionist school that held sway in American art between the two world wars. But for a couple of decades now, as painting has lost its lofty place as the artistic medium, he has mattered more as a pioneer of photographic modernism.

A photo such as his *Criss-Crossed Conveyors*, shot in 1927 at Ford Motor Company's 1,100-acre River Rouge plant, is a great work of 20th-century art — more significant, in the long run, than any Sheeler oil. It shows how photography, the signature medium of modern life, could apply the abstract principles and complexities of radical modernist painting — all asymmetry, diagonals and freakish spatial games — to some of reality's grittiest subjects. The modern world itself could be a source of modern forms; they didn't have to be abstracted out of it in paint.

Earlier Sheeler photographs are almost as important and innovative.



**Left:** Doylestown House—*The Stove*, 1917, gelatin silver print (National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund); **Right:** *Interior with Stove*, 1932, conté crayon on wove paper (National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift [Partial and Promised] of Aaron I. Fleischman, 2000)

By 1917, when he was 34, Sheeler had produced a series of photographs of the spare interior of a small white-washed Quaker house in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Alfred Stieglitz, the great photographer, art dealer and photographic publisher, championed — and exhibited — these pared-down images as part of a bold new push toward valuing straight photography as art. Artistic photography didn't have to try to look and feel like mushy, romantic painting (the pictorialist option that Stieglitz himself had once promoted). It could celebrate the directness, precision and completeness that was a special trademark of the photographic view.

Though Sheeler's Doylestown interiors are carefully staged and lit, they're piggybacking on the fact that photography, unlike other forms of art, can also pretend simply to document the world.

The most famous Doylestown photo, called *The Stove*, is certainly

a masterly example of modern composition, with its contrasting planes of white and gray, and its stove as a looming stripe of black that cuts the picture right in half. But it also is full of incidental details — dirt around a door handle, cracks in the wood floor, a mucky pan under the stove — that push against its artifice-filled paring down. That tension between document and art is one thing that makes a Sheeler photo great.

Sheeler's only movie, called *Manhatta*, has some of those same qualities. He made it in 1920, in collaboration with Paul Strand, another of Stieglitz's stable of straight photographers. It is said to be the first self-consciously avant-garde film made in the United States.

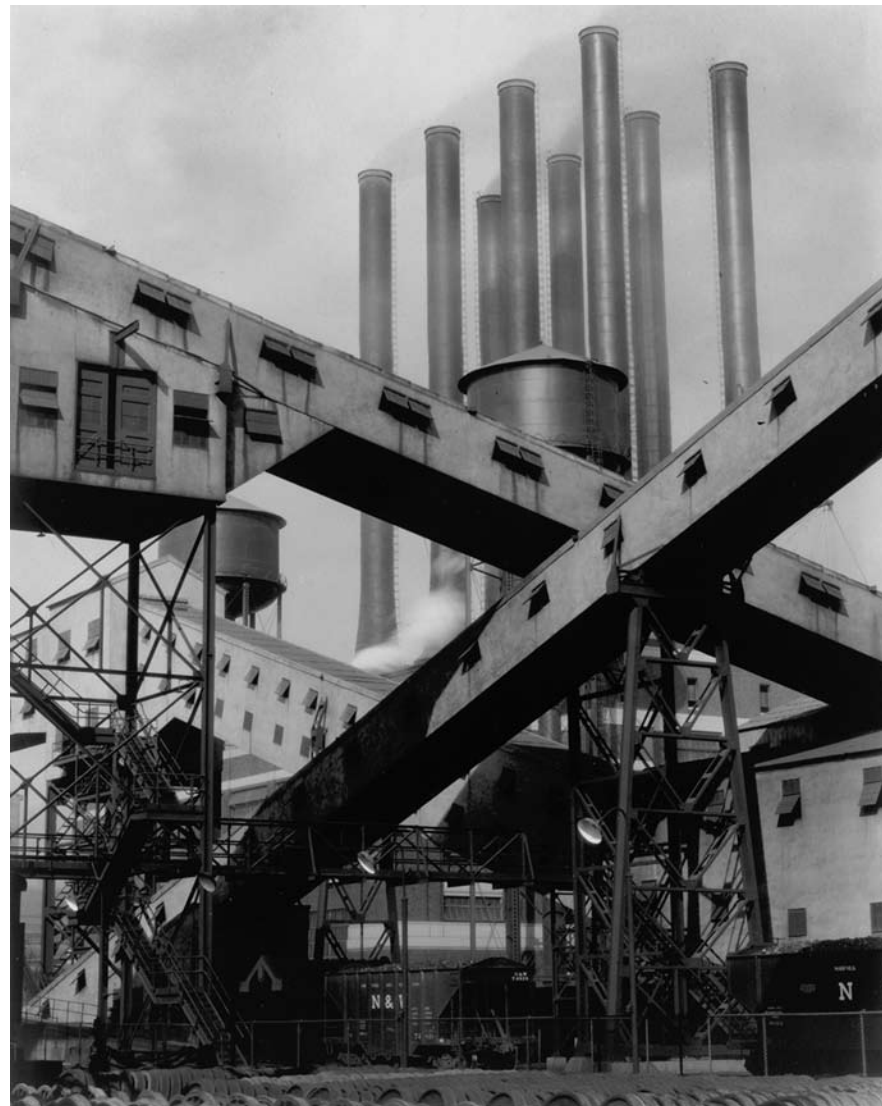
The 10-minute movie consists of 65 separate shots that together build a composite image of a single day in New York. We get a view of commuters pouring off a ferry; of tugs docking an ocean liner; of skyscrapers and

trains and rushing businessmen. The camera barely moves, and the cutting is surprisingly placid — it has more in common with a slide show than with the kind of frantic editing that Dada films were going for in the 1920s. (For a while, Sheeler moved in the most radical Dada circles in New York, but he never really joined in their artistic chaos.)

To Sheeler and Strand, it seems to be the movement in the world that matters — all those rushing feet and boats and scudding clouds of smoke, as unprecisionist as anything could be — and their movie camera simply works to frame it in the most dynamic way.

Here's the strange thing: Had we left it up to Sheeler and his dealer and principal patron, we might never have seen much of this wonderful stuff.

Sheeler had started his career as a painter — he showed Cézanne-ish oils in the famous Armory Show in 1913 — and kept that identity intact even



**Charles Sheeler:** *Criss-Crossed Conveyors*, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company, 1927, gelatin silver print (Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ford Motor Company, and John C. Waddell, 1987)

when his photographs were gaining recognition. In 1921, Stieglitz warned Strand that Sheeler would likely take — or at least get — all the credit for *Manhatta* because “it is one of those ticklish questions when one of two is an ‘artist’ and the other only a ‘photographer.’” The tensions that resulted led to a break between Sheeler and the other two men, though he continued to take photographs.

Throughout the 1920s Sheeler was making a decent living as one of New York’s more successful commercial photographers. The River Rouge images, which won Sheeler worldwide recognition in advanced artistic circles, started out as part of a publicity campaign for Ford. (It was “the finest photographic commission anybody ever got,” according to Edward Steichen, who helped launch Sheeler’s commercial career.) The automaker used the deluxe pictures to gin up interest in its advanced manufacturing process, in anticipation of the launch of its top secret Model A.

Then, in 1931, an art dealer named Edith Halpert got Sheeler to steer away from the low-status world of photography in favor of the high-prestige world of painting and drawing. Many of Sheeler’s brilliant later photos and photomontages were treated as preparatory material for his paintings — which were almost all based on photographs — rather than works to be shown in their own right. Sheeler’s one pioneering film, ignored by the artist himself, survived for decades as a single print buried in an English archive. Halpert’s biggest Sheeler client, William Lane, went so far as to buy up Sheeler’s entire photographic estate, to suppress and quarantine it. (Ironically, that helped it come down to us intact.)

