originality of authors. Like Barthes, Foucault politicized photography without linking it to any particular social movement or cause.

For photographers and critics, the writings of Barthes and Foucault opened the way to a philosophical and historical reconsideration of photographic practice and discredited pictures of the kind deemed original by virtue of individual expression. Their ideas suggested a new image-making, cognizant of the social reproduction of meaning, especially in mass media. Such ideas were close to those discussed and acted upon by Rosler, Sekula, and Lonidier, who tried to find new ways to integrate political action and camerawork. The photographers who admired both Barthes and Foucault, however, were frequently less politically active than the new social documentarians. They sought new insights and incentives for picture-making, not for directions on how to change society.

One of the most powerful ideas taken from Barthes and other thinkers concerned the futility of originality. Since mass-media photography was replete with messages, new pictures were not needed. In part or in full, existing images could be appropriated and re-exhibited. These "ready-mades" differed from the everyday objects earlier proposed as art by Marcel Duchamp (see Fig. 8.19), in that they were not things but pictures of things frequently marketed to arouse consumer desire. Some photographers argued that these acts of appropriation were inherently subversive, because the effect of seeing mass-media images framed in a new context would enlighten and politicize beholders. The recognition that images pilfered from magazines and newspapers had visual forebears in Dada photography, as well as in experimental camerawork between the world wars, sparked a renewed interest in what had hitherto been a neglected area of historical scholarship.

Beginning in the late 1970s, American critics such as Rosalind Krauss, Craig Owens, Hal Foster, and Douglas Crimp focused on the demise of the original as a vastly important sign that Modernism, with its enthronement of artistic expression and originality, was also dying. Two widely read essays by Crimp, "Pictures" (1977) and "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism" (1980), linked photography to French theory and to Benjamin's notions of aura and originality. Crimp was also among the earliest observers to see the fulfillment of contemporary theory in new approaches to photography, such as those employed by Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) (see Fig. 13.6) and Sherrie Levine (b. 1947), whom he included in the 1977 New York exhibition "Pictures," from which the essay was derived. By the late 1970s, photography was rapidly emerging as the vogue art, not simply because of its growing acceptance in the art world, but because of the way it dovetailed in practical terms with contemporary concerns about representation and originality. Simultaneously, the term "Postmodern" became current, to characterize what was increasingly perceived as a new period following Modernism.

THE POSTMODERN ERA

The concept of the Postmodern or Postmodernity predated what has become known as the Postmodern era. Historian Arnold Toynbee employed the term in *A Study of History* (written before World War II, but not published until 1947) to speculate on a vast historical period that began in the late nineteenth century, and which would culminate with the decline of Western power and the rise of non-Western societies. Toynbee's sweeping hypothesis was largely forgotten in the late twentieth century when Jean-François Lyotard's dense, short 1979 book *The Postmodern Condition* (English translation, 1984) posited Postmodernism as the next phase of Modernism. Lyotard maintained that Modernism's successor was already at work, disintegrating "metanarratives," or grand, longstanding social rationales about the improvability of the human condition made possible by the progress of knowledge, especially science. As these overarching visions declined, Lyotard argued that they would be replaced not by other unifying ideas but by a welter of competing notions, whose fertile chaos would feed a new freedom from the oppression and authority of scientific knowledge.

Lyotard's analysis was fanciful, underestimating the predominance of science and the prodigious ability of capitalism to adapt with the times. Nevertheless, from his book, philosophers, social commentators, critics, and artists construed a broad theory that explained and justified the present moment as a state of flux, propelled by instantaneous information churned out by mass media, and shaped by global finance and business networks, whose prevalence lessened the importance of the nation state in the world order.

In art circles, Postmodernism came to mean a rejection of themes and subjects that interested Modernist artists, such as abstraction and the subjective expression of unique intellects. Artists in many media reintroduced the human figure, or turned to mass-produced kitsch for image sources. Photographers, too, dwelled on the body, often deriving or appropriating images from commerce, advertising, and film. Some explored the potentials of the blurred image, in which forms were suggested but not clearly delineated.

In his essay for the catalog accompanying the "Pictures" exhibit, Crimp acknowledged how the experience of media created a generation gap between those raised on television, movies, and ubiquitous magazines, and those brought up in the less image-saturated culture of the period prior to World War II. "To an ever greater extent," he wrote, "our experience is governed by pictures, pictures in newspapers and magazines, on television and in the cinema. Next to these pictures, firsthand experience begins to retreat, to seem more and more trivial. While it once seemed that pictures had the function of interpreting reality, it now seems that they have usurped it."[19] Soon after, in response to another exhibit ominously called "Last Exit: Painting," critic Thomas Lawson argued that "the camera, in all its manifestations, is our god, dispensing what we mistakenly take to be truth."[20]

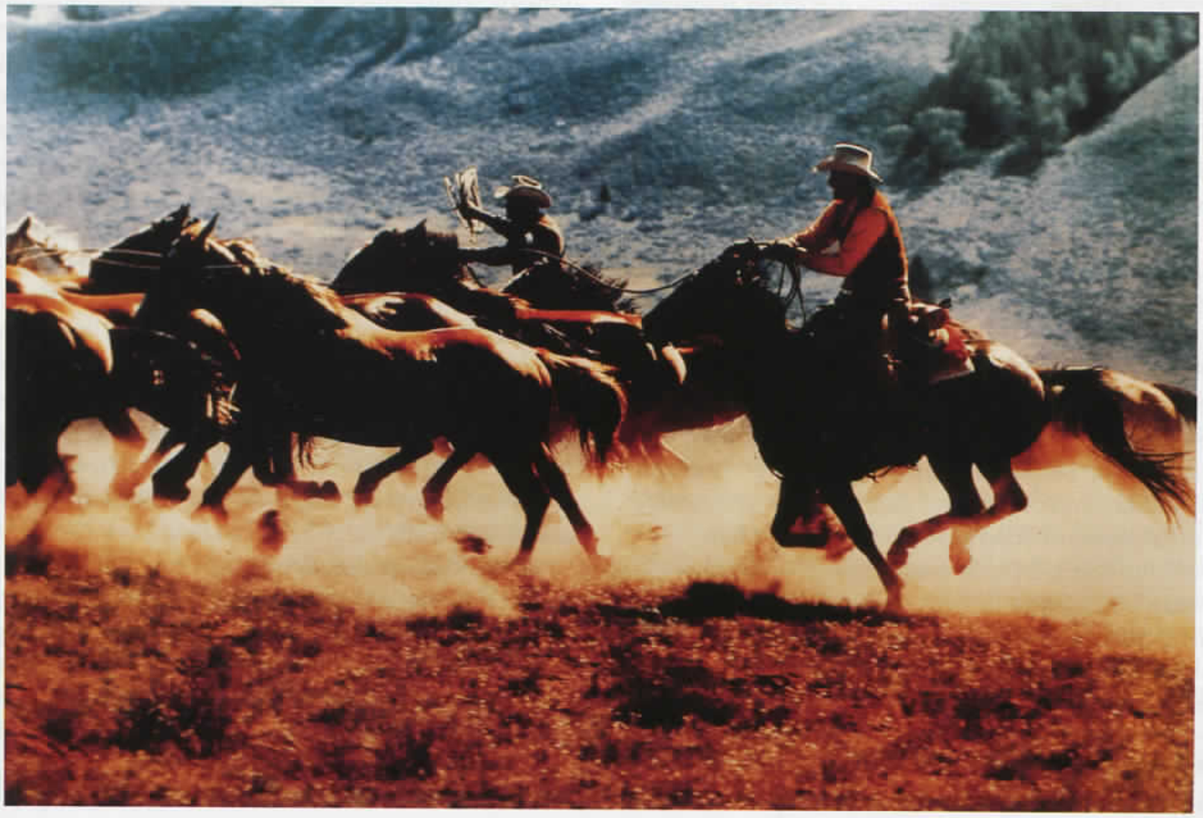
Although her writing was seldom cited by commentators on Postmodernism and photography, cultural critic Susan Sontag (1933–2004) built her widely read book *On Photography* (1977) upon the notion of a similar, even more noxious "Image-World," in which photographs injured human memory and drained away the instinct to know the world at first hand. This remove from reality, in Sontag's view, left us passive viewers at a spectacle of recycled pictures.[21] Sontag did not, however, put forward the consummate Postmodern conviction that, because of its omnipresence, the image-world provided a new source of realism for artists. She maintained that an authentic, valuable, first-hand reality had been plundered and debased. In sum, a chilly, sobering down-draft in the intellectual climate whirled away any remnants of Marshall McLuhan's rapturous 1960s' praise for the mass media's educational and peace-making powers (see p. 391).

POSTMODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHY

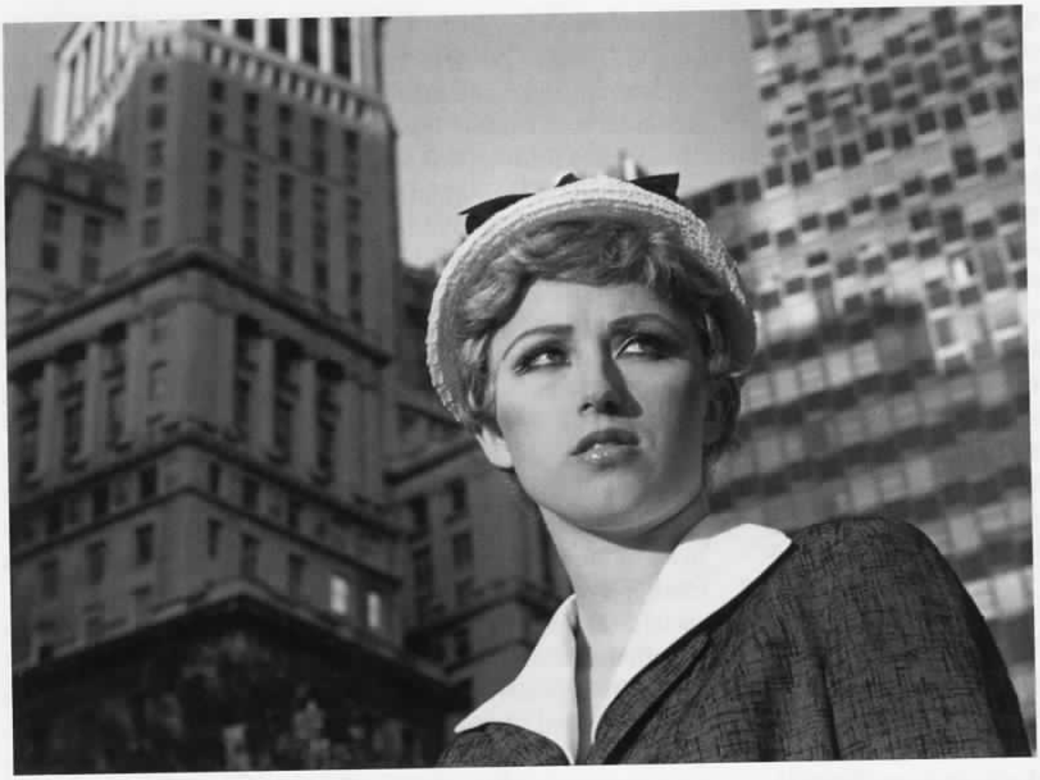
Among the artists included in Douglas Crimp's "Pictures," and discussed in his "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," was Sherrie Levine, who confronted the art world with her rephotographed well-known images made by famous photographers such as Edward Weston, Walker Evans, and Eliot Porter. Called APPROPRIATION, Levine's reuse of images such as Walker Evans's image of Allie Mae Burroughs (see Fig. 9.1), highlighted the ubiquity of the copy and the insignificance of the original. To make her point, she photographed art and photography examples reproduced in books so as to contrast copying a copy with original archival images and printing original negatives. By taking an image, rather than making an image, Levine repressed the notion of her art as original and unique. By the late twentieth century, Levine's appropriations were themselves being appropriated by other artists, including Dylan Stone (b. 1967), who took her black-and-white copies of Eugène Atget's Paris interiors and exhibited them as small three-dimensional, full-color scenes set into shoe boxes.

More frequently, appropriationists procured mass-media images. Artist and writer Richard Prince (b. 1949) found his source images in magazines, cutting, cropping, rearranging, and reprinting them to isolate the devices used in advertising to summon up desire (Fig. 13.5). Levine and Prince are typical examples of the powerful convergence of image-making and social analysis that occurred during the last decades of the twentieth century. Social science observation by artists, expressed primarily in art, became known as critical practice.

In "Pictures," Douglas Crimp noted the work of Cindy Sherman, who would become one of the most celebrated image-makers of the 1980s and 1990s. Her series of black-and-white photographs called *Untitled Film Stills* seemed to be derived from 1950s B-movie melodramas and from film stills—that is, the photographs displayed in theater lobbies.



13.5
RICHARD PRINCE, *Untitled* (Cowboys), 1993. Ektacolor print. Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.



13.6
CINDY SHERMAN, *Untitled Film Still,* 1978.

Sherman costumed and coiffed herself to look like troubled and anxious women from B-movies of the 1950s. She enacted the stereotypical role of the woman in jeopardy, not taken from a specific film, but improvised from an array of them.

The film still exaggerated movie-born gender stereotypes, especially that of the beleaguered, fretful, or frightened heroine. While Sherman found suggestions in film-still poses, she did not make reference to any particular movie. Photographing herself in make-up, wigs, and costumes, she imitated or evoked a culturally prevalent image (Fig. 13.6). Viewers could recognize the source of her images, not *because she actually clipped them from old movies, but* because the poses she assumed condensed the much repeated portrayal of women in films.

Crimp pointed out that Sherman's self-portraits do not ever reveal Cindy Sherman. Her faux film fragments played up the notion of the Postmodern copy and its opposition to the ideas of invention and genius. Sherman's later work shifted to larger, deeply saturated color pictures, in which she performed appearances based on pin-ups, fairy tales, and Old Master paintings. Eventually, she took herself out of the picture, substituting prostheses or plastic body parts used in medical education, and combining them to form grotesque bodies in the manner of Surrealist photographer Hans Bellmer (see Fig. 8.26). Despite these changes, Sherman's interest remained constant throughout the last decades of the twentieth century, as she continued to expose not only the shallowness of gender stereotyping but also the titillating pleasure of looking.

ART PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHOTOGRAPHY-BY-ARTISTS

The mid-1970s witnessed the increased use of photography by artists who usually worked in other media, and the retreat from conventional art photography by image-makers such as Cindy Sherman. Noting the development, critic Abigail Solomon-Godeau commented that "although the attempt to draw a distinction between art photography and photography done by artists might initially be taken for a semantic quibble, or worse, as informed by the desire to privilege the photographic work of artists over that of photographers, there remain significant differences in the two forms of practice."[22]

Art photography, of course, had a history going back to the beginnings of the medium. One of Daguerre's first successful photographs rendered a traditional art subject, the still life (see Fig. 1.14). The quintessential art photographer was Alfred Stieglitz, an unashamed elitist who positioned art photography as the moral opposite of crass commercial imaging. As Solomon-Godeau pointed out, art photographers continued to treasure subjective and intuitive expression, the intricacies of craft, and the sharp dividing line between fine art and commercial imagery. Briefly put, art photography aspired to the condition of painting, which meant recognition as a fully fledged art, and access to the intertwined realms of gallery and museum.

In contrast, photography-by-artists owed little to the traditional aspirations and values of art photography. It critiqued the notion of personal expression, holding up to public view the way in which the mass media spewed out copies of copies of copies of stereotypes. For those who praised and those who disparaged her work, Cindy Sherman became the exemplar of the photography-by-artists movement. In fact, she was one of the first image-makers who worked exclusively in the medium to be called an artist rather than a photographer.[23] Of course, the renunciation of personal expression was central to the philosophy of Conceptual artists and photographers, such as Edward Ruscha, who dispassionately itemized and compiled readymade images of ordinary locations and buildings, such as gas stations and motel swimming pools (see Fig. 11.67).

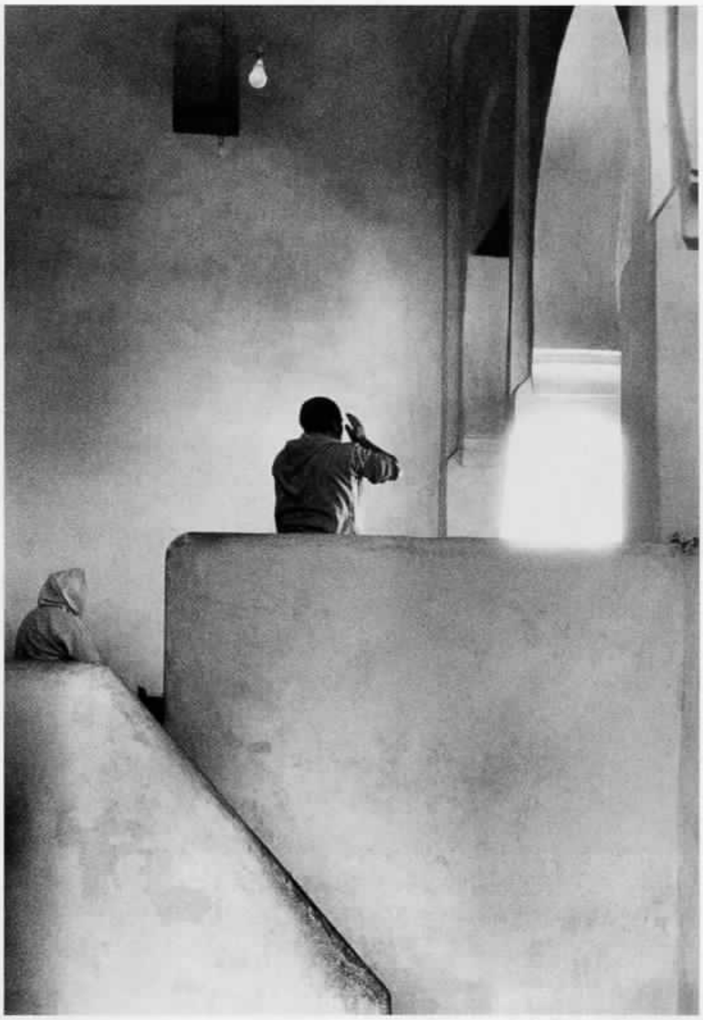
Ideally, photography-by-artists was intended as part of a broad social intervention, aimed at exposing the so-called illusions of individuality and originality that formed the bulwark of the art market. In fact, the boundary between art photography and photography-by-artists broke down almost as soon as it was conceived. By the mid-1980s, photography-by-artists had not shattered or reformed the art market, but had refreshed and recommercialized the notion of the avant-garde artist, whose attacks on mainstream society and consumerism had become an expected and marketable model of artistic behavior. Photography-by-artists was represented in chic galleries and showcased in prominent exhibitions and books. Because of its links to contemporary theories of language, notions of representation, and gender identity, photography-by-artists received an international academic welcome. It was the recurrent subject of lectures and discussions, not only in art and photography departments but also in literature, philosophy, and sociology classes.

For its part, the art photography exemplified by Stieglitz did not lose its appeal for the public but considerably increased in monetary value, as evidenced by the high auction prices recorded during the late twentieth-century economic boom. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the uncertain distinctions between art photography and photography-by-artists helped break down the compartmentalization of museum departments according to media, a configuration that was already taxed by hard-to-categorize activities such as installation and performance art. Heads of museum painting departments and photography departments vied with each other to collect work by such artists as Cindy Sherman. Sometimes museum photography departments broadened their acquisition goals; at other times new positions were created to embrace what were, and are, called "new media."