Rather than go to bat for the new media for which he’d done so much good work, Sheeler himself seems to have capitulated to the conservative realities of the American art market, and of bourgeois art appreciation. By aligning himself with the hallowed media of the old masters, and all they represent, Sheeler got to escape from the demanding — and sullied — world of modern commercial photography, and even from the questionable world



New York, Park Row Building, 1920, gelatin silver print (The Lane Collection)

of photographic art. Sheeler didn’t repudiate photography. Instead, he positioned himself as looking kindly down on it from his safe perch high up in the “fine” arts: “Photography is promising as a child,” he said in 1950, “and there are high hopes for it in its adulthood. Those of us who have been intrigued by acquaintance with a camera are happy to see the application of photography in constantly extended fields.”

Instead of abandoning the superb images he’d made as a photographer, Sheeler chose to convert them into labored drawings and finicky, half-dead paintings.

A Doylestown photo like his *Open Door With Dark Mirror* gets some of its force from the sense that it captures a single instant, when the chaos of the world happened to have come together in the order of a modern composition. The enlarged drawing Sheeler made from the photo in 1932, laboriously stippled in black conte crayon over a period of weeks or months, has lost all of that modernist verve. It deliberately looks backward, to an almost medieval love of handicraft for handicraft’s sake. Rather than documenting his subject, as his early photograph had done, Sheeler uses the meticulous stippling of early Italian religious art to try to hallow it. One critic declared him a 20th-century Fra Angelico — not the most daring role to play in 1932.

That straitlaced sanctification also happens in Sheeler’s paintings. The Doylestown photograph called *Stairway With Chair* becomes the 1938 oil called *The Upstairs*. (Even the title has gained a portentous note in the intervening decades.) The photograph, for all its careful structure, preserves a slew of incidentals, and they speak of a haphazard moment, caught: badly nailed boards, a door whose edge is almost but not quite lined up with the viewer’s eye, coarse whitewashing and scuffs. The painting loses almost all of those details: The door’s aligned, the boards are flush, edges and surfaces are crisp and clean. Sheeler has turned artful observation into arty obfuscation. His art gets worse the more it’s elevated — and much of that deliberate elevation happens when he paints. In Sheeler’s straight photography, even when a factory shot seems to promote boosterish ideas of the Industrial Sublime, there’s always going to be dirt on view as well.

As Stieglitz recognized, Sheeler’s photography embraces a new way of looking at things and at art. That embrace is part of what it is about. His drawings and paintings prefer to depend on accepted notions of what makes a fine picture fine, and of what might make it sell. That dependence is a big part of what they’re about.

Curator Charles Brock argues convincingly that Sheeler wanted to make art for art’s sake, divorced from the social world he made it in — that he was an old-fashioned aesthete in the Whistler mode. Everything about Sheeler’s pictures and his life proves that such divorces don’t work out. The purest aesthetic urge has social meaning, too.

“Charles Sheeler: Across Media” was seen at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, from May 7 to August 27, 2006; at The Art Institute of Chicago from October 7, 2006 to January 7, 2007; and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young from February 10 to May 6, 2007.

This article first appeared in *The Washington Post*, Sunday, May 7, 2006. © 2006, The Washington Post. Reprinted with permission. ■

## A Sense of Place

by ROSEMARY RANCK

A sense of place often brings with it a deeply conservative nostalgia. It is an appreciation of the deeply rooted, of the particular value of individual places that resist the encroaching sameness and loss of our varied histories that shopping malls, interstate highways, and TV bring. In the last several years four photographers who work in the Philadelphia area have published books that address these themes by focusing on the built environment, three of them concentrating on vernacular architecture and the fourth on Philadelphia’s historic religious buildings. Each of these books encourages a keener appreciation of the world around us.

Photographer Sandy Sorlien has a particular affinity for houses. If they meet her standards of authenticity, she finds in them infinite possibilities for expression of self, of differences to celebrate. In tribute to an American idiom, she has chosen one house from each of the fifty states that expresses something about its region — an antebellum style Louisiana bungalow built high to withstand floods, for example, and a house in Worcester, Massachusetts, whose particular homeliness is repeated in dozens of old industrial New England towns. Sorlien used infrared film for these photos, thus softening the images in a way that suggests a dreaminess and transience about each dwelling. *Fifty Houses*

speaks to the experience of driving down country roads, through small towns, or walking into new neighborhoods and wondering, is that for me? Would I want to be here? But Sorlien’s mission is not so much to charm you into inhabiting her images as to document a precious aspect of our material culture that she sees slipping away into a homogenous banality, one that erases the local dialects of architecture and makes it difficult to know where you are.

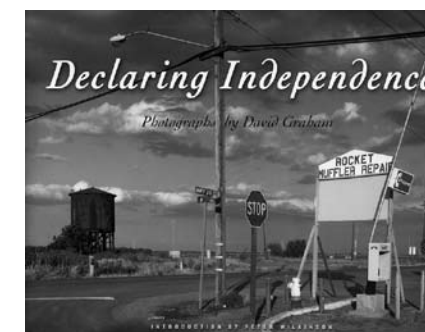
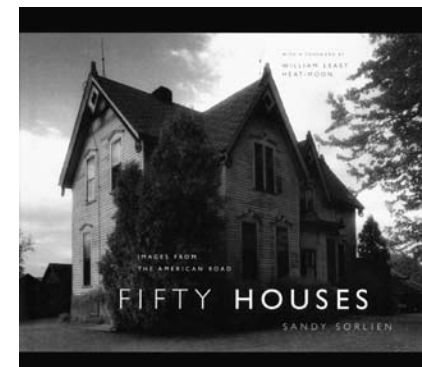
The humor and primary colors of David Graham’s photographs seem at first glance to be the antithesis of Sandy Sorlien’s work, but they are also infused with nostalgia for a particularly American individualism. And he, too, works in slow time, the kind found away from the interstates, along secondary roads where marginal enterprises offer live bait, retreads, and psychic readings. Life is not especially tidy as framed by Graham. Under bright skies, he celebrates the whole exuberant mess with its telephone lines and poles at crazy angles, rusty bollards, urban murals of pastoral scenes, and the quirky typography of signs like “Rocket Muffler Repair” and “Menudo Sat. – Sun.” *Declaring Independence* is a testament to Graham’s acute eye for nearly lunatic juxtapositions still to be found along the road throughout the U.S. His sense of wonder and pleasure in all sorts of

**Fifty Houses: Images from the American Road.** By Sandy Sorlien, foreword by William Least Heat-Moon, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), \$34.95 hb.

**Declaring Independence.** By David Graham, introduction by Peter Wilkinson, (Brooklyn, NY: Pond Press, 2004), 72 pages, 68 color illustrations, \$29.95 hb.

**Commonplace.** By Christine Welch, conclusion by John R. Stilgoe, (Chicago: Center for American Places, 2004), 96 pages, 57 color plates, \$35.00 hb.

**Historic Sacred Places of Philadelphia.** By Roger Moss, photographs by Tom Crane, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 328 pages, 174 color and 38 b/w illustrations, \$39.95 hb.