By the end of the century, the terms "photo-based artist" and "photo-based work" replaced "photography-by-artists," and with that substitution also vanished the association of photography-by-artists with a tough, ongoing social or media criticism. At century's end, photo-based work was normal fare. Surveying the New York gallery scene during the year 2000, critic David Rimanelli observed a "narrowing of that time-honored (if rarely acknowledged) distinction between those spaces devoted to contemporary art (including that which is photographically based) and venues catering to photography." "Given its absolute and tiresome omnipresence," he opined, photography "looks like the academic painting of our time."[24]

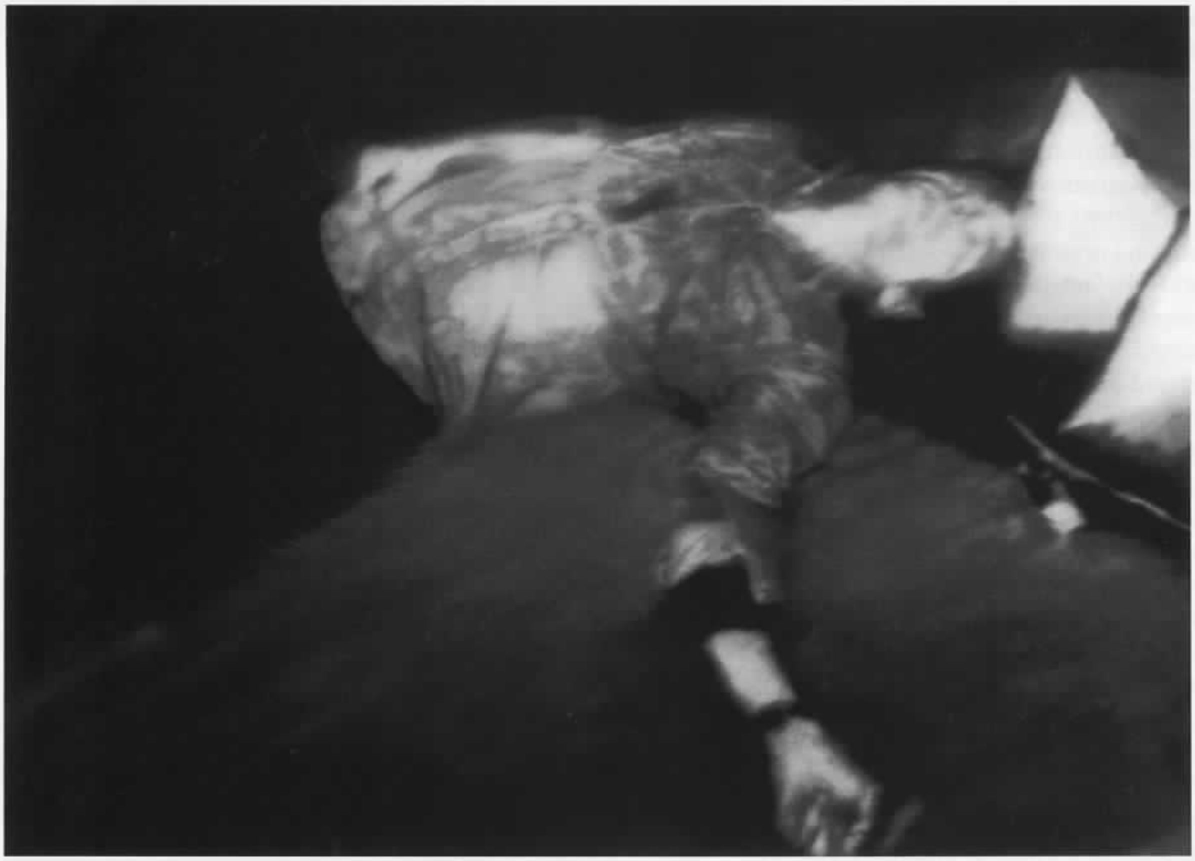
BLURRING THE SUBJECT

The Postmodern notion of indeterminate, circular meaning gave the blurred image a new lease on life as a multivalent symbol, alluding to transient and fragmentary moments, fuzzy or disfigured identities, or indistinct and ambiguous knowledge. Interestingly, blur has had many uses in the history of photography, the best-known of which was the Pictorialist image, with its pretensions to High Art. More recently, photographers such as Duane Michals blurred the actions of human figures to add mystery and wonder to a scene. Likewise, Tunisian photographer Kamel Dridi (b. 1951) revealed Muslim religious life in North Africa and Saudi Arabia in photographs published in the leading French newspaper *Le Monde*. He uniquely employed blurred images to evoke, for people brought up in the Muslim faith, early memories of ceremonial movements and gestures (Fig. 13.7).



13.7
KAMEL DRIDI, *Mosque, Fes*, 1987. Société Française de la Photographie, Paris.

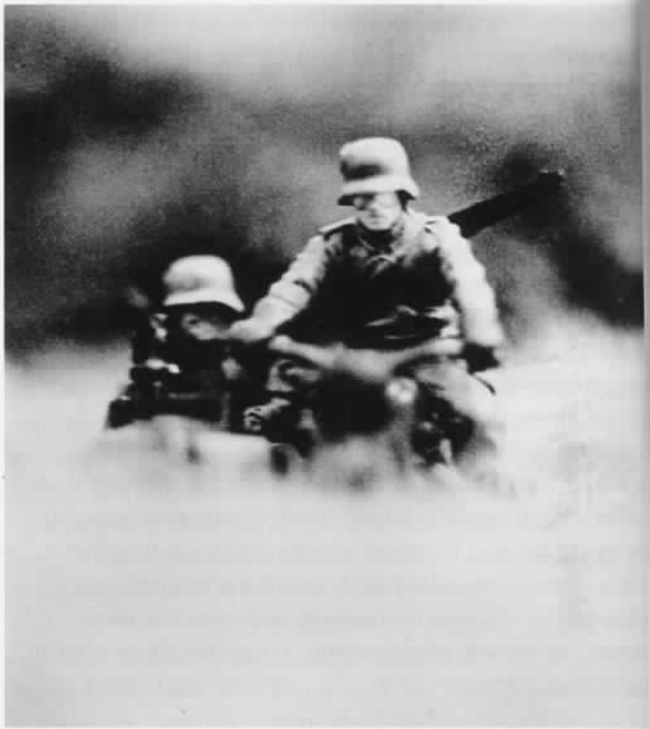
Since the mid-1960s, German painter Gerhard Richter (b. 1932) has reworked photographic sources, often his own snapshots, creating paintings that maintain photography's deep perspective. While the painting is still wet, he pulls a squeegee across its surface, blurring the subject almost to the point of unrecognizability. Some of his so-called "photo



13.8
GERHARD RICHTER, *Shot Down (1)*, 1988, from his series *18 Oktober 1977*. Oil on canvas, 39¼ × 55 in. (99.7 × 139.7 cm).

paintings" glow with suffused Romantic light, but others have a sinister dreaminess to them, as if the subject, hovering between painting and photography, cannot or will not allow itself to be fully grasped (Fig. 13.8). Produced a decade after the events, Richter's paintings refer to a specific incident of the deaths in prison of political activists, only to obscure it like a memory that is ten years old. Through blur, which indicates an eye dimmed with tears and a mind clouded with opinions, he transformed simple archival photographs into symbols for the tangled issue of German historical memory in and of the twentieth century. The smudged surfaces of the canvases erased the sharpness of their newspaper sources, imitating not only hazy recall but also the sense of lost idealism, felt especially by Germans who lived through the tensions and moral compromises of the Cold War.

Blur also found a place in staged photographs. While they were students at Yale University, photographer David Levinthal (b. 1949) and Garry Trudeau (b. 1948), the cartoonist who draws the political comic strip *Doonesbury*, collaborated on a book called *Hitler Moves East: A Graphic Chronicle, 1941–43* (1977). Levinthal leads viewers to believe that they are looking at old, blurred action shots of World War II taken by an intrepid photojournalist. In fact, he fabricated table-top scenes with toy soldiers and then obscured the resulting photograph sufficiently so that its miniature source

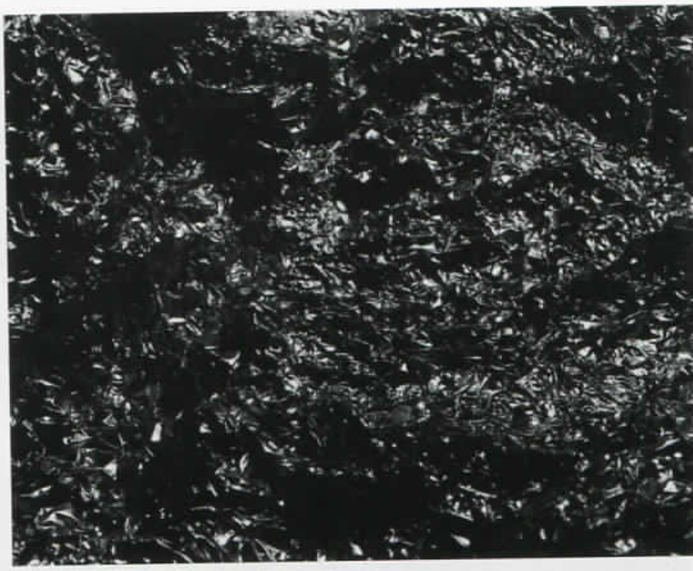


13.9
DAVID LEVINTHAL, *Untitled* from the series *Hitler Moves East*, 1975–1977. Courtesy the artist.

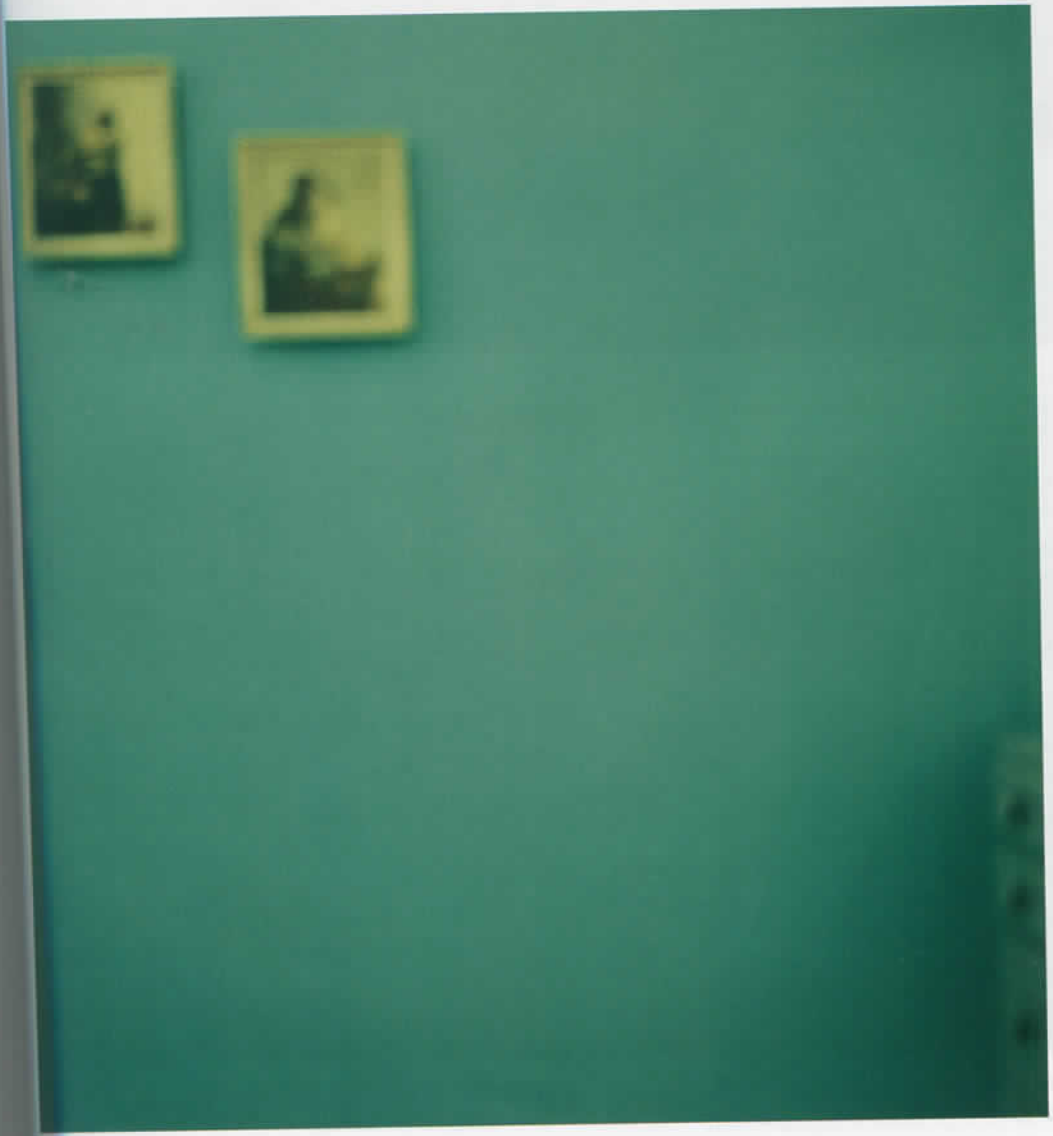
was not immediately apparent. Viewers fill in missing visual information from their memories of war portrayed in photojournalism and film (Fig. 13.9).

The work of James Welling (b. 1951) is also purposefully misleading. He photographs what appear to be black-and-white renditions of abstract paintings, or deeply shadowed abstract photographs in the manner of Aaron Siskind and Frederick Sommer (see Figs. 11.3, 11.5). Welling relies on the viewer's recollection of abstract art, especially as seen for years in black-and-white photography, to accept the absence of recognizable subject matter in *August 16a* (Fig. 13.10). In fact, the picture is no more than a shadowy close-up of aluminum foil.

German-born photographer Uta Barth (b. 1958) creates fragmentary, fuzzy pictures that depict light and color punctuated by wisps of identifiable subject matter (Fig. 13.11). In Barth's work, any trace of narrative seems to dissolve, an effect hastened by her off-kilter, seemingly out-of-focus approach. In fact, she does focus her work, but on an



13.10
JAMES WELLING, *August 16a*, 1980. Gelatin silver print.



13.11
UTA BARTH, *Ground #42*, 1994. Color photograph on panel.

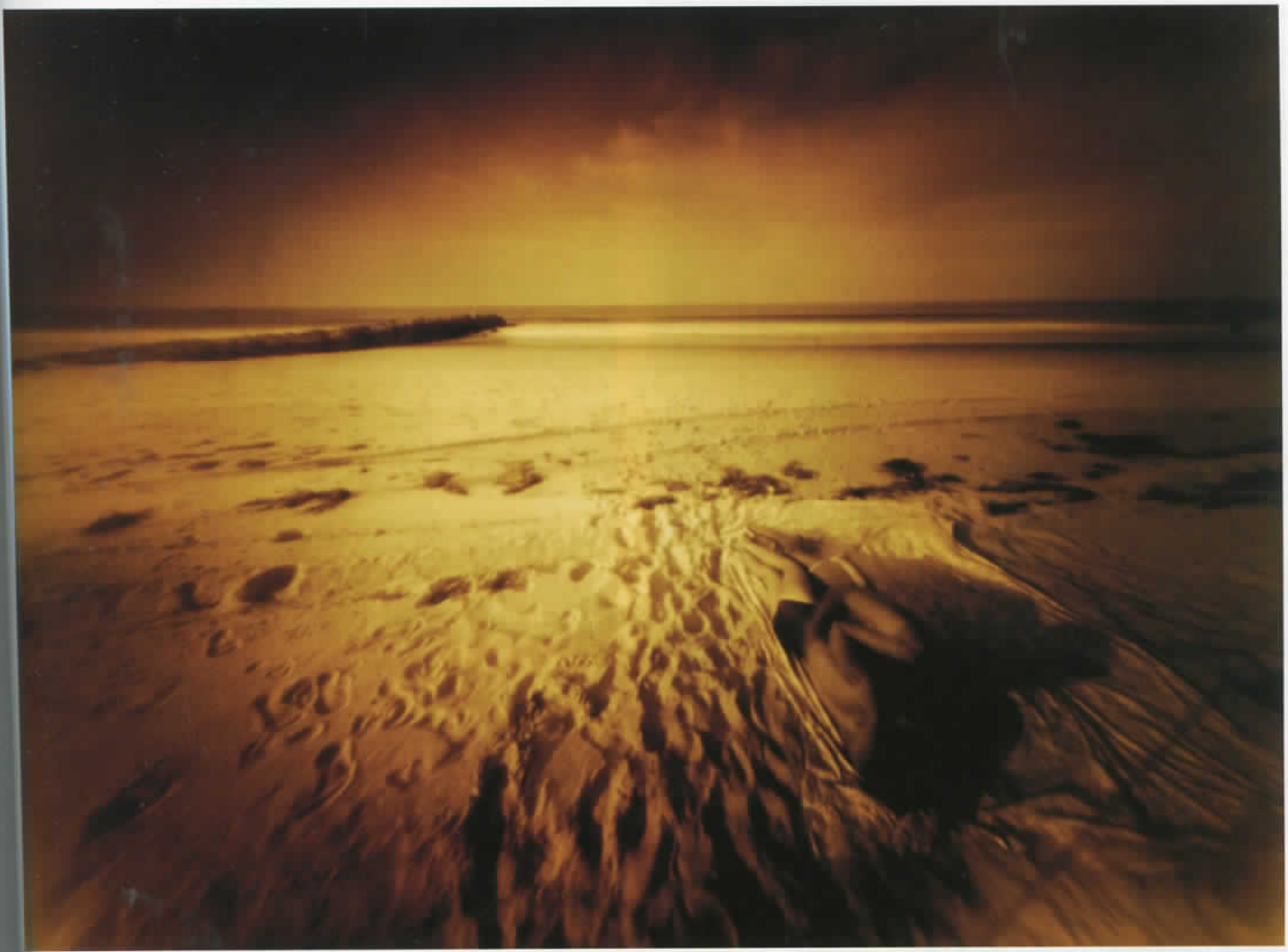
The rooms Barth photographs are almost empty, emphasizing their existence as containers for light. She focuses here on the unoccupied foreground space so as to blur the dep of field out of which dimly emerge two reproductions of paintings by Johanne Vermeer, *The Milkmaid* (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam) on the left and *The Lacemaker* (Louvre, Paris) on the right Barth's technique recalls Julia Margare Cameron, for whom the avoidance of focus could suit the mood of her subje matter (see Fig. 3.20).

imaginary plane of space, rather than recognizable objects. She seeks to present the peripheral and marginal—the things that stand on the edge of our attention. To stress her interest in perception, she sometimes hangs her work at eye-level. Her photographs express the impossibility of intelligible experience or certain definition, as well as the desire, however repressed, to seek pleasure in simply looking. Her technique recalls the attitude of Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, for whom photographic focus had to fit the mood of the subject matter, not necessarily mimic the clarity of normal optical vision.

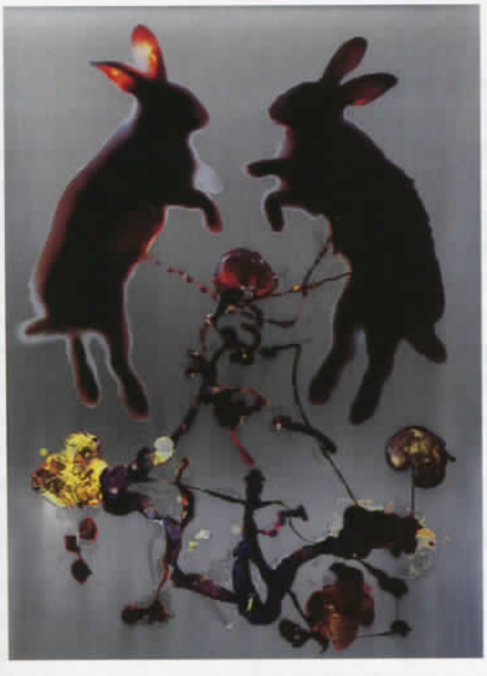
The black-and-white series by New York-based Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto (b. 1948) shares with Barth a regard for the fragile beauty of uncertainty, expressed in grainy atmospheric effects. Sugimoto often works in series, beginning with his eerie photographs of wildlife dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and including his lush black-and-white images of early twentieth-century movie theaters across the United States. For more than two decades, he has traveled the world seeking high vantage points from which to aim his camera at the point where the sky and ocean come together at the horizon (Fig. 13.12). The boundless vistas he portrays are reminiscent of Pictorialism's thronging gray tones. Sugimoto's work manifests the dichotomy between the rapture of visual pleasure and the cold comfort of human systems of measurement.

The PINHOLE CAMERA, favored by Pictorialists such as George Davison (see Fig. 6.10) because its wide angle stretched and fogged photography's typically deep pictorial space, was reinvestigated by late twentieth-century artists such as Barbara Ess (b. 1946) (Fig. 13.13). Along with Japanese photographer Nobuo Yamanaka (see pp. 381–82), Ess was one of the first image-makers in the period to

13.12
HIROSHI SUGIMOTO, ***Aegean Sea, Pilion 1*****, 1990.**



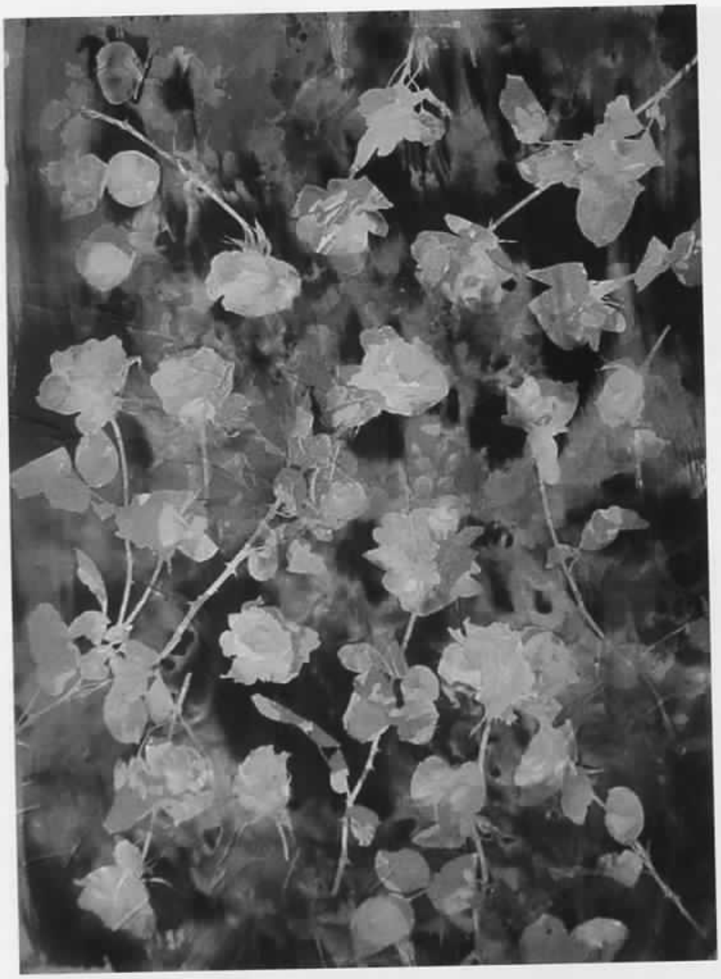
13.13
BARBARA ESS, *Untitled*, from her series *Food for the Moon*, 1986–87. Monochrome color photograph mounted on fiberboard. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



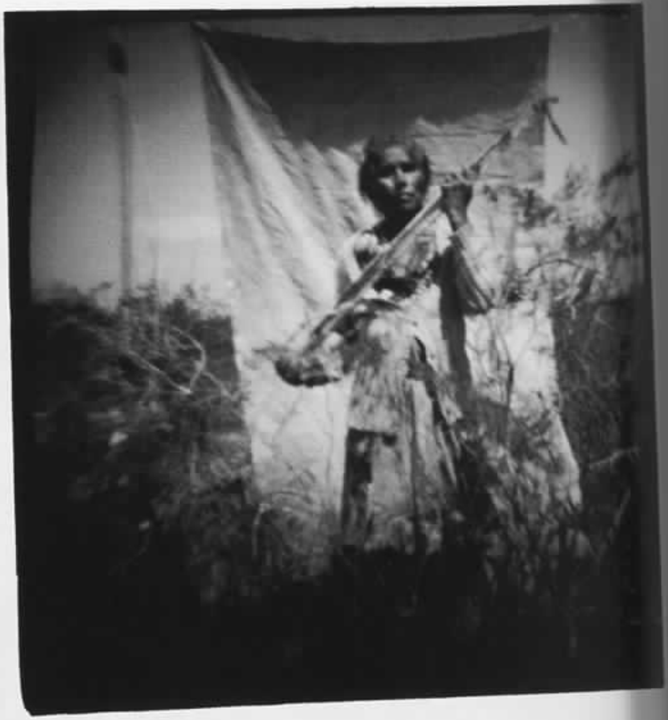
13.14
ADAM FUSS, *Wish*, 1992. Color photogram.

withdraw from the high-tech possibilities of advanced cameras and film, as well as computer enhancement, in favor of the simpler pinhole camera.

London-born Adam Fuss (b. 1961) is likewise disposed toward older, elementary forms of photography. He extensively employs cameraless image-making in the form of the PHOTOGRAM or what William Henry Fox Talbot called "photogenic drawing." Using a technique that also fueled experimental photography between the world wars, Fuss sometimes records only the action of light on sensitive film, or the concentric circles made by falling droplets of water. For the enigmatically titled *Wish* (1992), he arranged two rabbits as if they were heraldic animals on a medieval shield (Fig. 13.14). Fuss identifies more with painters than photographers, stating that he is less interested in Postmodern theory than in the expressive qualities of photographic techniques.



13.15
JOAN FONTCUBERTA, ***Ich danke Ihnen für die Rosen*****, from his series** ***Paper Gardens*****, 1990. Photogram on foil wrapping paper.**



13.16
CARLOS SOMONTE, ***Woman with Rattlesnake Skin, San Luis Potosí, Mexico (Señora con piel de serpiente, San Luis Potosí, Mexico)*****, 1990, from the series** ***The Last Poets*** **(*****Los ultimos poetas*****).**

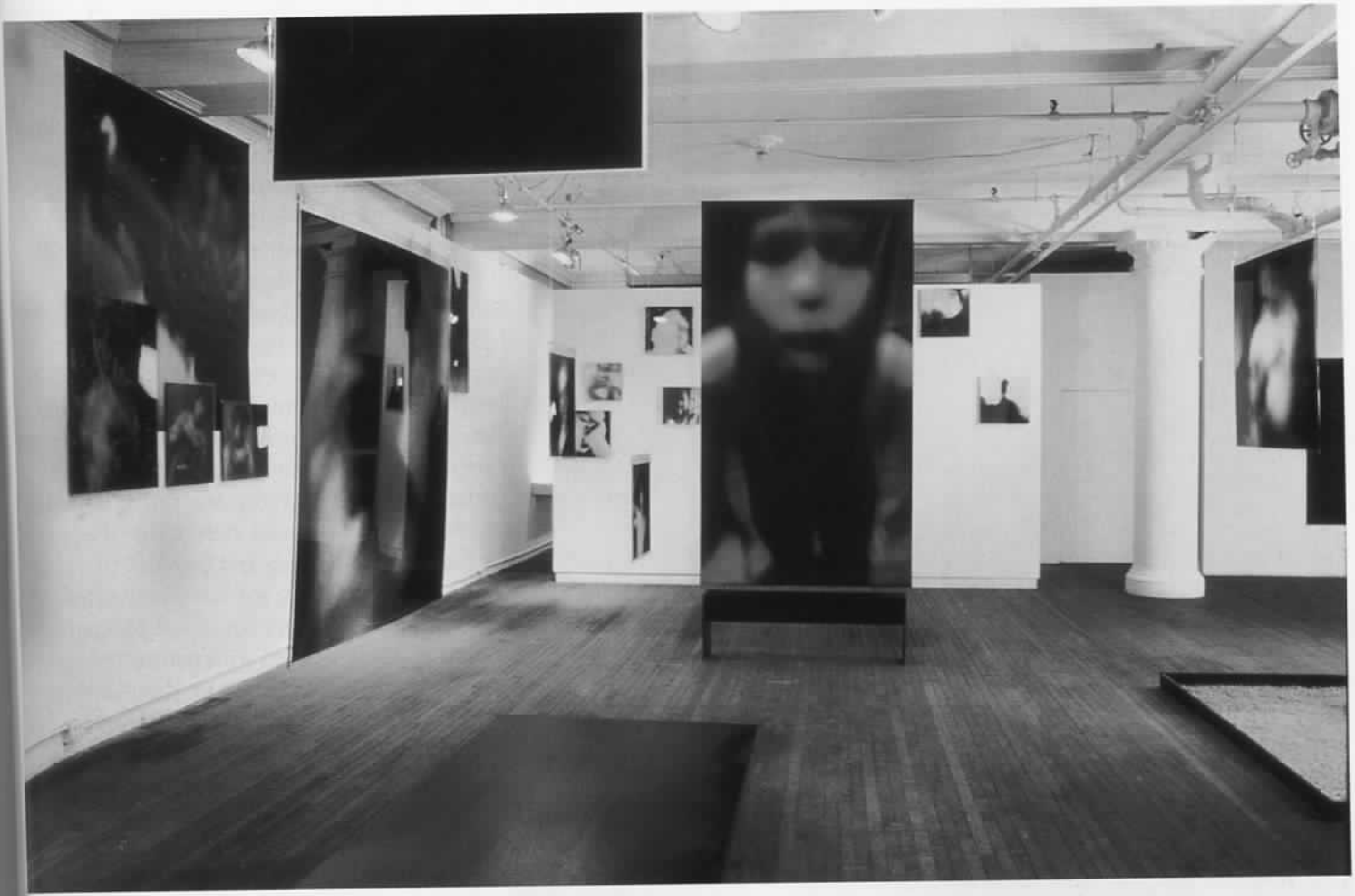
Somonte deliberately used an inexpensive camera to create a print looking deteriorated with age, perhaps to make his subjects look as though they have endured hardship for long periods of time, or as a visual metaphor for continuity between past and present.

By contrast, Spanish photographer Joan Fontcuberta was a Postmodernist before the movement began! From his precocious teenage years, he approached photography as the art of fabrication—in every sense of the word. His very first photographs were staged, and he quickly moved into montage. His use of the photogram is rooted in his axiom that a photograph best conveys that fact that it is a photograph, an idea that neatly reinforces Postmodern notions of media and representation. Even though a photogram is a trace of the objects set on or near the light-sensitive paper, Fontculberta toys with the viewer by not visually disclosing which of the flower images that impressed themselves on the final photograph were actual flowers and which were from mass-manufactured wallpaper (Fig. 13.15). In other words, the copy of the real is no more real than a stereotype.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, the DIANA camera and other inexpensive instruments found favor with photographers, who were attracted to its foggy, unevenly lit image. By shooting with a cheap plastic camera, Mexican photographer Carlos Somonte (b. 1956) rejected documentary realism in his series *The Last Poets*, which was based on images of the poor inhabitants of Mexico's northern and central desert areas (Fig. 13.16). Easy to achieve with a Diana camera, Barbara Pollack's blurry photographs require considerable planning. Her *The Family of Men* (1999) installation, which invoked the design of the 1955 exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art by suspending large-scale pictures at different heights (see Fig. 10.2), showed indistinct color photographs of her husband and son (Fig. 13.17). Pollack's main focus is voyeurism—that is, the desire to look—and what it feels like to be looked at. To that end, she intentionally blurs the image to frustrate the viewer's gaze, and make the viewer more aware of efforts to look.

FEMINISM AND POSTMODERN PHOTOGRAPHY

In an influential article titled "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," critic Craig Owens pointed out a convergence of "the postmodernism critique of representation," and "the feminist critique of patriarchy."[25] He looked back at Martha Rosler's series *The Bowery in Two*



13.17
BARBARA POLLACK, Installation view of *The Family of Men*, Thread-waxing Space, New York, 1999.

Pollack used out-of-date film and old Polaroid cameras to create *The Family of Men*. After exposure, she smeared and smudged the emulsion while it was developing. In contrast to Steichen's 1955 exhibition, "The Family of Man," Pollack's show displays not universal harmony, but interpersonal tension embodied in strained visual distortions

Inadequate Descriptive Systems (see Fig. 13.3), retroactively casting it as a Postmodern work because of Rosler's attempt to undermine the truth value of visual and verbal texts. He reasoned that her "refusal of mastery"—that is, a deliberate effort not to resolve meaning in an image—was a critique of representation that also related to contemporary feminist rejections of imposed gender identity.[26] Owens also enlisted Cindy Sherman's film stills to point out how the artist assumed roles so as to reveal them as gender stereotypes. Applying the psychoanalytic theory of French thinker Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), Owens was one of the first to fix on the notion that, if gender is not innate but culturally acquired, it can also be culturally rejected and redirected. The initial bridge Owens built between Postmodernism and feminism supported many subsequent accounts, and encouraged comparable investigations of received ideas on race and sexual preference.

The intense focus on gender as a kind of performance, rather than the expression of an inherent feminine or masculine temperament, followed a period in which some feminist photographers and photographic historians had begun to rehabilitate the reputations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron and Frances Benjamin Johnston. After producing the book *The Feminine Eye in Photography* (1973), at a time when the work of many women photographers was largely unknown, Californian photographer Judy Dater (b. 1941) created portraits showing women comfortable with their own bodies (Fig. 13.18). Several other studies and exhibitions attempted to show the breadth of women's photographic work. Anne Tucker's *The Woman's Eye* (1973), Val Williams's *Women Photographers: The Other Observers, 1900 to the Present* (1986), and Naomi Rosenblum's *A History of Women Photographers* (1994) helped gather initial data, and gave impetus to the ongoing study of the social factors that have excluded women from histories of photography.

The restoration of women's past photographic pursuits and the presentation of female sexuality began to be berated by critics, who attacked the uncomplicated notion that there was something distinctive about images by women. They

13.18
JUDY DATER, *Maureen with Fan*, 1972, from the book *Women and Other Visions*, 1972.

believed that it promoted the idea of an inherent feminine essence. For example, British writers Griselda Pollock and Janet Wolff asserted that there is no intrinsic feminine or masculine essence, only complex networks of culturally conditioned markers that construct what superficially appears to be coherent gender identity.[27] They questioned the experimental writings of French theorists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, both of whom put forward the concept of "writing from the body," or "feminine writing"—that is, the possibility of creative expression that eludes through indirection the dominant male point of view.

The French theorists' ideas were becoming widely persuasive in academic settings, including art schools, where it had already become important to visualize an alternative feminine condition, one sufficiently protean and anti-authoritarian to evade the pervasive gender stereotype of the nurturing, yet emotionally ruled woman. Conceptual artists such as the French image-maker Annette Messager (b. 1943) responded to this vein of feminist theory. Messager created her fragmented photo-pieces as an embodiment of Cixous's idea that the feminine was not fixed but was, instead, an aggregate of unstructured perspectives that thwarted summarization. In *Mes Voeux* (*My Vows*), Messager suspended from strings of different lengths several hundred photographs of women's body parts (Fig. 13.1).

Efforts to undermine the fixity of feminine identity discouraged the retrieval of information on women photographers simply because they were women. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, essentialist feminists—that is, people who believed that femininity is a real inborn trait—vied with culturalists, who held that gender roles were culturally determined. In photography, this argument ignited competing exhibition rationales and vigorous critical reviews. For instance, the 1987 show "Reclaiming Paradise: American Women Photograph the Land" was conceived to show a basic sameness underlying women's photography from different eras, a resemblance that stood in very opposition to landscape views taken by men. The exhibition hoped to show that women used visual strategies that indicate a caring attitude toward the earth, whereas, by contrast, men frame the land in ways that indicate a desire to possess and own it. Critic and photographer Deborah Bright (b. 1950) was among those who objected to the premise of a woman's landscape photography. She pointed out that aligning women with nature and natural functions had long been used historically to "devalue women and their cultural production." For Bright, the claim that women are "naturally" creative also suggested that men must create "artificially," through cultural and technological means alien to women.[28]

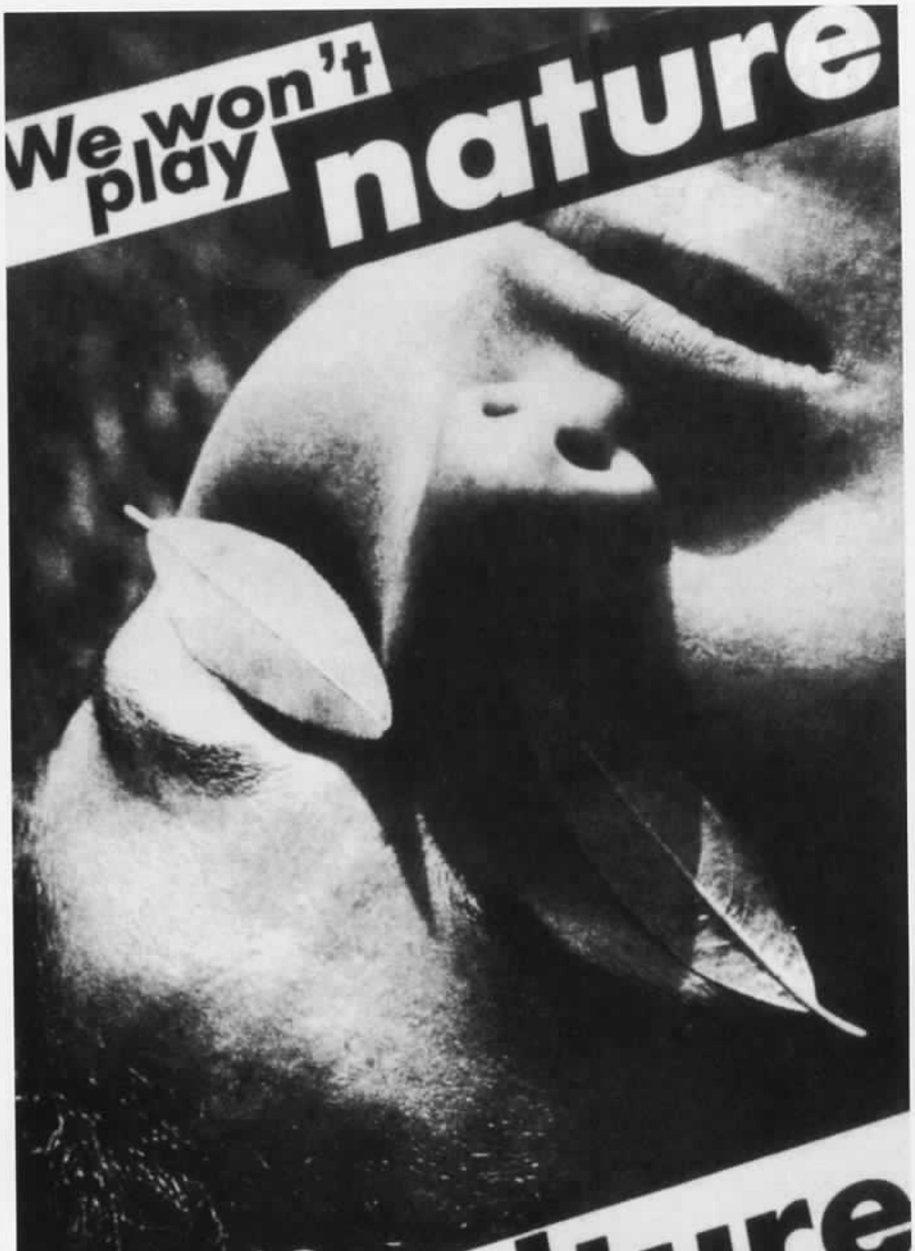
While scholars debated the desired direction of photographic history and practice, American graphic designer Barbara Kruger (b. 1945) culled photographically derived mass-media images for use in an extensive series of confrontational poster-like pictures based on Postmodern assumptions about women in society. Like experimental German photographers between the world wars, she inserted bold, blocky type derived from advertising into her compositions, both as design elements and for their meaning (Fig. 13.19). The art museum was only one location in which Kruger's work appeared; she also sought out public venues and commercial formats, putting her images and slogans on billboards and even department store shopping bags.

Despite the oppositional messages in her images, Barbara Kruger was well incorporated into the art world, the sales gallery, and even advertising, where her work was considered stylish. Indeed, by the mid-1990s, appropriation itself was mocked as a worn-out visual device, as when Amy Adler (b. 1967) photographed her own drawing of Sherrie Levine's appropriation of a photograph by Edward Weston.