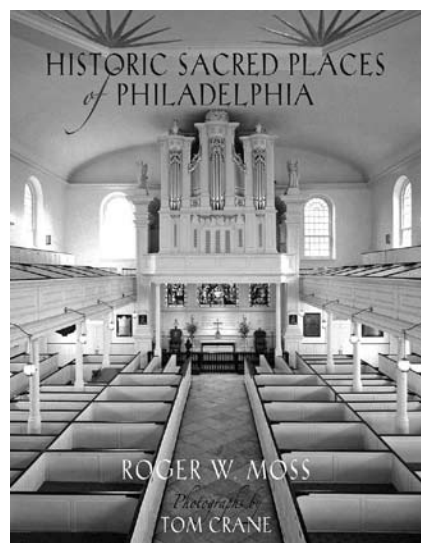




junk and silliness is infectious.

In his conclusion to Christine Welch's *Commonplace*, John Stilgoe, the eminent explicator of words and landscapes, describes her subject as "the theater of occasion." Though her photographs of lobbies, workspaces, and meeting rooms are empty of the actors who would normally inhabit them, the images are full of their presence — as if charged with the lingering vapors of small town chambers of commerce, waitresses, students, customers, and cooks. Like Graham and Sorlien, Welch uses material culture to express her view of what is authentic, which she finds in the kind of ordinary spaces where ordinary people play out the public part of their lives (hence her book's title). These are not charming spaces: the ceilings are dropped; the paneling, fiberboard; and the furnishings, industrial. Idle vacuum cleaners, barbershop gear hung on hooks, and chairs against the wall heighten the feeling these images give of a protracted break in the action. Welch's eye for the significance of these empty rooms and her suffuse light and color transform mundane places into mysteriously serene stages.

A collaboration of historian Roger Moss and photographer Tom Crane, *Sacred Places* celebrates Philadelphia's rich legacy of Christian and Jewish places of worship. It is an authoritative work of architectural and cultural history, a passionate effort at preservation, and an engaging tour guide. Fifty individual sites (Phila-



delphia has 16,000 congregations) were chosen for historical relevance, architectural merit, and accessibility. The entries are grouped according to their location in the city, and each has an informative biography that includes the context of its construction and architecture, and the history of its congregation. Making it clear that Moss is trying to broaden the population that

values these buildings and would fight to prevent their destruction, he is careful to include the locations and contact information for each. He succeeds in making the nearly impossible task of photographing large interiors with many dark corners look effortless. Crane's masterful color photographs of each site of worship bring this handsome 300-page book to life. ■

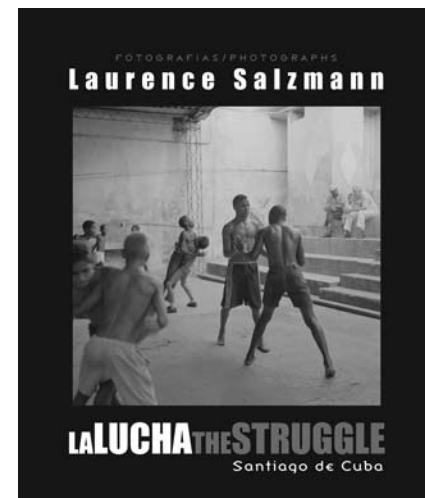
## BOOKS

**La Lucha/The Struggle.** Photographs and text by Laurence Salzmann, paintings by Luis el Estudiante (Philadelphia: Blue Flower Press, 2007), 72 pages, 20 color and 36 duotone plates, \$20 hb.

*La Lucha/The Struggle* is, as the title suggests, a bi-cultural creation, the product of a deliberately cooperative effort between Philadelphia photographer Laurence Salzmann and Cuban painter Luis Joaquin Rodriguez Ricardo, who paints under the name, Luis el Estudiante. *La Lucha* is also the provocative record of the struggle between photography and painting, between two forms of representation that are, in the pages of the book, struggling to coexist.

Salzmann conceived the project in 1999, on a visit to Cuba, when he stumbled upon a training center for young wrestlers and weight lifters in Santiago de Cuba. He returned to Cuba six times during the next four years, working on the wrestling series and also on a series on the Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, an Afro-Cuban dance group. (In fact, the work was part of a larger ambition in cultural exchange between Santiago de Cuba and Philadelphia that resulted as well in Salzmann's *El Festival Cubano*, which took place from 2000 to 2004 in Philadelphia.)

With 34 photographs included, as against 17 paintings, the weight of the book is toward documentary photography, but the paintings have nevertheless a strong presence. Six photographs introduce the volume, and twelve conclude it; but the middle of the book consists of a steady counter-



point of paintings and photos — two photographs followed by two paintings. In fact, the relationship between photos and paintings is, thematically at least, close and collaborative, with imitation and echo from one medium to the other.

We learn in an afterword that Luis El Estudiante, brought into the project by Salzmann, initially was painting versions of Salzmann's photographs, but that Salzmann began at a certain point to occasionally photograph versions of what the painter had seen and recorded; and though it doesn't particularly matter which medium had precedence, the effect of this structure — a kind of call and response — is surprisingly enriching to both media. One looks at a photograph on its own, then at the painter's version of it, which often captures by exaggeration the spirit of the image, for El Estudiante paints in a geometrical, naïve style bordering on caricature; returning to the photograph, it ap-

pears injected with another dimension of expression. At times the reality of the photographs — which depict the struggle of fitness training, the struggle of weight lifting, the struggle of wrestling — seems lightly mocked by the folk cartoon style of the paintings.

The complementarity of the photographs and paintings goes only so far, however. Where Salzmann shows us the sweat and muscles of ragtag athletes against bare, patched walls, Luis el Estudiante's paintings, by contrast, endow his subjects with clean and colorful uniforms, posed against cartoon-friendly backgrounds. The paintings also incorporate political slogans that are largely absent from the photographs: *El Que Lucha Triunfa* (He Who Struggles Triumphs); *Patria Tu dignidad nos inspira* (Fatherland, Your Dignity Inspires Us); *El Deporte Derecho Del Pueblo* (Sports are the Right of the People); and one, at least, that does appear on the wall in one photograph: *Seguiremo Trabajando* (We Will Continue to Work). Where the painter gives us the idealized world of athletic training in Cuba, celebrating the state as inspiration, the photographer shows us the strain of the struggle itself. The more one contemplates this duality, the more the two media seem sufficiently different to create a dissonance between painter and photographer.

In trying to imagine the book *without* the paintings, without the oscillation between photographic "reality" and idealized representation, I find myself in a very different world from the conjoined one of the book. Taken on their own terms and apart from the accompaniment of the paintings, Salzmann's photographs constitute an aesthetic and social document of great power.

Salzmann, who has often photographed in foreign locales, again manages to capture the character of his indigenous subjects, who are, with one or two exceptions, never posed but are instead caught in motion — climbing stairs on their hands, feet held up; hanging suspended from bars, walking with their hands; crouching under the weight of barbells; hanging upside-down from parallel bars;

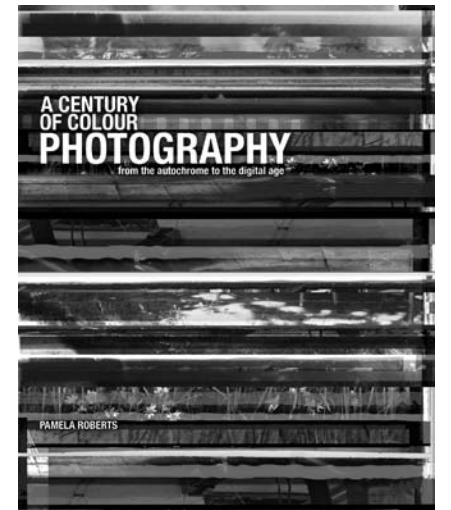
flipping one another as they practice moves; clenched in struggle or engaging in mano-a-mano combat; or as in the memorable last photograph, flying in mid-air over a bended partner. At other times, they are poised, listening to an instructor, or talking among themselves, or waiting, or hanging around, sometimes relaxed, sometimes affecting a toughness that — for the younger trainees — seems beyond their years. The athletes range from about 8 to 18 and they are on track to be selected for more advanced and serious training, so there is much at stake for these young lives — success in the socialist state, privileges, honor, escape (however temporary) from the dreariness of Castro's Cuba.

Salzmann's "Acknowledgments" reveal that he took the photographs of the young athletes at several gyms in Santiago de Cuba, which explains the varying backdrops in these otherwise uncaptioned images. The improvised training sites are basic, to say the least, spaces that might have served earlier as warehouses, now adorned with the occasional piece of gymnastic equipment or with wrestling mats. And we can read into the details of the bare walls and floors, the no-nonsense facilities of a state that is itself struggling to stay alive. The images capture the range of emotions that are part of this struggle within a struggle: the determination and seriousness of pre-teenagers lifting heavy barbells; the discipline of training in wrestling moves; the intense concentration. There is also in the hugging bodies, stripped to the waist and glistening with sweat, a homoerotic element that Salzmann captures, especially in one image where the figure is stretching out to the camera, upside down and gripped in the arms of his partner. The wrestlers here are like dancers, embracing and tossing one another, and Salzmann's eye for the grace and movement of this training is unerring, as is his framing of the human subject within a geometry of lines and angles that enhance the image. The composition is unobtrusive yet elegant.

*La Lucha/The Struggle* is a record of Salzmann's fascination with Cuban culture and a tribute to his generous

vision of cross-cultural understanding. What the paintings of Luis El Estudiante add to the volume is something like the "official" political vision of what is taking place in these training centers, and it is an important "document" of contemporary Cuba. But Salzmann shows us much more.

Miles Orvell



**A Century of Colour Photography: From the Autochrome to the Digital Age.** By Pamela Roberts (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., Carlton Publishing Group, 2007), 256 pp., \$39.00 hb.

Marking the centennial of the commercial introduction of the Lumière brothers' autochrome process in 1907, Pamela Roberts, Curator at the Royal Photographic Society from 1982 to 2001, has written a much-needed introduction to the underserved history of color photography. *A Century of Colour Photography: From the Autochrome to the Digital Age* presents the major technical and artistic happenings of the field over the past one hundred years plus a brief chapter about its earlier developments.

The large-format pages (12-3/8 x 10-1/4 inches) feature a straightforward design with good size reproductions on glossy stock, offering unencumbered viewing of over 300 color plates. However, the overall production values convey an atmosphere of advertising rather than one of a scholarly endeavor. The reproduction quality of some contemporary images, including those of Gregory Crewdson and William Wegman, appear too

cool, dark, and flat, and thus lose their visual authority; and image information is not included under each plate, necessitating flipping back and forth to the index of images by photographers to locate each picture's title, date, size, and process. Additionally, a more in-depth general index would have been useful.

Production issues aside, Roberts delivers a significant general survey of color photography by utilizing a decade-by-decade chronological approach. There is a strong chapter on autochrome and its alternatives, with coverage of Albert Kahn's *The Archives of the Planet*, and the works of Leon Gimpel, Stephane Passet, and Edward Steichen, who "never stopped experimenting with colour and his autochromes, especially those of his sad-eyed daughter Mary — are amongst the most beautiful ever taken."<sup>1</sup>

Another chapter, "The Colour Boom," covers the role popular magazines played in stealthily interjecting the expectation of color photographs into their productions. Photographers, such as Nicholas Muray, whose "work can be terrifically kitsch in parts but also hugely confident and striking, especially his portraits of women — his lover Frida Kahlo, and Judy Garland and Marilyn Monroe," — helped drive public acceptance of color photography long before it was recognized by fashionable galleries and museums.

Drawing on her years of curatorial experience, including collecting autochromes and other early experimental color work,<sup>2</sup> Roberts's solid picture research incorporates works from private collectors and galleries. Besides the usual suspects like Eliot Porter, Joel Meyerowitz, and Martin Parr, her scholarship allows readers to become acquainted with seldom seen images, such as early autochromist Fred Payne Clatworthy and overlooked Kodachrome practitioners like Saul Leiter. This is vital as museum collections are often deficient in this area because of their past reluctance to collect color images due to archival concerns or their underestimation of color's artistic importance.

Roberts's emphasis on previsualization, how the camera sees and

records color, results in a lack of coverage of the postvisualization movements, how what the camera captures is just a starting point for creative production. Although there are examples by anonymous photographers, the snapshot genre, especially those made with the 1963 Kodak Instamatic, which played a vital role in making color photography ubiquitous, is given scant coverage.

Roberts does bring into view underserved women photographers, such as Madame Yevonde,<sup>3</sup> a British color portrait and advertising photographer from the 1930s who favored the British Vivex tricolor carbonyl process to create a body of fantastical Surrealist-inspired work. Roberts notes, "She has inspired others including Cindy Sherman and now Jesse Landberg, a New York based filmmaker who is producing a feature film on her for 2008." Other women involved in early color photography, such as Sarah Angelina Acland, Violet Blaiklock, Gisele Freund, Helen Messinger Murdoch, and Agnes B. Warburg, are also represented.

Human color perception is a highly subjective and dynamically changeable process. This is reflected in Roberts's own favorite curatorial choices including John Batho for his "pure colour and form" and the later Paul Outerbridge Mexican material for its "extraordinary colour balance — so pure, lively, and intense. I discovered quite a lot about my own colour awareness whilst researching this book. Red was always my preferred colour but now I seem to be obsessed by shades of green — perhaps it's an age thing?"

Roberts's project was not intended as a technical treatise. This ground has been covered first by E. J. Wall, then Joseph S. Friedman, and more recently by the late Brian Coe and Jack H. Coote. Rather, Roberts puts forward an aesthetic history of color photography that knowledgeably introduces key events, such as William Eggleston's 1976 Museum of Modern Art exhibition that helped usher color photography into the art world. Additional detailed coverage of such events would have been welcome, especially

in how societal changes steered color photography in new directions.

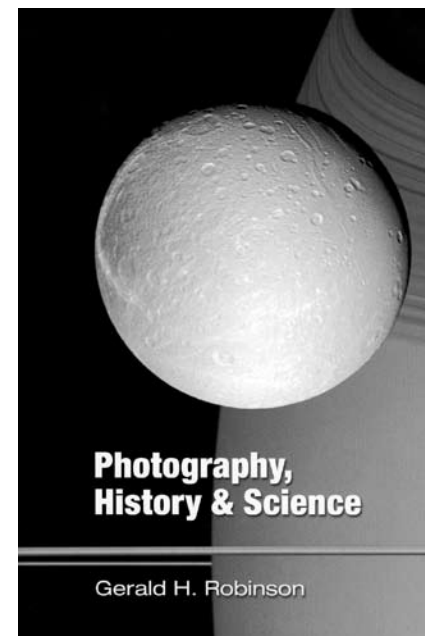
Ultimately, Roberts supplies a much-needed entry point for people desiring an overview of western color practice that is clearly written without pretense or academic jargon. Roberts's book, completed in only nine months, will perhaps inspire other historians and publishers to delve more deeply into this neglected subject.

#### NOTES

1. All quotations by Pam Roberts are from emails with the author and a meeting in Rochester, New York, on October 11, 2007.
2. Through Roberts's efforts, the National Media Museum in Bradford, UK, the current home of the former RPS collection, has one of the world's finest public autochrome collections.
3. With Robin Gibson of the National Portrait Gallery in London, Roberts organized an exhibition and wrote a book, *Madame Yevonde* (1990).