CONSTRUCTED REALITIES

In a period of multiple convergences, one of the most fruitful for photographic practice was the hybridization of Conceptual art's interest in ideas, Postmodernism's investigation into visual and verbal signs, and the increased presence of installation art beginning in the late 1970s. The mixture was evident in the widespread practice sometimes referred to as the "staged photograph." Interestingly, attempts to create

13.19
BARBARA KRUGER, ***"We won't play nature to your culture,"*** **1983.**



fictions for the camera never acquired an accepted label. Especially in its early years, staging was awkwardly called the "fabricated-to-be-photographed" approach, meaning that a scene was composed mostly, but not always totally, of inanimate objects. Equally ambiguous terms were also tried, such as "the constructed photograph," which did not indicate the collage technique, but referred to any scenes assembled for the camera. As early as 1976, American critic A. D. Coleman outlined an extensive history for what he called the "directorial mode," in which he made the case that contemporary staged photographs had precedents, such as Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner's deliberate moving of a dead Confederate soldier so as to compose a more richly symbolic image (see Fig. 4.18), or the nineteenth-century STEREOGRAPH, in which many narrative scenes were enacted as a matter of course (see pp. 80–81).[29]

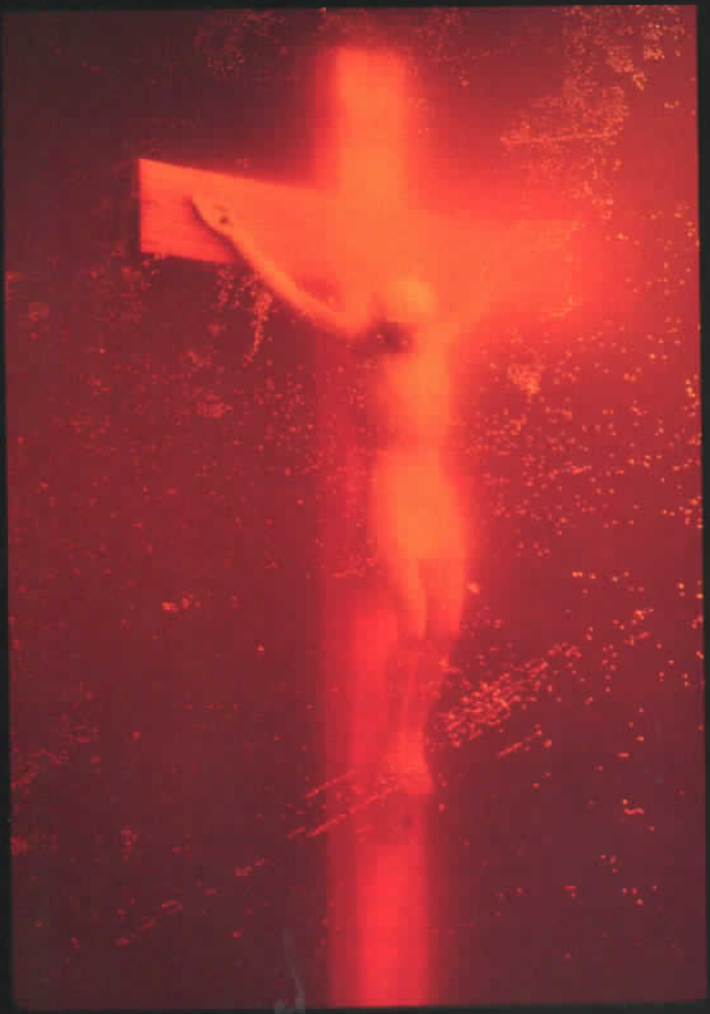
Of course, the *tableaux vivants* orchestrated by nineteenth-century photographers Oscar Rejlander and Henry Peach Robinson (see Figs. 3.14, 3.15) were assembled to be photographed, but the artists' motives could hardly be more

focus

Culture Wars

A fabricated-to-be-photographed image was at the center of a national debate in the United States about public funding for the arts. On May 18, 1989, New York Senator Alphonse D'Amato demonstrated his hostility to public funding of the arts in the United States by ripping up a photograph of a work by the then little-known artist Andres Serrano (b. 1950). The offending image showed a crucifix suspended in an illuminated bubbly, reddish-yellow liquid. The radiant glow around the crucifix made it seem like a work of devout religious fervor. Were it not for the title, *Piss Christ*, viewers could not tell that the liquid was urine (Fig. 13.20).

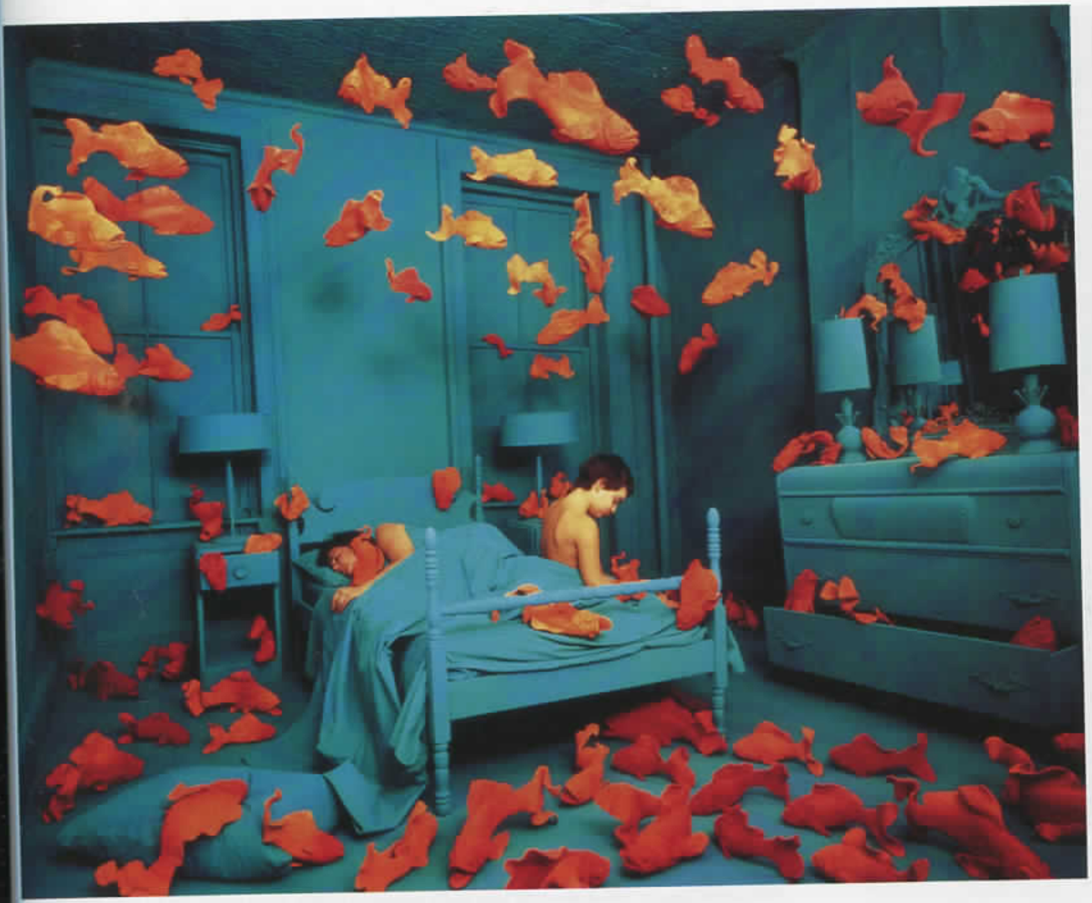
The piece had been exhibited at a show of fellowship winners held by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The program was sponsored by private foundations, including The Rockefeller Foundation and The Equitable Foundation, as well as the government-funded National Endowment for the Arts.[30] Only the last organization, which channeled public money, was criticized for its support.



13.20
ANDRES SERRANO, ***Piss Christ*****, 1987. Cibachrome, silicone, Plexiglas, wood frame, edition of 4.**

Serrano devised and labeled his work to bring about a collision of extremes: intense aesthetic pleasure and strong physical revulsion. Another piece, *Semen and Blood III*, for example, shows these bodily fluids swirling in a dynamic abstraction. But Serrano undercut the enjoyment of shapes and colors with a title that unambiguously declares its unorthodox materials, and put viewers in mind of the connection of sexuality with disease, particularly AIDS. Some observers complained that they were repelled by Serrano's pictures, just as if they were in the physical presence of the substances. Others felt fooled into experiencing visual pleasure from elements repugnant to them.

The dispute ignited by Senator D'Amato raged on, fueled by people of faith who felt that Serrano had desecrated a cherished religious symbol at public expense. Critic Steven C. Dubin observed that the public controversy over *Piss Christ* was prompted by a national sense of uncertainty about the future, which also kindled a longing for traditional values of home and church during the Reagan administration. These feelings found a target in Serrano's picture. In the end, government funding to the arts was placed under the scrutiny of the so-called "Helms amendment," named for its sponsor, North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms. It barred public moneys from underwriting so-called "obscene" work, unless it had "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."[31]



13.21
SANDY SKOGLUND, ***Revenge of the Goldfish***, **1981. Silver dye-bleach (Cibachrome) print.**

Skoglund unified the area in her room-size installations by applying the same color paint to the walls, floors, and furnishings. The bright orange goldfish who fly in the air and wriggle on the floorboards make the picture both fanciful and menacing—a balance often achieved in her work.

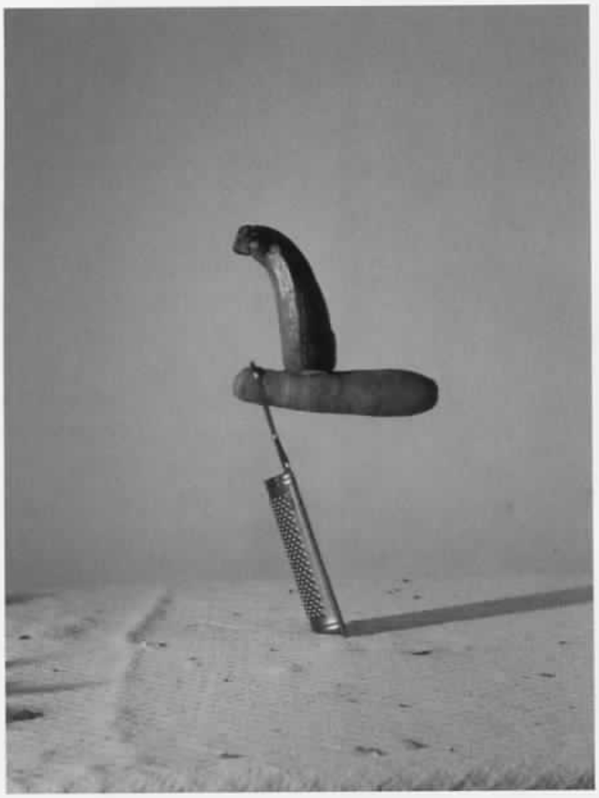
different from those of contemporary picture-makers. Sometimes Rejlander and Robinson could not make the stubborn paper negatives and imprecise lens clearly capture the image they had mentally conceived. Rejlander and Robinson welcomed the hands-on, directorial aspects of composite photography as a way to negate the criticism that photography was witlessly automatic and therefore not an art.

But when fabricated-to-be-photographed approaches became widespread in the 1980s, former technical difficulties had long been overcome, and the issue of whether a photograph could be art was not raucously contested. Photographers and critics began to adopt the long view, noting that from its beginnings, mundane photographic studio work normally demanded staging, rehearsal, and lighting strategies. In particular, the history of advertising photography is filled by a steady stream of sophisticated fabricating techniques, such as intricate artificial lighting and suggestive, unnatural color, used to enhance the appeal of products. In addition, the omnipresence of movies and television, in which a director orchestrates scenes, may have amplified photographers' desire to direct for the still camera. Though the movement seems to have arisen within photographic practice, it was abetted by the success in the early 1980s of the edgy narrative paintings created by artists such as Eric Fischl (b. 1948) and, more recently, the suburban Surrealism of German painter Neo Rauch (b. 1960).

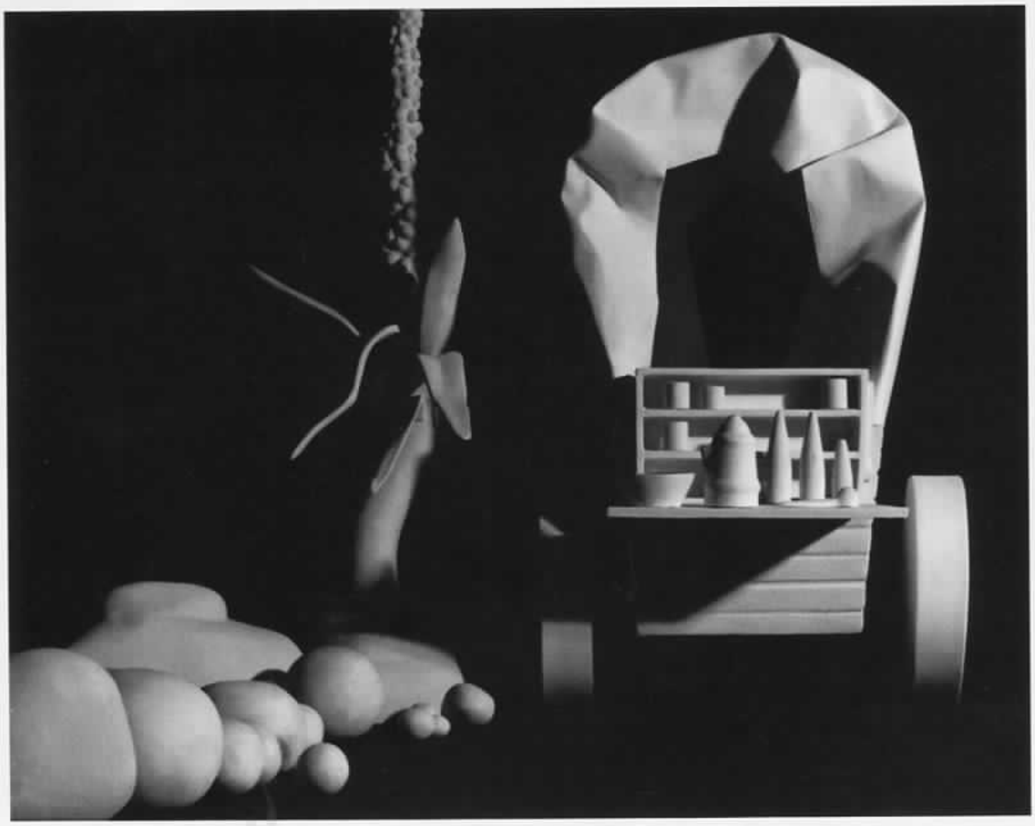
The lack of an overarching "-ism" for staged photographs may owe to the fact that it was not an art movement driven by a core of beliefs, but an approach that interested image-makers with different artistic perspectives and ideological positions. What the fabricators had in common was not a philosophy but a methodology, and, perhaps, a boredom or anger with the limitations of Modernist idioms. Where Modernist photographers combed the visual field for delightful coincidence, poignant metaphors, or abstract patterns, none of which was (or should have been) contrived, the photographers working in the directorial mode conceived and fabricated subjects, disregarding photography's traditional assignment of finding meaning from the look of the world. In addition, the Postmodern dismantling of photographic truth indirectly encouraged the creation of photographic fictions.

The making of scenes, rather than the taking of scenes, was epitomized in the work of American sculptor-photographer Sandy Skoglund (b. 1946), who created room-size installations to be viewed in their own right as three-dimensional sculptures, as well as photographs. In her work, exaggerated objects, such as cobalt-blue leaves or safety-orange fish, invade spaces occupied by sense-dulled people stranded in monochrome settings (Fig. 13.21). Skoglund's work anticipated the partnership between sculpture and photography that pervaded art in the last decades of the twentieth century, ranging from the tongue-in-cheek balancing acts pictured by Swiss artists Peter Fischli (b. 1952) and David Weiss (b. 1946) (Fig. 13.22) to the cool, cerebral black-and-white world pictured by James Casebere (b. 1953) (Fig. 13.23). Large, richly colored and fabricated-to-be-photographed scenes were also made by German artist Thomas Demand (see Fig. 14.8). By constructing scenes and objects for the camera's eye, the photographer can control every detail of the image.

By contrast, Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco (b. 1962) prizes fleeting perceptions of art, especially the unintentional presence of sculpture in everyday life. Orozco points to the gracefulness of a melting popsicle, chronicles the brief life of a human breath exhaled on to the polished surface of a piano, and fabricates makeshift scenes to be photographed (Fig. 13.24). American Laurie Simmons (b. 1949) works with doll-house-like settings in which plastic figures, almost exclusively women, robotically act out routine incidents of domestic life (Fig. 13.25). When Simmons began making images of males, she continued her concern with authenticity and originality by manipulating ventriloquists' dummies. With many other late twentieth-century artists who use the camera, Skoglund, Fischli and Weiss, Casebere, Demand, Simmons, and Orozco want to be principally known not as photographers but as artists who work with photography, as well as other media.

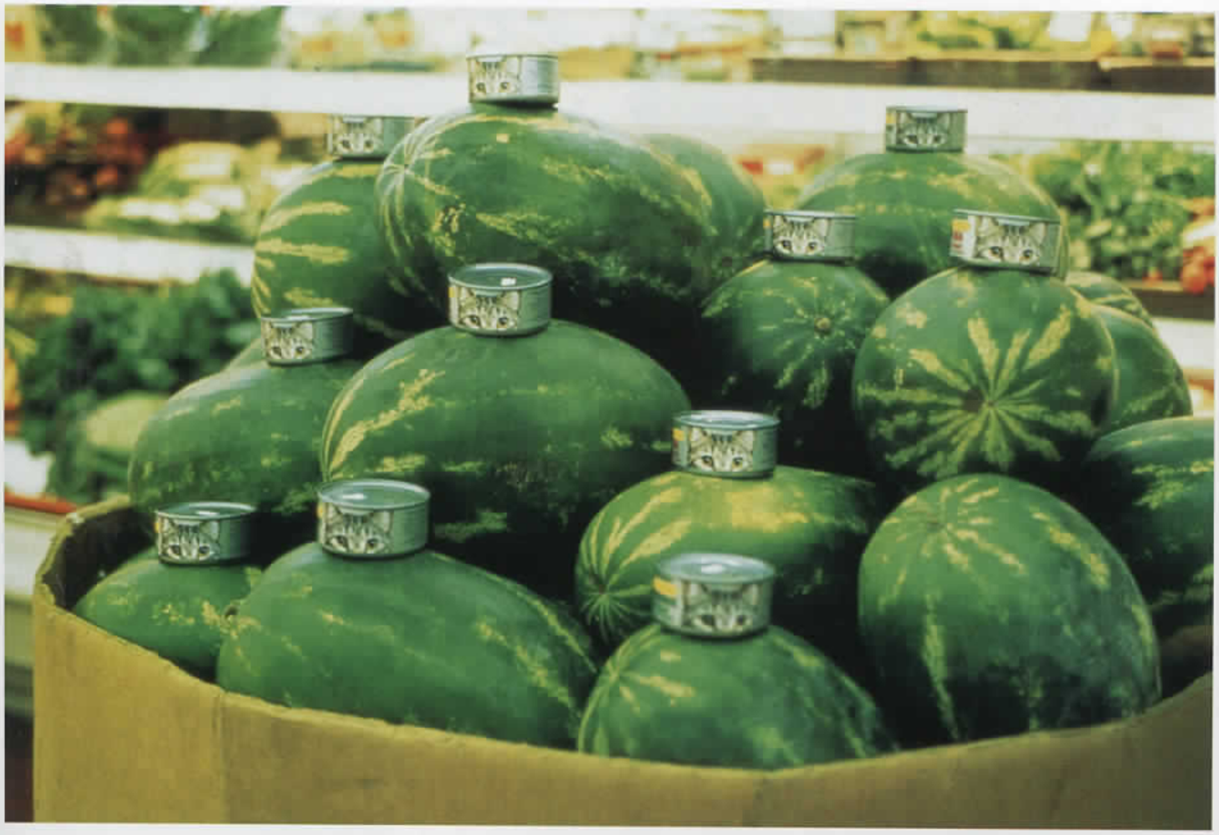


13.22
PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS, ***Untitled*****, from the series** ***Stiller Nachmittag*****, 1985. Kunsthaus, Zurich.**