This review was first published in *Afterimage*.

Robert Hirsch



**Photography, History & Science.** By Gerald H. Robinson (Nevada City, CA: Carl Mautz Publishing, 2006), \$35 hb.

Much contemporary writing on photography seems unrelated to the body politic, so it is refreshing to

read Robinson's *Photography, History & Science*, which includes this clearly stated *Weltanschauung*: "We live in one of the most conservative eras of American history since the early 1920s, replete with public piety mouthed by corrupt politicians, intrusive religiosity, nauseating moral hypocrisy, and a burgeoning worldwide empire thinly disguised as 'bringing democracy' to those unfortunates who would rather live their lives as they see fit." (p. 96) Although Robinson's book is on the history of photography, his inclusion of such comments conveys a sense of moral outrage that does not permit divorcing art from history. For the reader, his analysis of themes and leading historical figures in photography is eerily relevant to issues facing Americans today.

Robinson's undiminished ire over violations of civil rights and other government excesses under the guise of national defense during the 1940s surfaces especially in his chapters, "Images of War, Fraud, and Photography: The Internment of the Japanese-Americans" and "The Photo League: Photography in the Cold War." In the former short chapter, Robinson explains how a fraud was perpetrated on the American people by the United States military when it withheld intelligence that the Japanese had no intention of invading the West Coast — thereby justifying the infamous Executive Order 9066 that placed 110,000 law abiding citizens of one-quarter or more Japanese descent into ten internment camps. Robinson characterizes this injustice as "one of the great deceptions in modern military and political history." He then briefly discusses the photography at the Manzanar camp, both by inmate Toyo Miyatake, a close friend of Edward Weston's, and by a series of visiting photographers, including Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange. This story is told in more depth in *Elusive Truth: Four Photographers at Manzanar* by Robinson and Archie Miyatake (2002), which for some reason Robinson doesn't cite in his present book.

In his longest of fourteen chapters, Robinson devotes nearly forty pages to the Photo League, the noncommer-

cial photographers cooperative and school that was active in New York from 1936 to 1951 and which encouraged the practice of documentary photography. Most of the leading photographers of the day had some connection with it, including Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston. The Photo League came to its demise after Attorney General Tom Clark included it on a list of 91 organizations deemed to be "totalitarian, fascist, communist, or subversive," based largely on the reports of an FBI spy, Angela Calomiris, who for a time served as the League's secretary. While the League's leadership was politically predominantly left-wing and its encouragement of students to photograph substandard slum conditions could be considered "subversive" by those who thought any implied criticism of America was unpatriotic, the tiny organization hardly represented a threat to the security of the United States.

Thus, the loss of the League, for Robinson, is another injustice perpetrated by the American government, and one that may have pushed photographers in the 1950s toward more apolitical, subjective, and non-representational modes of expression. What makes Robinson's account so riveting, aside from the details not previously discussed by other historians, is that he thoroughly studied the FBI's files on the case, the League's newsletter *Photo Notes*, and other sources, and he discusses the flimsy evidence against the League with the assurance and clarity of an adept attorney, which he happened to be for forty-five years.

Robinson's chapter on Edward and Brett Weston's characters, relationship, similarities, and differences is enlightening because Robinson had numerous visits and conversations with Brett and shares "insider" information with the reader. For example, I learned that both father and son were devoted to nudism (p. 123) and that while Brett was not a writer like his father, he was an avid reader. Robinson also offers fresh insights in other chapters on fairly obvious topics such as Ansel Adams and the conservation movement, Stieglitz, and Surrealism. A welcome surprise is Robinson's

paean to photo historian and curator Peter C. Bunnell.

While some chapters are of more interest than others, and Robinson didn't convince me that Elliott Erwitt is a "vernacular" photographer, my only real complaint is that the index is incomplete, sometimes making it difficult to go back to a reference one has remembered. For those who never got the chance to take Robinson's course on the history of photography at Mt. Hood College in Oregon before his recent retirement, these fourteen essays provide an entertaining and informative surrogate for his lectures.

Gary D. Saretzky



**Guillermo Thorn:** *Tennis Players, South Plainfield, New Jersey, 1880s*

**Victorian New Jersey: Photographs by Guillermo Thorn from the Kean University Collection.** By Frank J. Esposito and Donald Lokuta, with an essay by Robert Yoskowitz (Union, NJ: Kean University Press, 2005), \$29.95 hb, \$19.95 sb.

For decades, Guillermo Thorn (1837–1920) was the camera chronicler of Plainfield, New Jersey. He also photographed the surrounding area, including the Jersey shore, and issued hundreds of his photographs as stereographs. While his name has been well known to local historians, his work is now concentrated in a few private and institutional collections and only a handful have appeared in recent books or magazines. Even to those who have seen occasional examples of Thorn's images, this book and the accompanying exhibition will come as a revelation.

In his essay on Thorn's place in the history of art and photography, Robert Yoskowitz compares Thorn favorably to famous photo-documentarians Eugène Atget and Walker Evans. Indeed, some of Thorn's late 19th century photographs seem to anticipate his

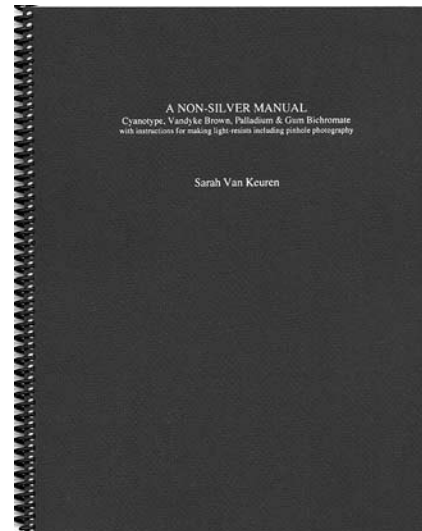
more illustrious successors. However, it would be a mistake to categorize Thorn as just a proto-Atget. Few contemporaries were his equal but he had his own peer group, most of whom have also not been included in the “documentary photography” chapters of history of photography textbooks. In the last decades of the 19th century, working independently and probably with little contact with each other, town photographers like Thorn — in Plainfield, Gustavus Pach — in Long Branch, New Jersey, and Joseph E. Smith — in Socorro, New Mexico, recorded daily life in their times.

Unlike many 20th century social documentary photographers who photographed while traveling and whose perspective was essentially that of a visitor, Thorn photographed from inside the community. It is apparent from the expressions of his subjects — often in large groups — that he was someone they knew and trusted and that they were willing, if not eager, to stop what they were doing to be photographed. One senses that Thorn took a lot of time to make these images, arranging the figures to best advantage. While Atget concentrated on several themes like architecture, garden sculpture, and trees, and seems to have been most comfortable working before his neighbors got out of bed in the morning, Thorn brought his camera to events — parades, races, celebrations of all kinds — and photographed landscape and architecture as well. One senses that Thorn had an avid curiosity about a wide range of subjects and wanted to record them all, from events like the Big Flood of 1889 to street scenes to interiors like a bowling alley in North Plainfield.

The photographs in this book are well selected and the tonal quality is excellent. Many are from exceptionally detailed albumen or gelatin silver prints from glass plate negatives; others are stereographic cards reproduced larger than the originals. The book is divided into chapters covering the Jersey Shore; Picturesque Plainfield; Churches and Schools; Neighboring Communities; The Fairgrounds; Popular Attractions; and Estates, Hotels, and Parks. Scholars will lament the

lack of footnotes and bibliography, especially for the biographical essay by the principal authors and the quotes by Thorn that are scattered throughout the book.

The New Jersey State Museum in Trenton, NJ, is hosting an exhibit of Thorn’s work through August 30, 2009.  
Gary D. Saretzky



**A Non-Silver Manual.** By Sarah Van Keuren, 3rd edition, 8th revision, \$22.50 + \$5 postage in US; \$10 postage outside U.S., from Sarah Van Keuren, svankeuren@comcast.net. Also sold through Malin Fabbri’s alternativephotography.com website and Pinhole Resource.

“You learn a lot teaching,” Marcella said. “You learn a lot about cooking from the questions people ask. Sometimes they’re not very important questions. Sometimes they’re stupid questions and sometimes they make you think, I need to explain.”

Amanda Hesser, *NY Times Magazine*, 11/21/04

Every foodie has of course heard of Marcella Hazan, as well as Amanda Hesser, whose article I quote above. I can’t *guarantee* that every “alternative process” photographer or even every gum printer has heard of Sarah Van Keuren, but I’d bet most of them have — through her work, her teaching at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and/or her book, *A Non-Silver Manual*,\* subtitled *Cyanotype, Vandyke Brown, Palladium & Gum*

*Bichromate with instructions for making light-resists including pinhole photography.* A later edition added a sub-subtitle: *Gum Printing on Alternative Surfaces by Dana Leight*, and now in the Third Edition, 6th Revision, we have a sub-sub-subtitle: *New in this edition: Desktop Negatives by Sandra C. Davis; Instructions for Vertical Copy Cameras by Sandra C. Davis, Stuart Goldstein and SVK; One Interpretation of Gum Printing by Melissa Good; and Casein Printing by Rosae Reeder.*

Sarah’s is among a welcome group of “alternative process” photography manuals from seasoned practitioners that redeem the genre from the overblown productions cobbled together by hirelings (or “names” out of their depth). Several were even distributed by major publishers when the field got trendy. Their “info” was heinous; their errors, tragicomic — which can be explained.

Kodak used to boast that it spent \$3 million a day on research. After all, if Kodak had its info wrong, it lost heaps of money. As Kodak and company flourished, however, these hand-coated processes, used for artistic rather than commercial purposes, were eclipsed or entirely forgotten. “Research,” if any, was idiosyncratic. If gum bichromate information was wrong, who knew or cared? A number of bad guesses were enshrined in the canon of the 1940s, from which they were cut and pasted into book after book 50 years later. The late John Rudiak described one such opus (*The Ansel Adams Guide, Book 2*, if you could believe), as “a collection of misinformation compiled...without the benefit of personal experience,” suitable “for entertainment purposes only.”

Sarah Van Keuren’s *Manual* is just the reverse. Production is unassuming to a fault: spiral bound, no illustrations, modest price, a combination teaching manual and love letter to the field (and to her students) by a practitioner-teacher. Begun with the basics (even some errors) at 36 pages in 1993, it’s been honed and upgraded over the years with corrections, feedback, amplifications, and (as the sub-sub-subtitle shows) new devel-

opments, to an estimated 125 pages (“estimated” because each of its 12 or so sections is either entirely innocent of numbers or starts over again at page 1).

But even books that handle basics well often maintain radio silence on the conundrums of actual practice. If, for instance, your dried print has curled up like a lettuce leaf, you’re on your own. Sarah, however, witness to every imaginable pitfall and stumbling block, is there for you, with strategies she and students have devised from experience. She, like Marcella, has learned “a lot” from teaching (among other pursuits). But her *explaining* is the special charm of this book. In fact, comparing editions, I was seduced all over again. Although of course you are not expecting the kind of book where you look up a formula in the index, photocopy the page, tape it to the wall, and just run the program.

In the first place, there is no index, nor even page numbers in the “table of contents,” which notes, “The pagination of individual handouts has been retained. The formatting and fonts of the different contributors have also been retained.” In the second place, you are in the hands of a witty, wise, articulate, and, it must be said, *poetic* friend with an instinct for joy/discovery in photography, who has been turning over its rocks forever, inspiring students to do likewise, and sharing their finds. Forget autoprogram. In Sarah Van Keuren’s manual, the rules of photography are a personal *decision* (although rules of *nature* are still rules). She’s calm but available whenever you pick up the book; always amusing, encouraging, and generous. You can read the chapter on cyanotype, mix, coat, expose, wash, etc., and then go on to “Deconstructing Cyanotype,” which has you coating the paper with part A, exposing it under a negative and selectively brushing on Part B, followed by “delicate effects” and/or disappointment, and/or more experiment.

The chapter on enlarged negatives follows; again, simple language, sage advice, and low-key reality. These processes generally require negatives the size of the final print (the emulsions are too slow for enlarging), and

every approach to making the negatives is here, including serious attention to digital. Then, after sections on Vandyke and Palladium, we receive 49 (forty-nine!) pages on Gum Bichromate, with a good thought on every one of them. (Many authors attempting a chapter on this allegedly “difficult,” “temperamental,” and “complicated” process have never actually done it, and, scared stiff of making the errors they do make, set legions of photographers on the road to Post-Traumatic-Gum-Refusenik syndrome.)

Sarah is clearly a factor in the loose cadre of alternative printers that has grown up in the Philadelphia area, with “difficult,” “temperamental,” and “complicated” defeated by *grace, calme, and volupté*. Not that I wouldn’t argue a few points, but there’s not a page I didn’t learn something from, or just enjoy as a hymn to art-and-photography from a muse who notices that “[s]tudents who learn gum printing before being introduced to other non-silver processes are disappointed to find that the subtractive manipulation they do with gum is impossible with cyanotype, Vandyke, or palladium,” then uses that to explain the mechanisms of all.

If you want the rules for a photograph that looks like the Zone System on steroids from the Church of Previsualization, this manual would not be your first choice. Otherwise, you might want two — one to have in reserve when a friend “borrows” the first.

\* The term “non-silver” is something of a misnomer for the 19th-century processes addressed here, since several of them (e.g., Vandyke Brown), are based on silver. But the origins of the term are also historic. When it was discovered in the 19th century that silver photographs were fading, a committee formed to address the problem suggested switching to “non-silver” processes, such as platinum, for permanence. In due course, the fading problems of silver were more or less adequately resolved, and commercial production of silver gelatin paper insured its preeminence for more than a century. Periodically,

however, the point about the inadequacy of the term “non-silver” processes is raised in the field. To date, the only viable alternative seems to be “alternative photography,” even more widely used and understood, but with its own hermeneutical problems.

Judy Seigel

Judy Seigel (jseigel@panix.com) is an artist/photographer based in New York and editor/publisher of *The World Journal of Post-Factory Photography*.

**Dawoud Bey: The Chicago Project.** By Dawoud Bey (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 2004), \$25.00, sb. with audio CD.

This handsome catalogue documents an exhibit at the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum that resulted from an artist’s residency designed by photographer Dawoud Bey. In collaboration with the museum’s curatorial and education staff, an advisory committee and two audio documentarians, Bey set out to involve a diverse set of students in a project that would give them hands-on experience of the professional art world and a chance to connect with other teenagers well outside of their daily experience. Key to the undertaking were the twelve local high school students who became both actors in and the focus of an exploration into identity, portrait making, and the evolving role of art institutions. In the large and richly colored portraits for which he is known, Bey has often experimented with methods such as multiple views to transcend the constraints of the traditional portrait’s single perspective. Here the multifaceted portrayal of each student consists of: a single Bey photo, text from an audio portrait by Dan Collison and Elizabeth Meister; a photo chosen by the student to represent him or herself; and an autobiographical text written by the student. The book’s essays offer valuable insight into the process and difficulties of mounting such an ambitious and complex project. In the end, though, it is Bey, through the strength of his images, who commands our attention.