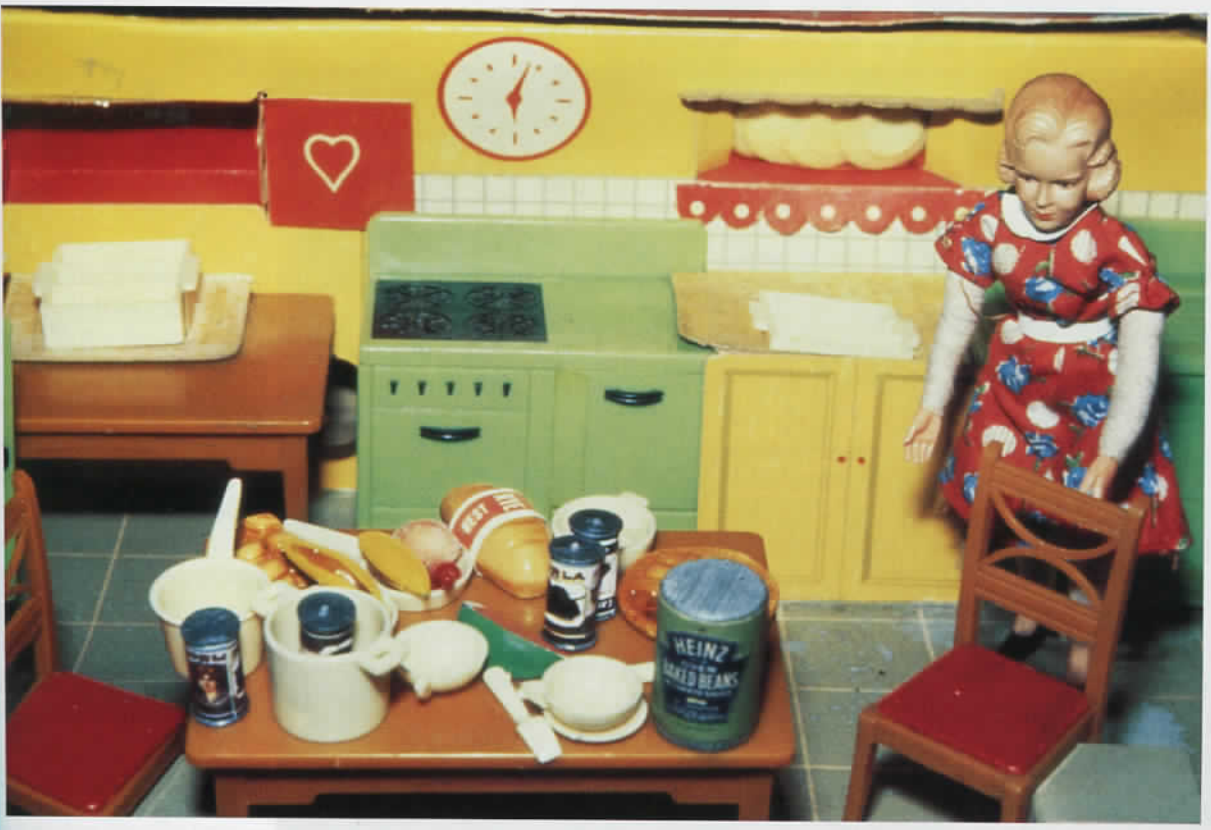


13.23
JAMES CASEBERE, ***Chuck Wagon with Yucca*****, 1988. Gelatin silver print, edition of seven.**

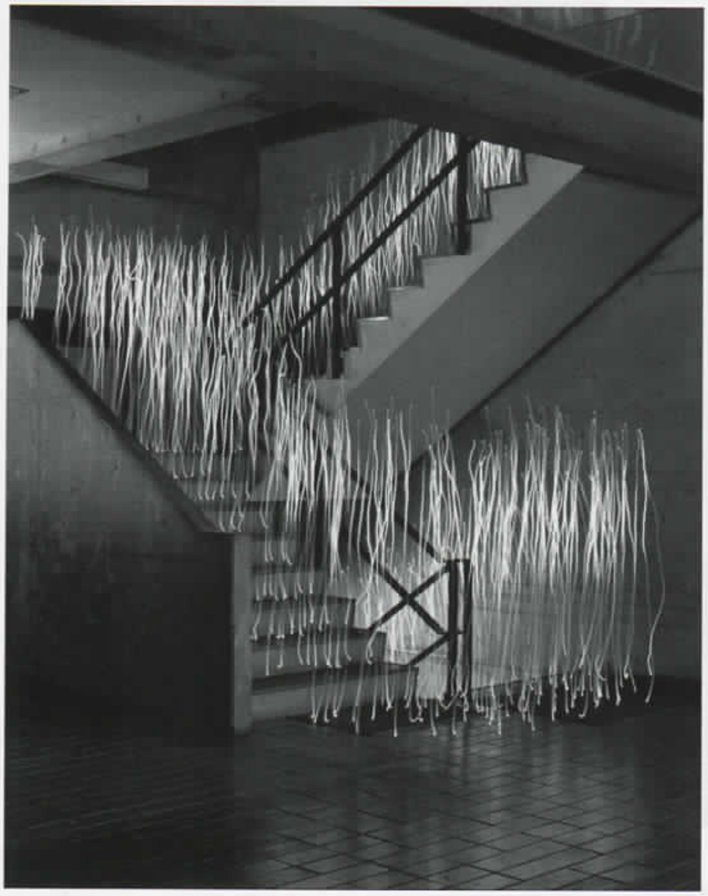
Casebere, who began his career in sculpture, works with both larger-than-life pieces and dollhouse-size objects, all derived from the world of experience but presented in a flat monotone, with the distinguishing edges and textures smoothed away, as in memory or a dream. In this image, the wheels of the chuck wagon are too polished to seem authentic, and the canvas covering lacks roughness.



13.24
GABRIEL OROZCO, *Gatos y sandías (Cats and Watermelons)*, 1992. C-type print.


HEINZ
BAKED BEANS

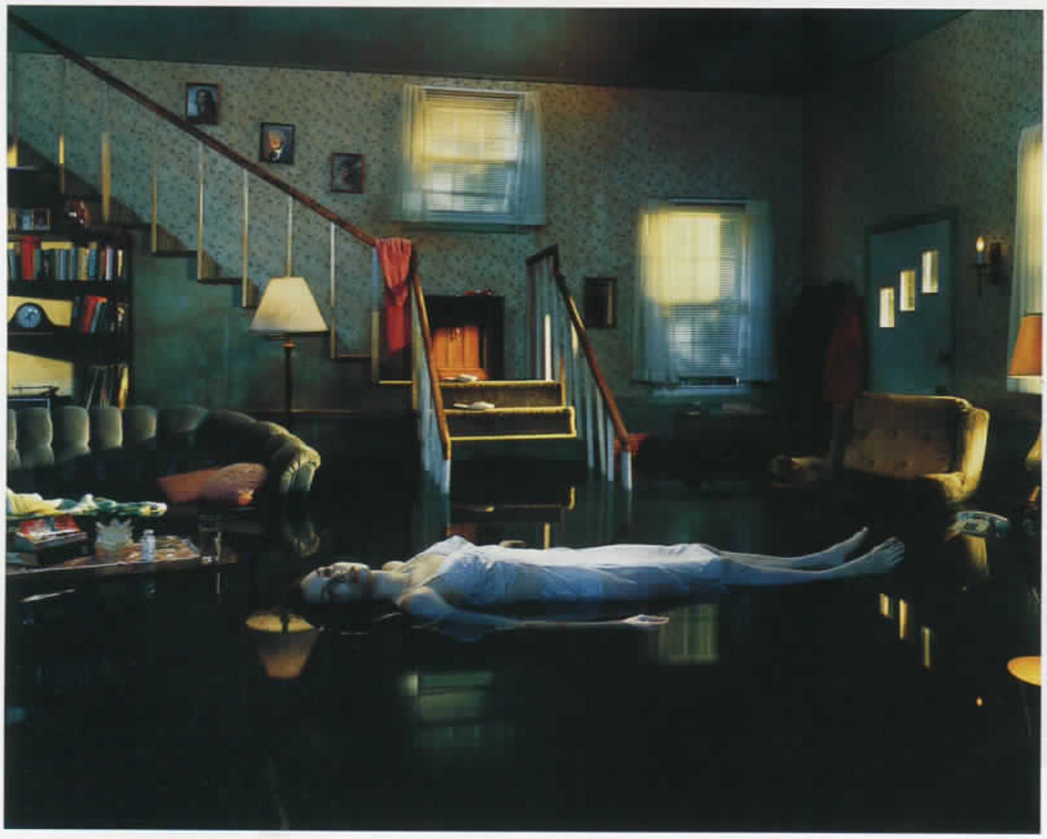
13.25
LAURIE SIMMONS, *Blonde/Red Dress/Kitchen*, 1978.



13.26
TOKIHIRO SATOH, ***Photo-Respiration (Breath-graph no. 22)***, 1988.

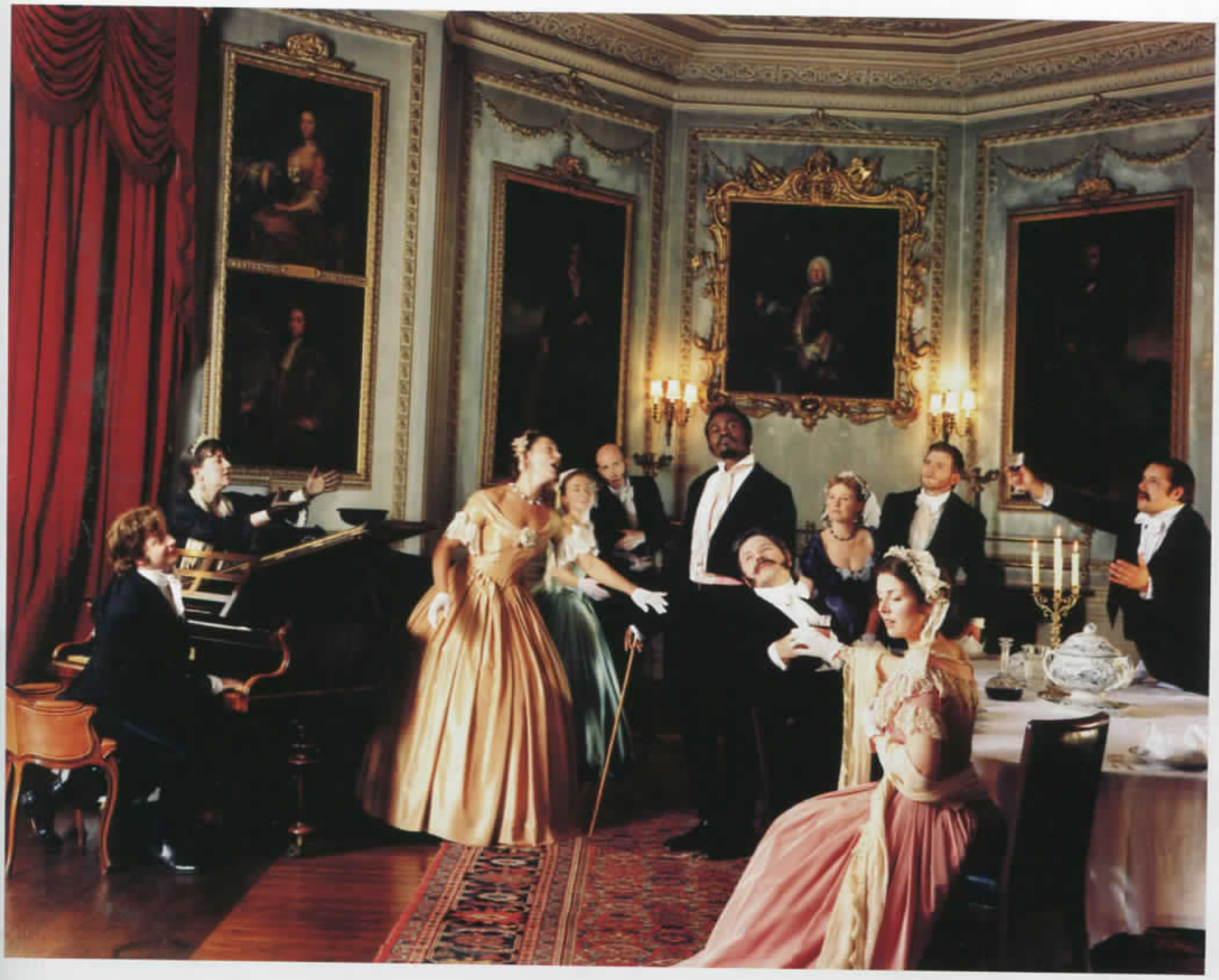
The success of performance art before a live audience during the late twentieth century influenced the conception of staged photographs. For example, starting in the mid-1980s, Japanese photographer Tokihiro Satoh (b. 1957) initiated what might be called ephemeral sculpture or light performance pieces, not conceived for a live audience but intended solely to be viewed as a photograph (Fig. 13.26). In interior settings Satoh used projected light, such as a flashlight, and in exterior locations he captured and reflected sunlight with a mirror, all the while moving so quickly that his camera, adjusted for long, slow exposure, could record only twinkles and trails of bright light, not his body. Like Robert Smithson before him, Satoh created transient environments that exist only for the camera. Yet where Smithson tried to stop the flow of time, Satoh wanted his so-called "breath-graphs" to suggest time's progress; he imagined that his pictures intimated the accumulated streams of human energy that had been expended in the settings he photographed.

The directorial mode was instigated by artists and photographers for whom video constituted an absorbing initial experience of directing, rather than physically making, a work of art. It also benefited from the allure of film and, especially the cultic admiration of film directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, whose exceedingly planned scripts often



13.27
GREGORY CREWDSON, ***Ophelia***, 2001.
Digital C-print.

Crewdson's melodramatic stagings suggest an undercurrent of abnormal events. His creations were among the most influential on young photographers working in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

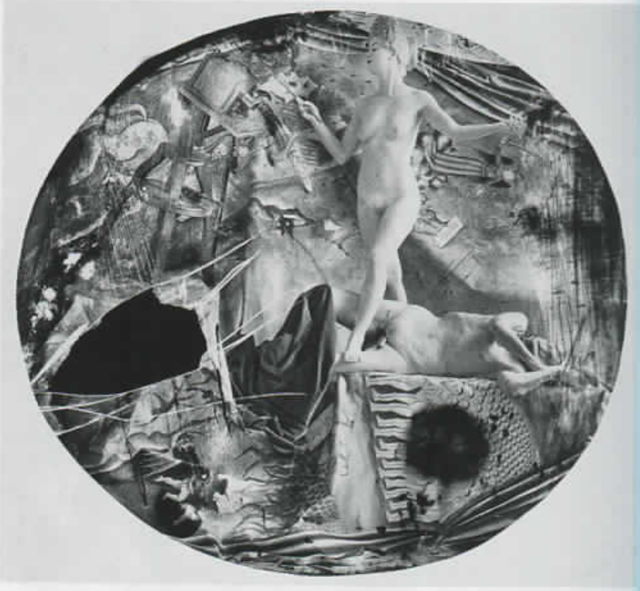


13.28
YINKA SHONIBARE, ***Diary of a Victorian Dandy (21:00 hours)*****, 1998. C-type print.**

revolved around the innocence of an ordinary individual who must cope with an extraordinary happening. Gregory Crewdson's (b. 1962) disquieting and shadowy scenes are produced with big budgets and the assistance of a crew whose jobs are the same as they would be on a film project. Like a film director, Crewdson does extensive post-production additions and alterations, using cutting-edge digital-editing tools. Working in series, he crafts enigmatic scenes that often take place in small towns or suburban tracts. These locales, standard settings for the American dream of the good life, are seen in many films by Steven Spielberg, whom Crewdson admires, but in Crewdson's work suburban life is on the brink of being splintered by nail-biting anxiety. He invokes the uncanny and the edgy supernatural effects that made the television series *X-Files* popular. Crewdson wants to explore "the American psyche through the American vernacular landscape, much as [the painter, Edward] Hopper did."[32] For example, in Crewdson's *Ophelia* (Fig. 13.27), a scene from the *Twilight* series that he began in 1998, a woman seems to float on water that has mysteriously filled her living-room. The subject, drawn from William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, is about a sensitive young woman who becomes mentally unbalanced and drowns herself. Many painters and photographers, such as Henry Peach Robinson and Julia Margaret Cameron (see Fig. 3.20), also took up the subject.

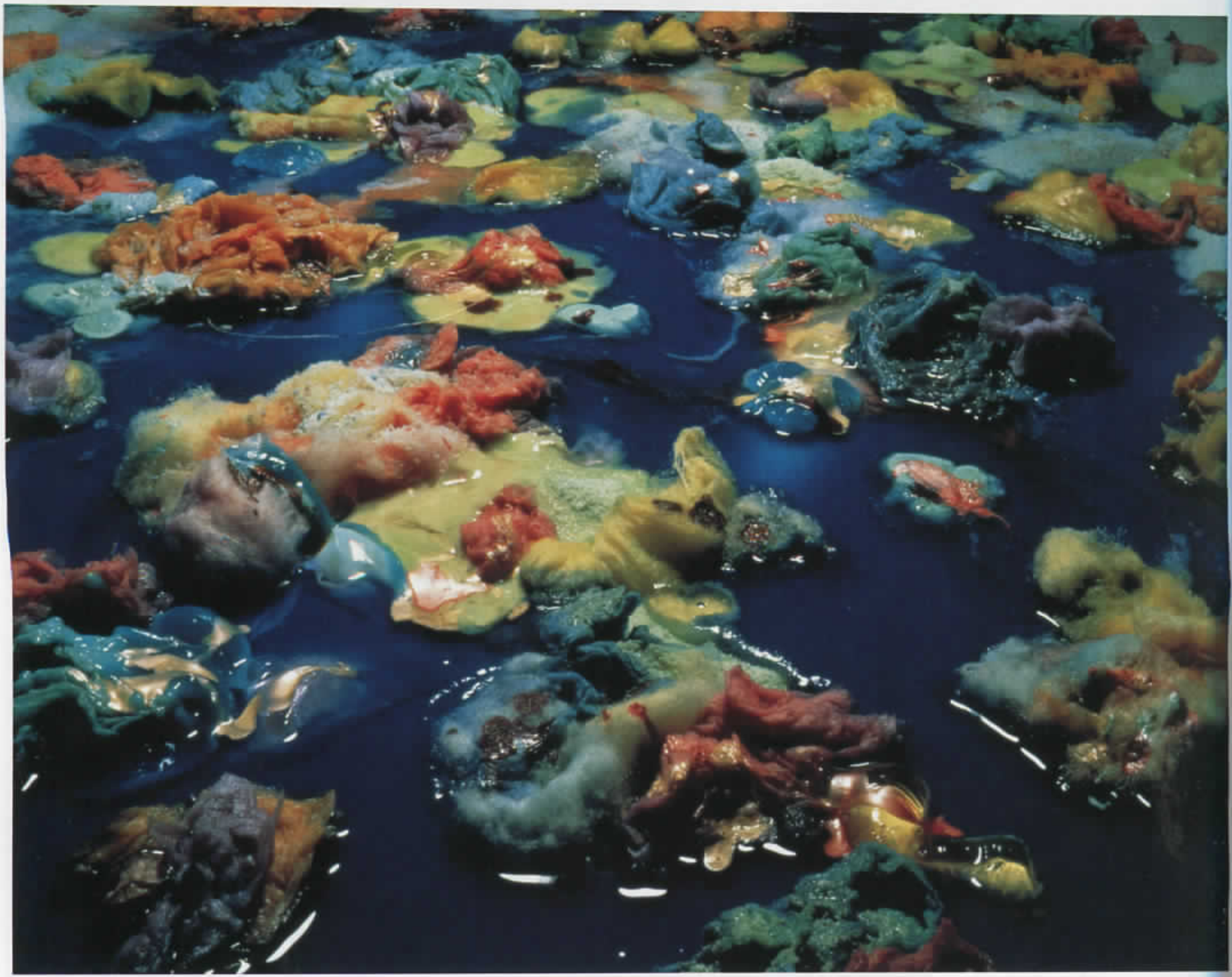
Famous paintings from the canon of Western art also served as sources for fabricated images. The life of Christ, as seen in the history of art, inspired several photographers to stage such scenes as the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. In one of his series the London-born, Nigeria-raised artist Yinka Shonibare (b. 1962), who works in many media, posed himself incongruously in the midst of figures enacting a scene whose setting, gestures, costumes, and colors resemble late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting (Fig. 13.28). American photographer Joel-Peter Witkin (b. 1939) also mined art history for ideas, occasionally improvising elaborate tableaux recalling familiar paintings in the Western tradition, and then aging the resultant image by scratching