Rosemary Ranck

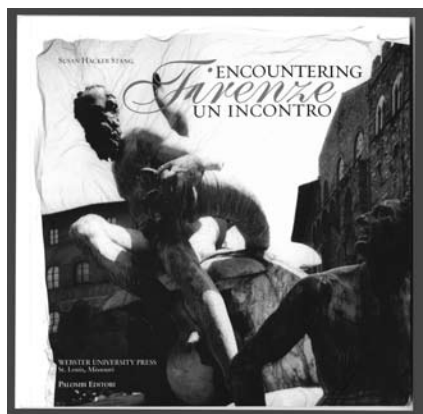




**The Beatles: 365 Days.** By Simon Wells (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), \$29.95 hb.

*The Beatles: 365 Days*, by Simon Wells, illustrates the convergence, rise, and divergence of the “greatest, most influential band to ever grace this planet.” Opportunely published in time for the 65th anniversary of John Lennon’s birthday, this colorful, brick-shaped book compiles photographs from a recently rediscovered treasure-trove of an archive in West London. As part of a true picture book, Wells’s captions tell a detailed and frank tidbit of history to complement each photograph, assuming the reader’s predisposed general knowledge of the band’s story. Often offbeat, comedic quotations of the Fab Four and others adorn the captions. The photographs themselves range from candidly artful photo shoots to artfully candid snapshots and are so extensive that one can see the growth and development of the stars’ laugh lines and signature hairdos. Unlike most other Beatles books, *The Beatles: 365 Days* does not attempt to be the be all and end all of the documentaries, but rather lets the photographs speak — and having just been unearthed from a basement archive, they have a lot to say.

Cressa Perloff



**Encountering Firenze un Incontro.** By Susan Hacker Stang (Rome: Palombi Editori, 2007; distributed by Webster University Press, St. Louis, MO), \$35 sb.

Susan Hacker Stang applies poetic lyricism to her images in order to communicate her love for Florence. The photographic process of Polaroid Emulsion Transfers assists in expressing a feeling of romance within the historic city. The work possesses a delicate, draping quality, caused by the transfer process, which is reminiscent of the fabric draped on the ancient statues within the images. Stang’s use of Polaroid transfers enhances the textural element that often mimics and relates to the content of the photographs. The wrinkling of the image also provides a sense of formal rhythm and interest that serves as a linear tool moving the viewer’s eye around the page. Stang’s romantic notions present in her photographs are supported by equally calming text furthering the enchanting portrait of Florence.

Lynn Rocco

## RECEIVED AND NOTED

### Photos that Changed the World.

Edited by Peter Stepan (Munich: Prestel, 2006), \$19.95 sb.

In lavish two-page spreads, this book presents more than ninety of history’s most memorable photographs — from the Wright Brothers’ first flight to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, from the Martin Luther King’s speech “I Have a Dream” to Nelson Mandela’s release from prison. The book features pictures from photography masters such as Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, Yousuf Karsh, Diane Arbus, and James Nachtwey, as well as iconic images from lesser-known and unknown photojournalists. Essays accompany each photography and tell the story of each image.

**Weegee’s New York: Photographs 1935–1960.** By John Coplans (London: Schirmer Art Books, 2006), \$49.95 sb.

Weegee (1899–1968) is arguably the most famous pictorial chronicler of New York in the 1930s and 40s. On

his forays he recorded a city marked by the Great Depression, unemployment and poverty, mob violence and prostitution. Equipped with the invaluable street wisdom of a poverty-stricken childhood among Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side and the first news photographer allowed to have a police radio in his car, he often beat the cops to the scene of the crime to shoot pictures which would scream from the front page of the *Daily News* and the *Daily Mirror* the next morning. This volume presents 335 photographs preceded by an introductory essay by John Coplans in a special original-size reprint of a book that has itself become as legendary as the time it portrays and the mastermind behind it, Arthur (Usher) Fellig a.k.a. Weegee the Famous.

**Remembering Jack: Intimate and Unseen Photographs of the Kennedys.** By Jacques Lowe, text by Hugh Sidey, Thomasina Lowe, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., afterwards by Tom Wolfe (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2006) \$19.95 sb.

Jacques Lowe and his photographs capture the beauty, charm, optimism, and seeming indestructibility of the Kennedy family, making his pictures national treasures. Unfortunately, Jacques Lowe’s photographs were housed in a vault at the World Trade Center and were destroyed on September 11, 2001. However, after painstaking research, the photographs featured in the book were meticulously reconstructed through existing prints and contact sheets. Created in cooperation with the estate of the photographer, *Remembering Jack* features more than 600 of these photographs — half of which were unpublished before the hardcover edition.

**Cuba: The Natural Beauty.** By Clyde Butcher (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), \$29.95 hb.

The United Nations declared the year 2002 as “The Year of the Mountains” and encouraged countries all over the world to have environmental conferences regarding the conservation of mountains. The Conference for the Caribbean and the Americas was

held in Cuba, and Clyde Butcher was invited to photograph the mountains of Cuba for the conference. He spent three weeks photographing from Sierra Maestra to the east of the coast to the mogote region of the west coast — rain forests, waterfalls, and cliffs that drop off into a perfect ocean. The beauty and majesty of Cuba’s natural landscape are captured in his intimate compositions, their focus on shape and light, the horizon and the sky.

**The Portrait Now.** By Sandy Nairne and Sarah Howgate (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), \$40.00 sb.

In today’s art world, many artists are using portraiture to explore complex issues of identity. *The Portrait Now* brings together more than eighty portraits from internationally acclaimed artists to demonstrate the accomplishment and inventiveness of the art form. Challenging the boundaries of figurative art, these works often go beyond likeness, break free of traditional media, and respond to complicated political, religious, and social issues. Recent works by John Currin, Sally Mann, Catherine Opie, Chuck Close, Lucian Freud, Thomas Ruff, Wolfgang Tillmans, Vik Muniz, Thomas Struth, and others.

**An Inner Silence: The Portraits of Henri Cartier-Bresson.** By Agnès Sire and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006), \$45.00 hb.

Over a fifty-year period, Henri Cartier-Bresson photographed some of the most eminent personalities of the era, as well as ordinary people. This book was published to coincide with the first exhibition at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris that was drawn entirely from the organization’s archives, and features both well-known images and previously unpublished portraits.

**Where We Find Ourselves.** By Justin Kimball (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), \$45.00 hb.

From National Lampoon’s Vacation to the disastrous camping trips immortalized in Calvin and Hobbes, the American family vacation has often been portrayed as a nonstop comedy

of errors. But despite the often-humorous complications, a family vacation is also an earnest escape from ordinary life and all its relentless demands. Many families don’t get to retreat to luxurious resorts and tropical getaways, but instead go to city parks, public beaches, or even their own backyards to find relief and relaxation. Justin Kimball chronicles this poignant slice of American life.

**Niagara.** By Alex Soth, Essays by Richard Ford and Phillip Brookman (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), \$60.00 hb.

By way of follow-up to his debut monograph *Sleeping by the Mississippi*, Alec Soth turns his eye to another ironic body of water, Niagara Falls. And as with his photographs of the Mississippi, these images are less about natural wonder than human desire. Working over the course of two years on both the American and Canadian sides of the falls, Soth edited the results of his labors down to a tight and surprising album. He depicts newlyweds and naked lovers, motel parking lots, pawnshop wedding rings, and love letters from subjects he photographed. Niagara brings viewers both the passion and the disappointment — a remarkable portrayal of modern love and its aftermath.

**See No Evil.** By Neil Selkirk (Tucson: Nazraeli Press, 2006), \$75.00 hb.

In *See No Evil*, Neil Selkirk, cuts through a broad swathe of subject matter — from the dignitaries at parades to farm animals at auction, from Cabinet members to cowboys. This book is a series of tableaux of people, animals, and places in which roles are acted out — sometimes in pursuit of recognition, sometimes in pursuit of meaning and, sometimes, pursued and overtaken by both.

**A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography.** John Raeburn (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), \$35.00 sb.

During the 1930s, the world of photography was unsettled, exciting, and boisterous. John Raeburn’s *A Staggering Revolution* recreates the energy of the era by surveying pho-

tography’s rich variety of innovation, exploring the aesthetic and cultural achievements of its leading figures, and mapping the paths their pictures blazed in the culture’s imagination.

**Landscape A.** By Nicolas Faure, Essays by Hans Ibelings and Daniel Girardin (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), \$55.00 hb.

Nick Faure has been photographing the Swiss landscape since the 1990s, concentrating in particular on the amalgam of traditional and modern scenery that he finds along the highways, where technology, architecture, and a certain concept of nature merge. The motorways, which now crisscross the country, at once divide it into parts and also constitute a whole new territory in themselves. Faure cruises its apparently natural but fundamentally man-made surroundings, eliciting views that characterize a new Switzerland.

**Lorna Simpson.** By Okwui Enwezor (New York: Abrams, 2006), \$45.00 hb.

*Lorna Simpson* presents a comprehensive examination of this artist’s remarkable achievement and features a conversation among Lorna Simpson, artist Isaac Julien, and Studio Museum in Harlem Director Thelma Golden. Lorna Simpson first became well known in the mid-1980s for her large-scale photograph and text works that confront and challenge narrow, conventional views of gender, identity, culture, history, and memory. With the African American woman as a visual point of departure, Simpson innovatively uses the figure to examine the ways in which gender and culture shape the interactions, relationships, and experiences of our lives in contemporary multiracial America.

**Instant Light: Tarkovsky Polaroids.** Edited by Giovanni Chiaromonte and Andrey A. Tarkovsky (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006), \$24.95 sb.

This beautifully produced book is composed of sixty luminous Polaroids taken by the Russian director Andrey Tarkovsky in Russia and Italy between 1979 and 1984. The stunning, often haunting, images from the direc-

tor’s life reveal him to be a master of the still as well as the moving image. The photos convey a radiant melancholy of lengthening shadows and trees looming through misty dawns and exquisite still lifes and glimmering ruins, together with portraits of his family.

**Boxers.** By Carol Huebner Venezia (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), \$30.00 sb.  
Boxing offers those working class men who learn the sport a slim chance of realizing the American dream. But the price for social standing and above-average income is often broken bones and chronic health problems. In contrast, in Assisi, in the center of the Italian boxing world, boxing is about athletic competition and the art of the sport. *Boxers* intersperses Carol Huebner Venezia’s photographs from these two contrasting environments. In the U.S., her subject is Brooklyn’s Gleason’s Gym, the oldest and most famous boxing ring in the world, training ground for such literal heavyweights as Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Forman, Jake La Motta, and Mike Tyson. Venezia shows neither stars nor spectacular matches — her work captures the intense atmosphere of the gym, and the lives of these modern warriors, idealized, honored, and ultimately discarded.

**Refractions.** By Ralph Gibson (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), \$19.95 sb.  
In *Refractions*, Ralph Gibson compiles his “Notes on the Aesthetics of Photography,” a significant contribution to both practical and intellectual considerations for understanding and making photographs. It will be of interest to students, experienced practitioners, teachers, and collectors alike, as it contains the insights of one of the master protagonists of the photographic medium.

**Recycled Realities.** By John Willis and Tom Young (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), \$45.00 hb.  
We throw away literally tons of trash everyday, and often never consider where it goes after the garbage truck picks it up. But the fate of the discarded fragments of our lives is a

long journey, one which ultimately ends at isolated sites and lots across America. Photographers John Willis and Tom Young spent nearly four years documenting such sites, as they captured the subtle yet powerful narrative hidden within the paper waste bales at a mill in Massachusetts.

**Husk of Time: The Photographs of Victor Masayesva.** By Victor Masayesva, Jr., introduction by Beverly R. Singer (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2006), \$24.95 sb.  
The poignant images splashed pm the pages of *Husk of Time* will leave readers wanting to explore the depths of Victor Masayesva, Jr.’s intriguing mind. His talent lies in creating layered images of American Indian life, with a mix of photography and hand painting. This book takes a reader along a photographic journey equipped with striking images and provocative essays about the Hopi culture.

**Perfect Intimacy.** By Lili Almog (Brooklyn: powerHouse Books, 2006), \$39.95 hb.  
Over the last two years, Lili Almog has made extensive visits to nuns in three different Carmelite monasteries — one in Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, where the order was founded and assumed its name in the year 1200; the first Carmelite monastery in the United States, in Port Tobacco, MD; and one located at Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. The result of the work, *Perfect Intimacy*, is an experience of the cloistered world these nuns live in, and a documentation of their state of mind, relationship with God, and spiritual identity.

**Vanishing.** By Antonin Kratochvil, text by Michael Persson (Millbrook: de.MO, 2006), \$54.00 hb.  
Antonin Kratochvil has long associated himself with what could be called “difficult” subject matter. His first book, *Broken Dream*, was a tour de force of the war-ravaged societies of Communist era Eastern bloc countries. *Vanishing* only broadens the scope of territory covered, taking under its purview a wide range of lands

and peoples and is the result of work from nearly twenty years of travel.

**The Reverend.** By James Perry Walker, foreword by Will D. Campbell (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), \$35.00 hb.  
For six years, from 1976 until the reverend’s death in 1981, Walker photographed this circuit preacher, the black congregation he served, and the roads he traveled. *The Reverend* depicts the life and death of an African American minister who spread the Gospel and inspired his congregants in West Tennessee and north Mississippi.

**City 2000.** Edited by Teri Boyd (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), \$49.95 hb.  
Inspired by a wish to capture Chicago’s magnitude and vibrancy, Chicago native and Lands’ End founder Gary Comer formulated an idea to take “a year-long snapshot of the city,” beginning with the first minute of the new millennium and ending with the last minute of the year 2000. *City 2000* includes the work of more than 200 photographers who spent the year chronicling the city.

**Wondrous Cold: An Antarctic Journey.** By Joan Myers (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2006), \$35.00 hb.  
For centuries Antarctica has captured the imagination of explorers, scientists, and armchair travelers as the world’s least understood continent. Photographer Joan Myers set out to see for herself why people are drawn to such an inhospitable and uncompromising place. *Wondrous Cold* features more than 180 of Myers’s color and black-and-white images.

**Rick Sammon’s Travel and Nature Photography.** By Rick Sammon (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), \$29.95 sb.  
A travel and nature photographer should be prepared for any number of diverse destinations. Rick Sammon shares tips from his own professional experience as a traveling photographer in many different settings and with many different subjects. ■



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### IN THIS ISSUE

- Barbara L. Michaels on Eugène Atget
- Nancy Brokaw on Ricardo Barros
- Blake Gopnik on Charles Sheeler
- Lynn Keyser on Wendel White
- A Lynn Saville Portfolio: Bridges
- Rosemary Ranck: A Sense of Place
- Book reviews and more

### IN FOLLOWING ISSUES

- Nancy Brokaw on Nancy Hellebrand
- Robert Hirsch Interviews Carl Chiarenza
- The Trouble with Facebook
- John Grant on "Photographing the Dead": Censorship and War Photography
- Jayme Guokas Interviews Emmet Gowin

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