13.29
JOEL-PETER WITKIN, *Eve Knighting Daguerre*, 2004. Toned gelatin silver print.

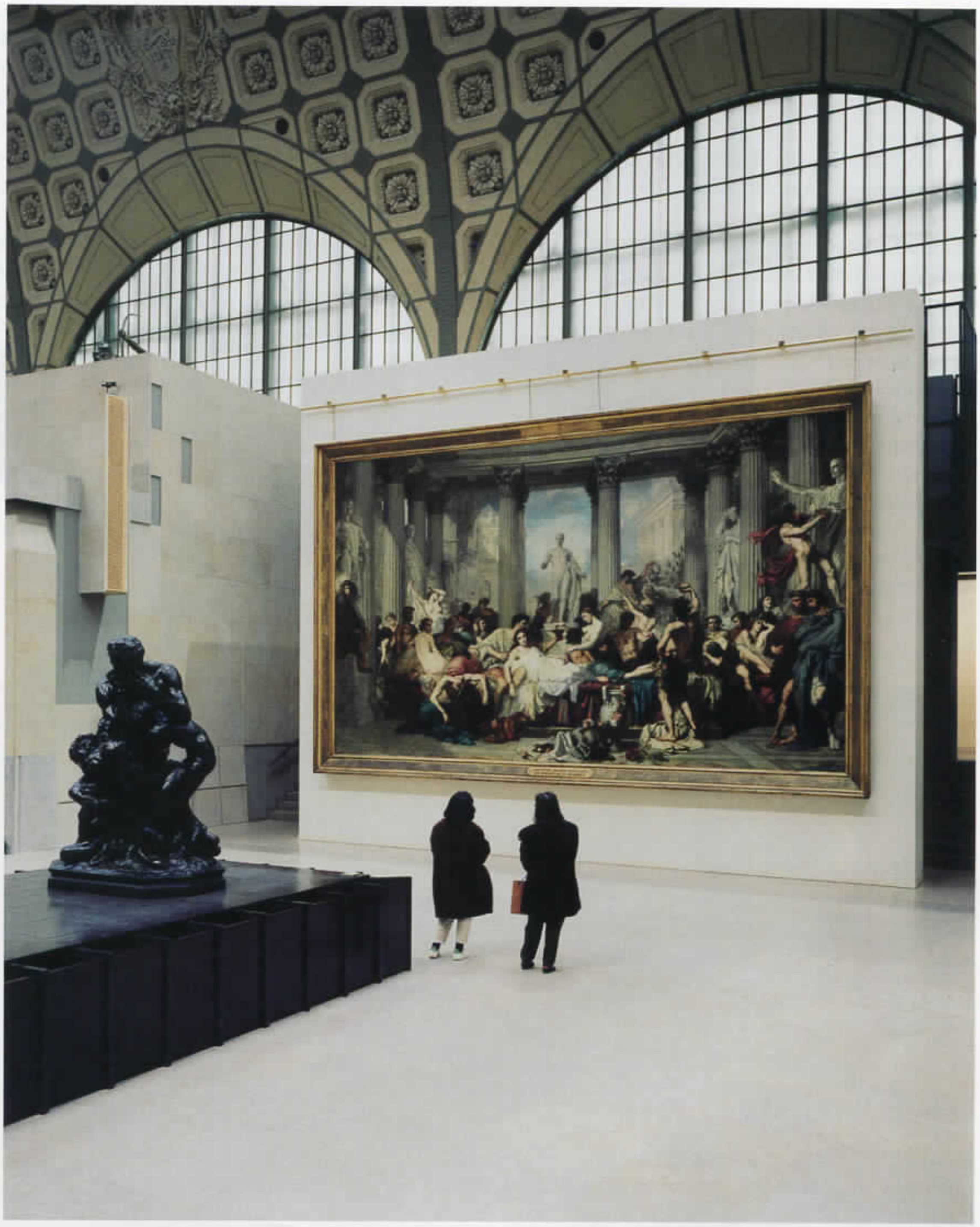


the negative and antiquing the print's tone. The aging appearance adds an unsettling, dream-like effect to his fantastic visions, which are often charged with an unsettling eroticism (Fig. 13.29).

As image-makers began to "make" and then "take" their pictures, they also increased the size and intensity of their pictures. For example, Satoh's *Breath-graph # 22* is 95¼ inches by 77½ inches. This development was showcased in a 1983 exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art, called "Big Pictures." Not only did photographs come to emulate the size of large paintings in museums and galleries; they also acquired deeply saturated, tropically hot colors, more obviously associated with paint than with photographic materials. Sandy Skoglund's installations and photographs

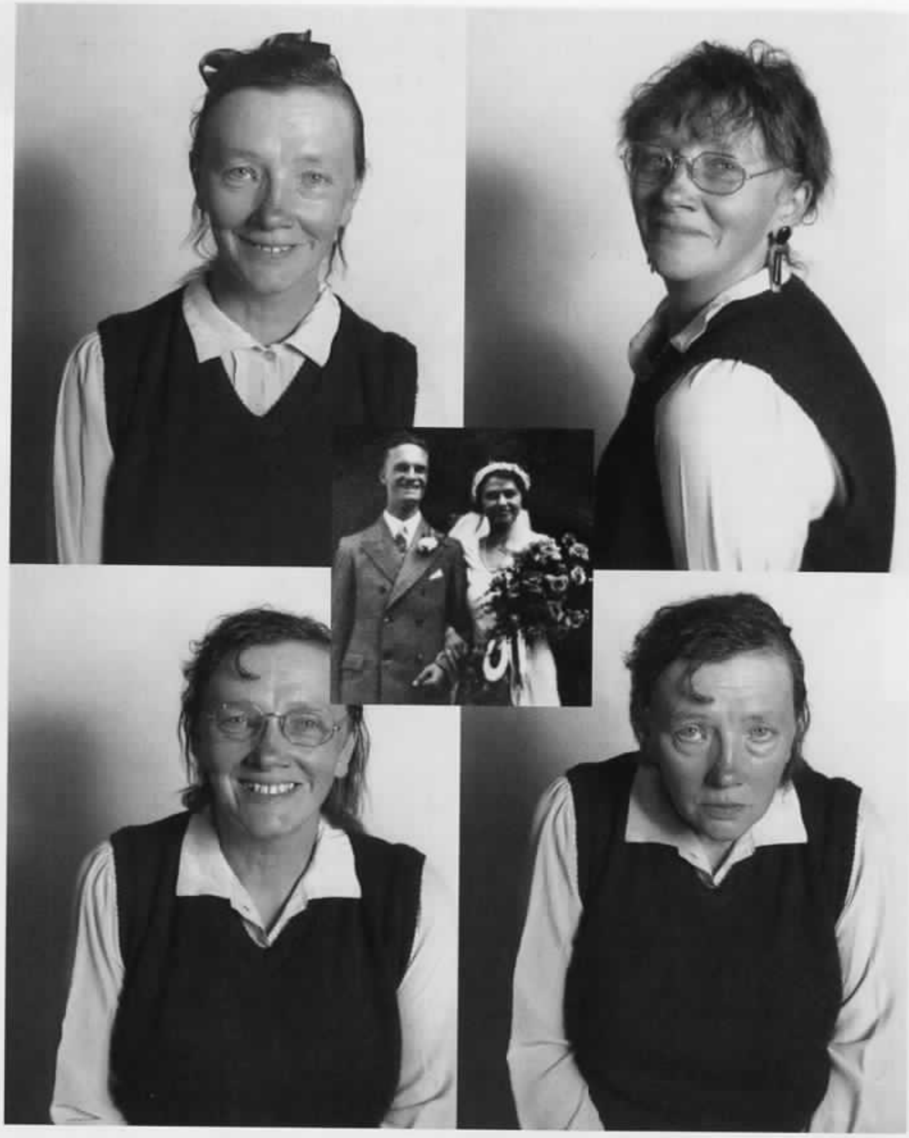


13.30
TIM HEAD, *Toxic Lagoon*, 1987. Cibachrome print.



13.31
THOMAS STRUTH,
***Musée d'Orsay, Paris*, 1989.**

erupt in the piercing colors of acrylic paint. Similarly, the collages of waste materials gathered together and photographed by British artist Tim Head (b. 1946) concentrate on the eye-catching density of the color used in packaging consumer goods. During the 1980s, Head began gathering discarded mass-produced materials to serve as the basis for his photographs. At once luridly attractive and repugnant, Head's images of ecological casualty imitate the push–pull of desire and guilt (Fig. 13.30). In the 1990s, the art gallery and the photograph came together in yet another way, in the large photographs of Thomas Struth (b. 1954), who created detailed yet huge studies of people contemplating art in museums (Fig. 13.31). The odd, quasi-religious convention of maintaining silence or talking in hushed tones while visiting the art gallery finds a visual correspondence in the poses and expressions of people attempting to deliberate images considered to be masterworks in Western art. Unlike Andreas Gursky, Struth does not use digital means, but achieves his prints employing a large-format camera similar to those used by nineteenth-century photographers.



13.32
JO SPENCE, *Transformations*, from her book *Putting Myself in the Picture*, 1986.

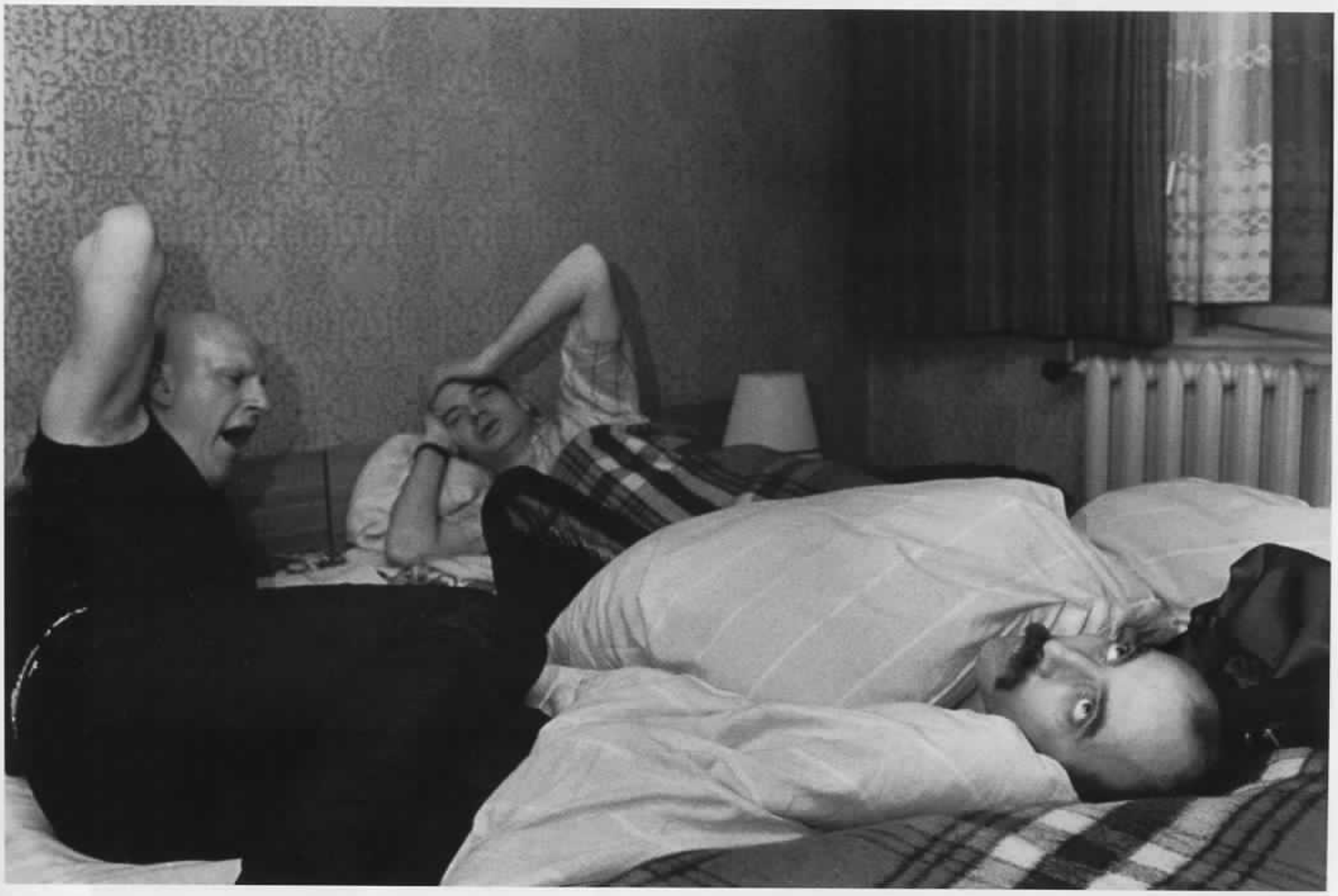
FAMILY PICTURES

Although staged photographs did not arise as part of a consistent art movement, several motifs recurred, among them the subject of the family, a topic taken up around the world during the late twentieth century. Focus on domestic life intensified, in part because the concept of the ideal family had been rocked by a high divorce rate, picked over in family therapy, and mangled in the popular media, from *Roseanne* through *The Simpsons*. During the Reagan administration (1981–89) in the United States, and the years that Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of Britain (1979–90), traditional values, in particular the glorified norm of the white, middle-class family, were enlisted as remedies for a tattered social morality thought to reveal itself in the increase of single-parent families, the rising demand for abortion and birth control, and the growth of gay and lesbian activism.

Of course, many early photographers made images of their family members, chiefly because they were near at hand. William Henry Fox Talbot photographed his wife, Constance, who also made her own photographs. From the beginning, amateurs and professionals practiced lighting techniques and rehearsed stances using members of the family. Nevertheless, few nineteenth-century photographers operated like Lady Hawarden and Julia Margaret Cameron, purposefully posing family members in evocative attitudes suggestive of characters in literature and myth. In the postwar period, Edward Steichen's "The Family of Man" exhibition and the best-selling book that accompanied it became conceptual markers to which most photographers had to attend, whether they were inspired by the emphasis on the universal bonds of family life, or distressed by the omission of personal, social, and economic circumstances that differentiate people from each other.

In addition, throughout the twentieth century, families accumulated extensive collections of images, the majority taken with simple cameras and increasingly reliable film. The content of family photographs was dominated by celebratory occasions, such as weddings, birthdays, and vacations. Few families resolutely set out to record the look of everyday life, such as messy kitchens and unmade beds. Fewer still made visual records of emotionally trying times, or used the camera for psychological self-study or therapy. Interestingly, the very themes and subjects omitted in family pictures were explored by a wide variety of photographers, and studied by artists and scholars. British critic and photographer Jo Spence (1934–1992) was one of the first image-makers to use her own baby pictures, family snapshots, and early studio portraits to investigate her socialization into gender and class roles. Out of this experience she and actor Rosy Martin developed what was called "the reconstructive process," a psychological therapy in which new photographic portraits were made in order "to disrupt, replace or rework" an aspect of personality (Fig. 13.32). Artists came to view the casual snapshot, with its innocence of technique and composition, and the cheap camera, with its lack of sophisticated metering or fine lenses, as exciting means with which to extricate photography from its longstanding infatuation with "artistry." Canadian photographer Jeff Wall dubbed this far-reaching, self-imposed, de-skilling of photographers as "amateurization."[33]

Toward the end of the Cold War in Russia, Soviet photographers "amateurized" their photographs, creasing and spotting the print in experiments with what they called "the aesthetics of defect."[34] Ignoring the fact that the humble and crumpled snapshot could be as riddled with conventions as the refined studio portrait or the news photograph, some photographers looked to it as a means to escape the pervasive influence of Henri Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment." German writer Ulf Erdmann Ziegler accused the "decisive moment" of being an intellectually and visually reductive technique that diminished photography to a mere anecdote.[35] Family photographs not only refreshed art; they also energized social commentary. In East Germany during the 1980s, Ute Mahler (b. 1949) pictured an array of households that repudiated the official state-sponsored view of the normal family (Fig. 13.33). The Chinese photographer Wang Jinsong (b. 1963) focused on the family as an act of



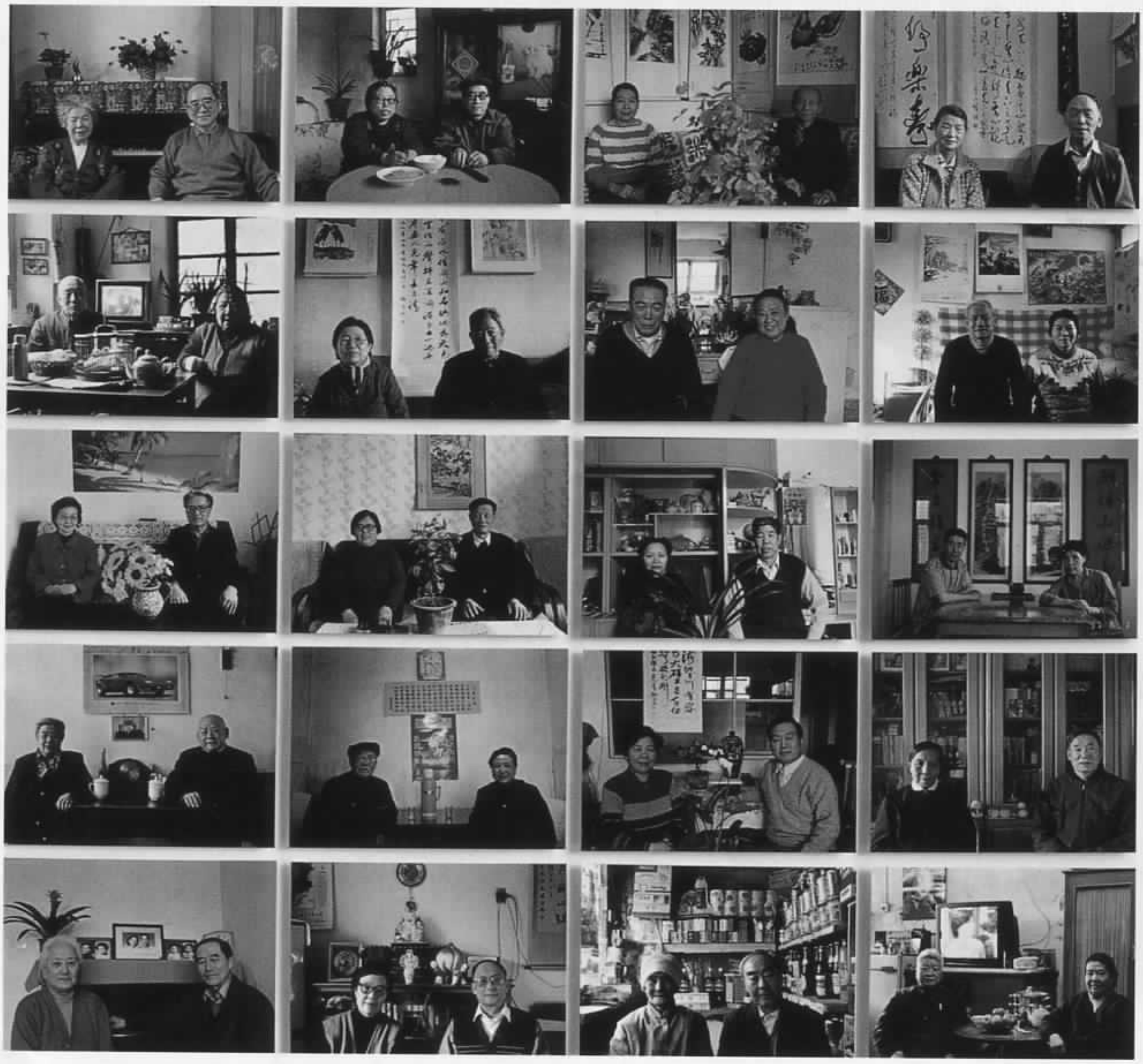
13.33
UTE MAHLER, ***Untitled*****, from** ***Living Together*****, c. 1981.**

Mahler's photographic series *Living Together* focused on the family, an approved subject for East German photography. But she moved beyond the idealized, happy household to show the variety of people who live together, and their idiosyncrasies.

political resistance. His *Standard Family* series illustrates the effects of China's policy of one-child families in images of middle-aged and older couples that would be immediately understood by Chinese viewers (Fig. 13.34). Yet, as Wang explained, the image can be appreciated negatively, by those who object to China's rule, and positively, by those who favor population control.[36]

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of the eastern and western halves of Germany the following year marked a change in German photographers' attitude toward the medium's social role. Arguing that the post-1989 period lacked vitality and ideological coherence, they became engrossed by lengthy, non-narrative depictions showing the tedium of daily life. However, the hold of the "decisive moment" was evident, even in the work of image-makers who emphatically tried to escape it. For example, Andre Zelck's (b. 1962) pictures of a marginally employed working-class family in the industrialized Ruhr area of Germany vacillate between precise, telling moments, and rambling pictures of miscellaneous scenes (Fig. 13.35).

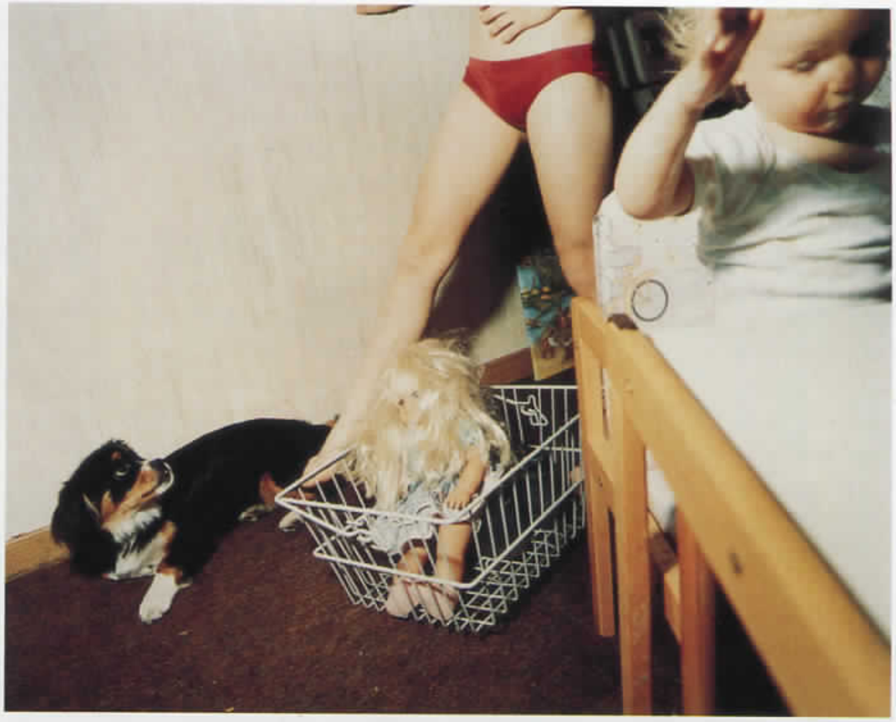
The notion that home life had eclipsed street life in American art and documentary photography was the theme of a much discussed 1991 exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art called "Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort." Curator Peter Galassi sampled family photographs ranging from the disconcerting staged tableaux of Philip-Lorca di Corcia (b. 1953) (Fig. 13.36) through Tina Barney's representations of affluence (see Fig. 13.45), Sally Mann's controversial images of her immediate family (see Fig. 13.52), and Larry Sultan's views of his parents' daily routine (see Fig. 13.44). In the last decades of the twentieth century, when photographers increasingly created sets and scenarios, family

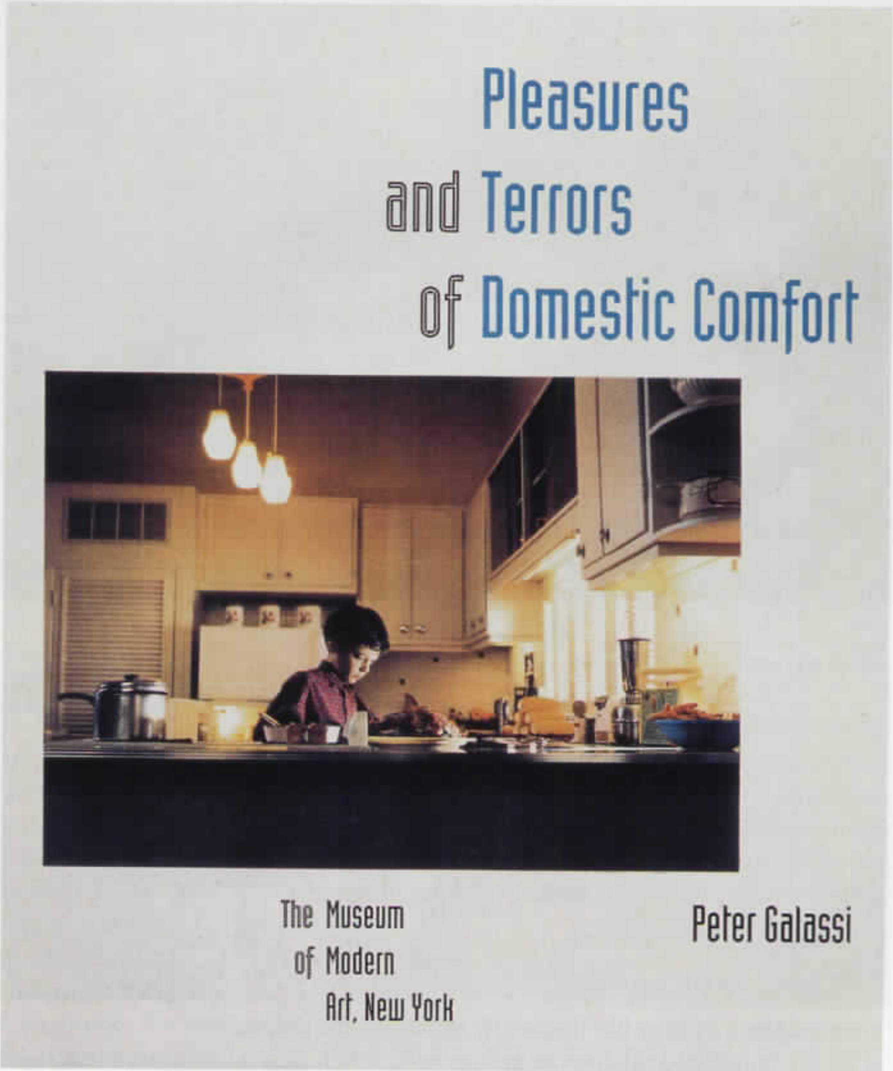


13.34
WANG JINSONG, ***Parents***, **1998.**

13.35
ANDRE ZELCK, *Untitled*, from his series *Familienbande* (*Family Group*), 1992–96.

Zelck's family scene seems to show a moment beneath the notice of most snapshot makers. Despite its apparent casualness, the image is composed of interlocking triangular shapes, starting in the lower right-hand corner with the wedge of table that enters the picture. It reveals the difficulties of breaking away from the angular designs of Modernist photography.





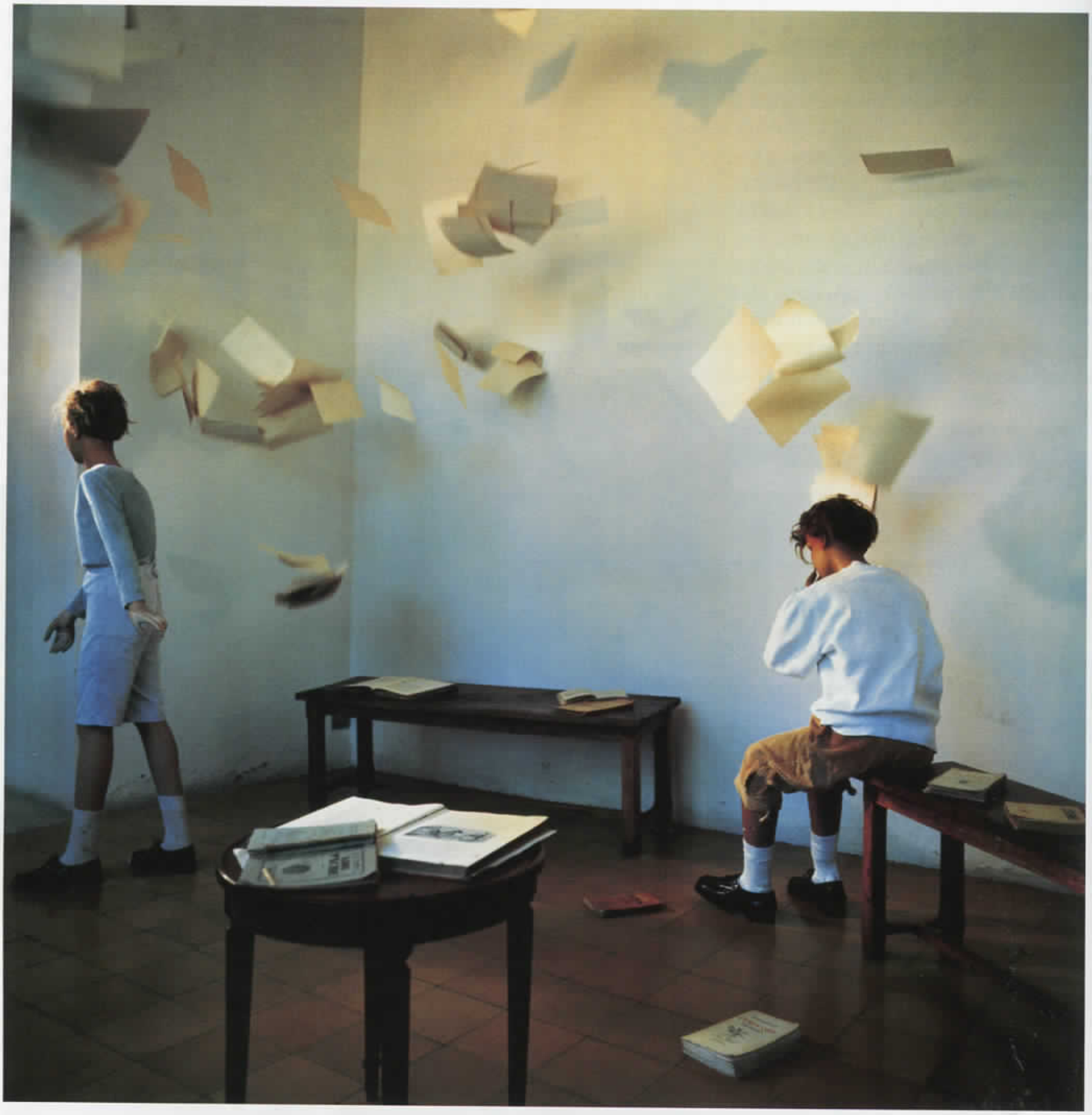
Pleasures
and Terrors
of Domestic Comfort

The Museum
of Modern
Art, New York

Peter Galassi

13.36
PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA, *Brian*, 1988, on the cover of the book accompanying the show "Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort," 1991. Offset, printed in color. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

An edgy foreboding seeps through Philip-Lorca di Corcia's images of ordinary domestic life. In this picture, the boy's thoughts seem far removed from the simple task of making a snack.



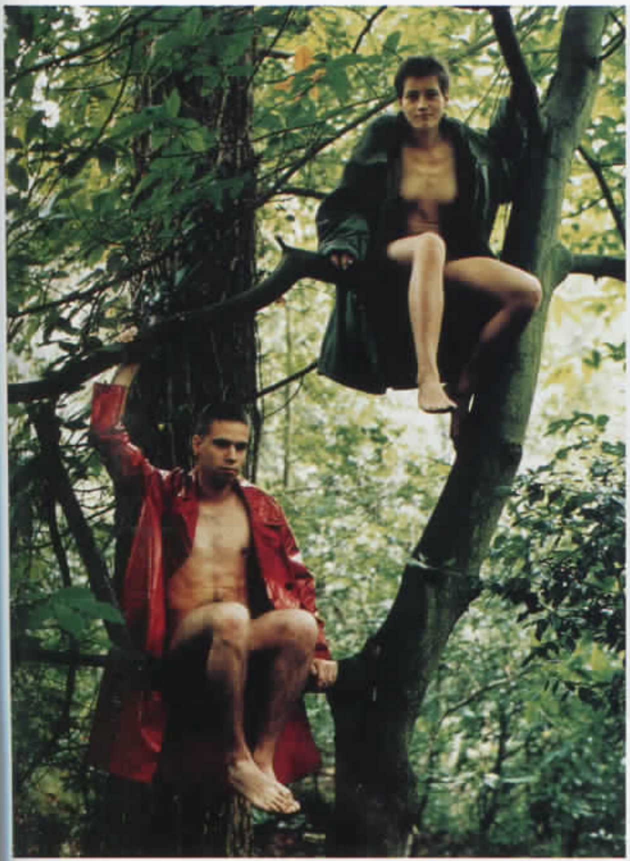
13.37
BERNARD FAUCON, *Les Papiers qui Volent*, 1977–95. Fresson technique, edition of 40.

life and interaction with friends were increasingly pictured. Larry Sultan used his parents' home as the setting for the photographs directed by him, but other photographers, such as French image-maker Bernard Faucon (b. 1950), contrived elaborate backdrops and tableaux for tense, enigmatic domestic dramas (Fig. 13.37).

EXTENDED FAMILY

Photographers of daily life frequently expanded the definition of family from blood relatives to groups with which they associated. In particular, the ever-expanding domain of youth culture became a fertile terrain for photographic description. German Göran Gnaudschun (b. 1971) assembled his photobook project *Longe–44 Leningrad* as a chronicle of his life with a folk-punk band called 44 Leningrad. In Gnaudschun's words, *Longe*, or daily life, "does not aspire to relate a story, but the everyday cycle of constantly changing yet always recurring basic feelings."[37]

Similarly, Wolfgang Tillmans (b. 1968), a German living in London, began his career photographing the London club

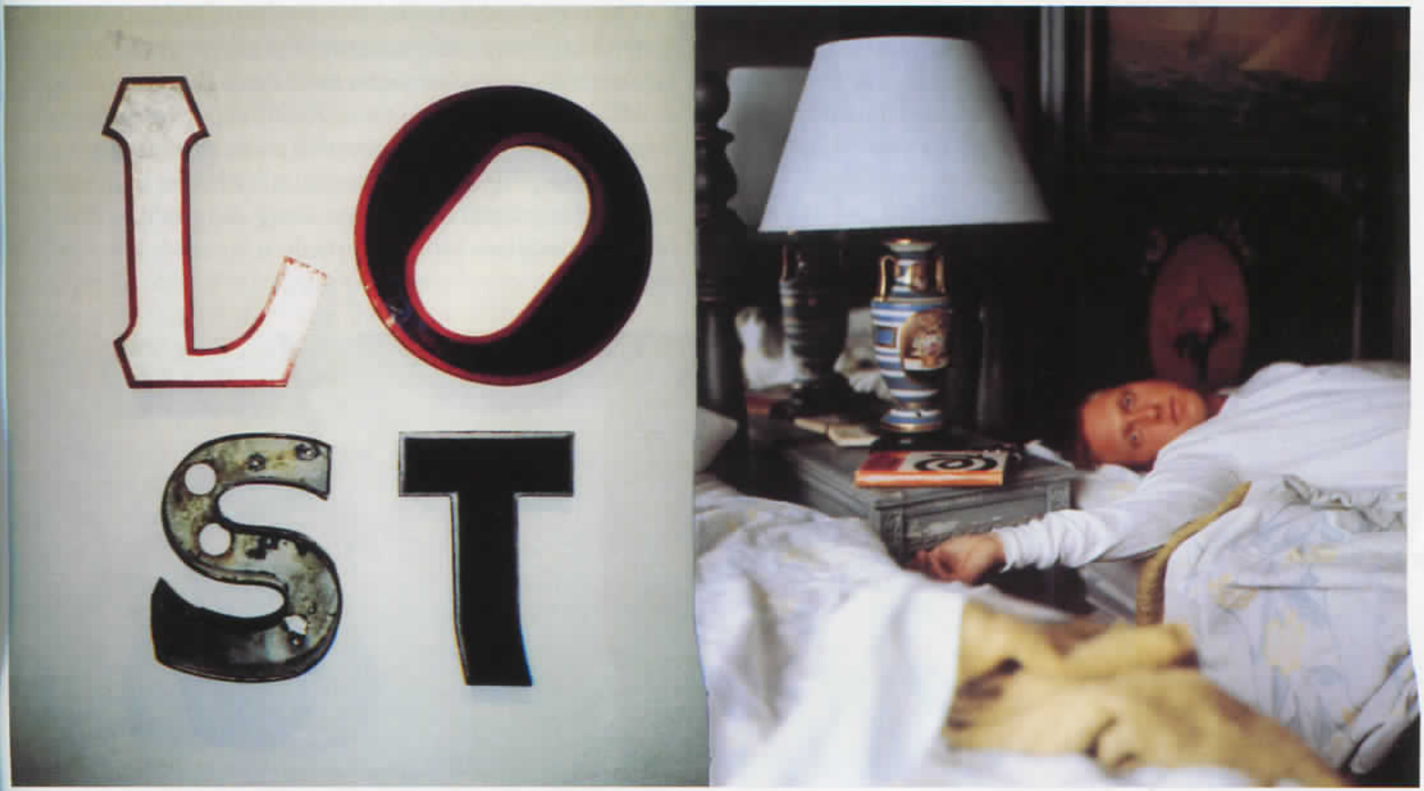


13.38
WOLFGANG TILLMANS, *Lutz and Alex Sitting in the Trees*, 1992. C-type print.

scene and street life for unconventional British fashion magazines such as *The Face*, but achieved an international reputation for informal photographs of his coterie of friends (Fig. 13.38). Like Charles Baudelaire (see p. 85), Tillmans believes that an artist must render the ever-changing look of the contemporary world and not pursue timeless beauty—a rationale, perhaps, for his continued work in fashion photography. American artist Jack Pierson (b. 1960) created clusters of disjointed, blurry, or overexposed shots of his life and companions (Fig. 13.39). An air of listless "hanging around" is relieved by scenes of sexual longing and melodrama.

Although Tillmans and Pierson bear little resemblance to the politically inspired Postmodern photographers of the late 1970s and 1980s, their outlook on truth as an unrealizable goal for photography is similar. By insisting on portraying the private self, both photographers testify to the modest limits of the medium. At the same time, they further glamorized the mass-media-induced fantasy that it is pleasurable to be incessantly photographed in private life, as well as in public.

During the 1980s, Pierson was a member of an informal network of photographers that has since been called the Boston School. Also in the group were Philip-Lorca di Corcia, Mark Morrisoe (1959–1989), and Nan Goldin (b. 1953), whose work during the last decades of the twentieth century exemplified the trend toward books and exhibitions that



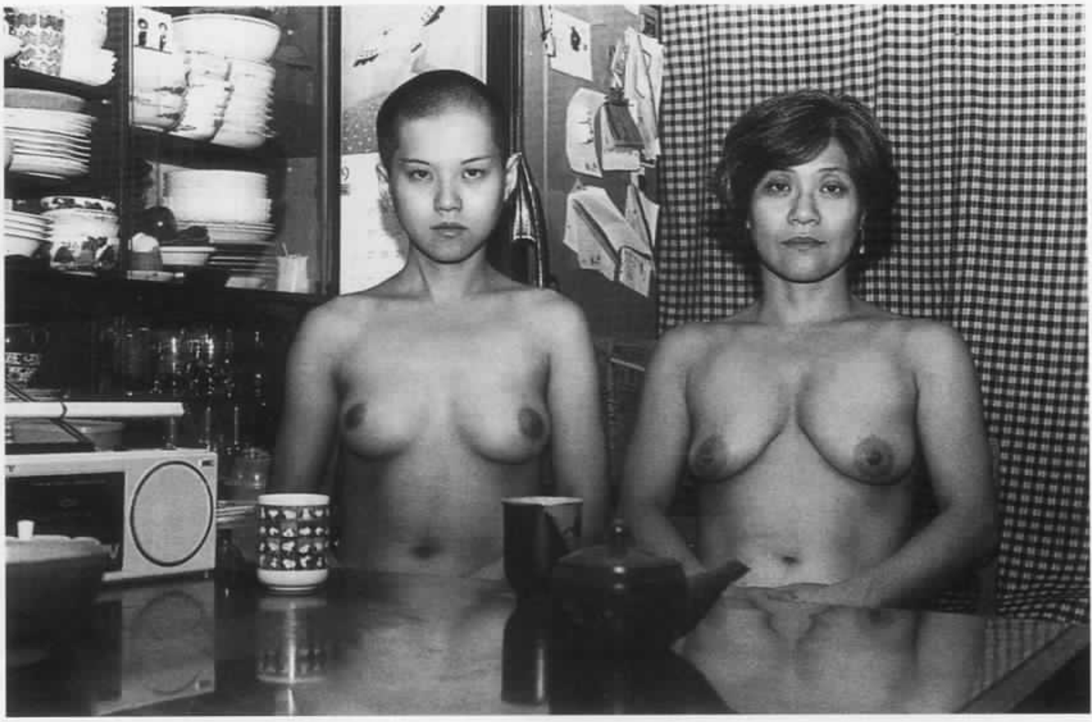
13.39
JACK PIERSON, *Untitled*, from his book *Jack Pierson: The Lonely Life*. Edition Stemmle, Zürich, 1997.

13.40
NAN GOLDIN, ***Nan and Brian in Bed, New York City,*** **1983, from "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency"**
1981–86.

mingled private and public views of family and friends. By far the best known and most influential of her efforts was the sound and slide show titled "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency" (1981–86). The show consisted of about seven hundred to eight hundred transparencies (slides) detailing the intimate lives of Goldin and her friends, her "re-created family"[38] (Fig. 13.40). Her 1996 book *I'll Be your Mirror* included personal interviews as well as pictures of friends who were HIV-positive. Goldin has traveled extensively, and her sexually charged work, characterized by a revealing flash and a palette of strong colors, has been internationally influential in validating the use of photography as a diary of daily life. Her approach was widely influential in fashion photography (see p. 486). "Heartbeat," Goldin's 2002 slide show, with music composed by John Tavener (b. 1944) and sung by Bjork (b. 1965), moved away from the portrayal of personal pain evident in "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency" to reveal the domestic routines of couples.

The sexual subjects and shock-value of Goldin's images from the 1980s paralleled some of those produced by the Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki (b. 1940), whom Goldin met in the early 1990s. Araki roams the streets of Tokyo collecting photographs with an array of cameras ranging from the latest technological advances to inexpensive devices. Frequently tilted, these views glimpse the friction between traditional and ultra-modern Japanese life. But

13.41
NOBUYOSHI ARAKI, ***Untitled,*** **from his series** ***Desire and the Void,*** **1996–97.**



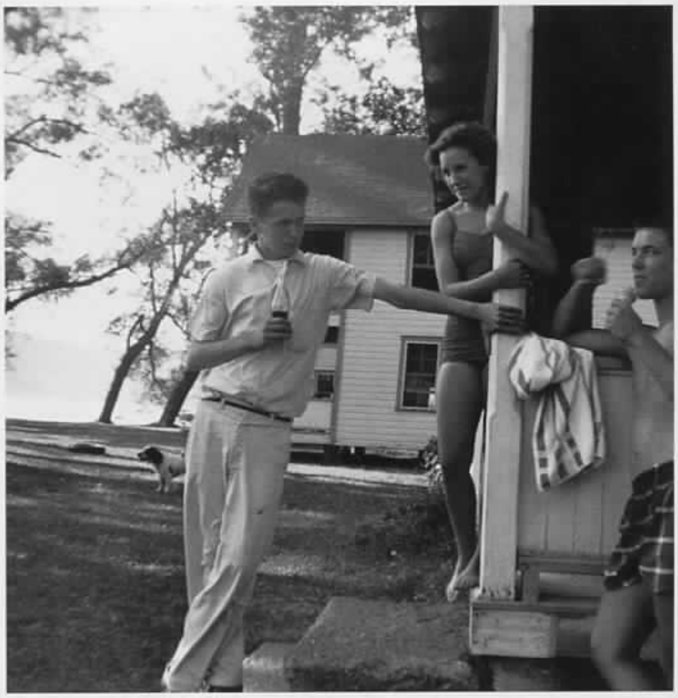
13.42
YURIE NAGASHIMA, *"Self-Portrait," Mother no. 2*, 1993. Gelatin silver print.

Araki's most notorious images show women in sexually submissive or suggestive poses derived from pornography (Fig. 13.41). In both his street scenes and his photographs of women, Araki attempts to show what he believes is an obsessiveness lurking in the Japanese character.[39]

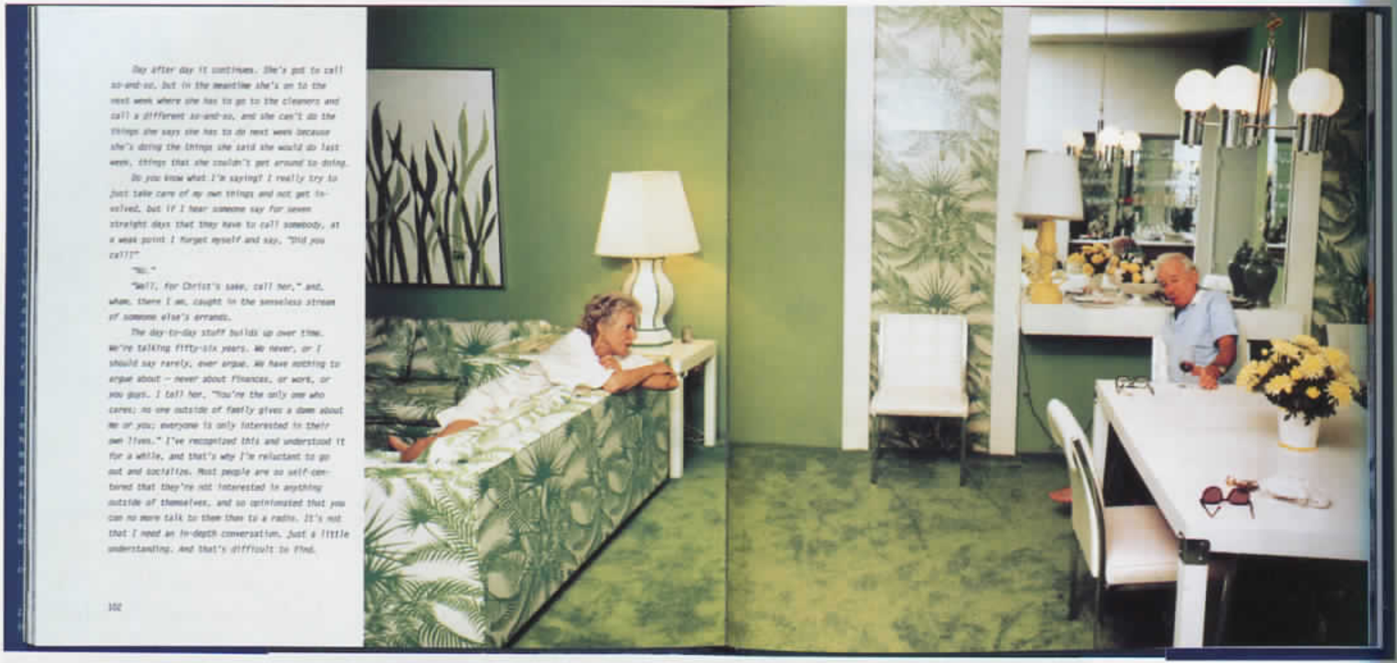
In Japan, Araki's casual, snapshot-like photographs and Nan Goldin's diaries of friends and life experience had an unpredictable impact on young Japanese women photographers.[40] Until the 1980s, when formal training in photography became available through art schools, women in Japan found it difficult to learn the medium. Apprenticeships with master photographers were routinely given to men. A woman who succeeded in learning and practicing the craft was called a "Joryu photographer," meaning one who works in a woman's style.[41] The popularity of the diary-like photographs by Araki and Goldin served to validate women's lives and image-making. Indeed, Yurie Nagashima (b. 1973) became a celebrity for her images of family and friends (Fig. 13.42).

The extent and availability of family photograph collections, some tracing back several generations, spearheaded the late twentieth-century image-makers' reuse of old images, from daguerreotypes to snapshots. Korean photographer Young Kim searched through her family's albums for materials with which to express her anxiety at living between two worlds. Californian Doug Muir (b. 1940) reprinted images he took with an inexpensive, fixed-focus camera during his childhood. His pictures center on gestures and facial expressions that reveal interpersonal relationships that were probably unrecognized by the participants at the time (Fig. 13.43).

While Muir does not fundamentally alter the snapshots that form the basis of his work, another Californian, Larry Sultan (b. 1946), plainly demonstrates that his pictures are his interpretations, by bleaching, blurring, and enlarging family snapshots and home movie stills. For "Pictures From



13.43
DOUG MUIR, *My Brother Gary and his Girlfriend Joanie, Otisco Lake, Amber, New York*, 1959. Gelatin silver print of a snapshot.



Day after day it continues. She's got to call so-and-so, but in the meantime she's on to the next week where she has to go to the cleaners and call a different so-and-so, and she can't do the things she says she has to do next week because she's doing the things she said she would do last week, things that she couldn't get around to doing.

Do you know what I'm saying? I really try to just take care of my own things and not get involved, but if I hear someone say for seven straight days that they have to call somebody, at a weak point I forget myself and say, "Did you call?"

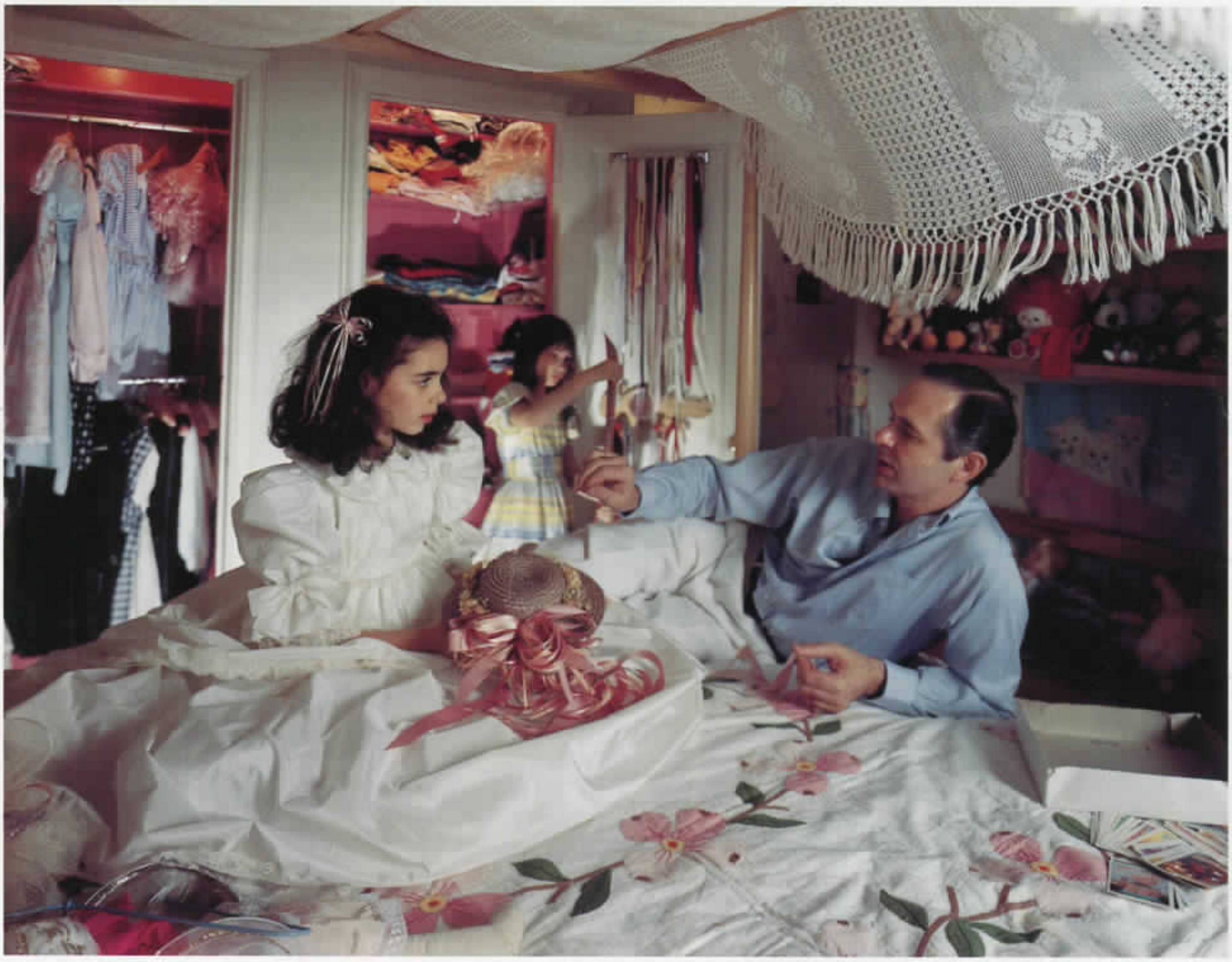
"No."

"Well, for Christ's sake, call her," and, wham, there I am, caught in the senseless stream of someone else's errands.

The day-to-day stuff builds up over time. We're talking fifty-six years. We never, or I should say rarely, ever argue. We have nothing to argue about — never about finances, or work, or you guys. I tell her, "You're the only one who cares; no one outside of family gives a damn about me or you; everyone is only interested in their own lives." I've recognized this and understood it for a while, and that's why I'm reluctant to go out and socialize. Most people are so self-centered that they're not interested in anything outside of themselves, and so opinionated that you can no more talk to them than to a radio. It's not that I need an in-depth conversation, just a little understanding. And that's difficult to find.

102

13.44
LARRY SULTAN, *Untitled*, from his book *Pictures from Home*, 1992.



13.45
TINA BARNEY, *Marina's Room*, 1987.

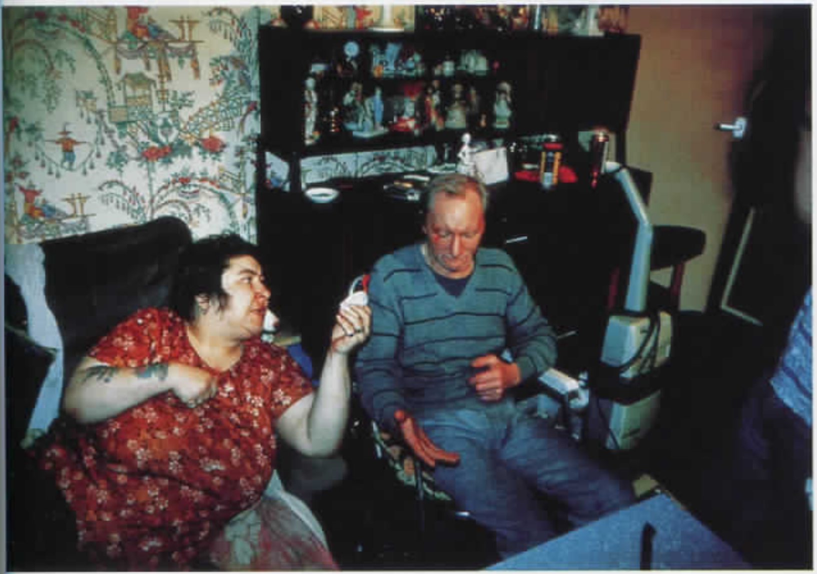
Home" (1992), an exhibition and book, Sultan directed his parents in poses for new photographs (Fig. 13.44). Sultan's work went beyond the affections and tensions of his family, to offer a public statement about the acritical exaltation of American family life promoted by the political right wing during the Reagan era.

At first glance, the photographs by Tina Barney (b. 1945) of her relatives offer an inside look at the private lives of the wealthy, who actively work to prevent themselves from being seen candidly. Barney's images feature informal and secluded domestic moments, such as preparations for a party (Fig. 13.45). At the other end of the socio-economic scale, Richard Billingham (b. 1970) photographed people with a seeming indifference to the lens. Employing an inexpensive auto-exposure camera and budget film-processing, Billingham logged his British family's strained existence, much of which turned on his father's alcoholism (Fig. 13.46). The dirt, disorder, and dishevelment pictured in his work have long been associated with truthful photographic documentation, for example in the images made by Jacob Riis (see Figs. 7.5, 7.7). It is intriguing to compare the grime and raw passion in Billingham's pictures with the cleanliness and order transcribed in Barney's work. Despite the apparent artlessness of their images, Barney and Billingham do not break free from the prevailing stereotype that the rich and poor are the way they are because of their inherent temperaments.

Family pictures provided an important source for authenticating forgotten social history. During the late twentieth century, museums began to exhibit and create histories for so-called OUTSIDER ART, which drew on non-traditional forms of folk art and shed new light on family photographs. Sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu scrutinized family picture-making with the belief that its social significance surpassed the stated intentions of the photographer. He and others deduced that family pictures consecrated social identity, within and beyond the family. Interestingly, lower-class families seldom had family-produced photographs of past generations, owing, perhaps, to an unease about the visual signs of their social identity, as well as to practical economics. Groups for whom political powerlessness was accompanied by the lack of public visibility sought out family albums with which to reclaim their ancestors' stories and place in society's collective memory.

In addition to his own photographs of daily life, Santu Mofokeng concocted an ongoing broad historical research project called *Black Photo Album: Look at Me, 1890–1950*, which attempts to locate and preserve family photographs of black South Africans, including the seldom acknowledged middle class. The big mixed-media works by Radcliffe Bailey (b. 1968), who is based in Atlanta, Georgia, incorporate real tintypes and other old photographs handed down in his family. Much like Mofokeng, Bailey wants to indicate the existence of a flourishing black middle class, and authenticates his research into late nineteenth-century African-American life by using actual photographs as evidence (Fig. 13.47).

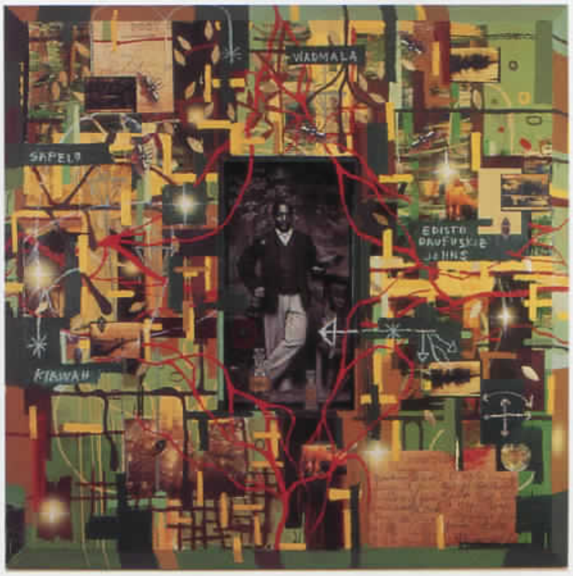
On a large scale, historian and curator Deborah Willis brought together the first comprehensive view of African-American photographers in her *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1940 to the Present* (2000). Willis's



13.46

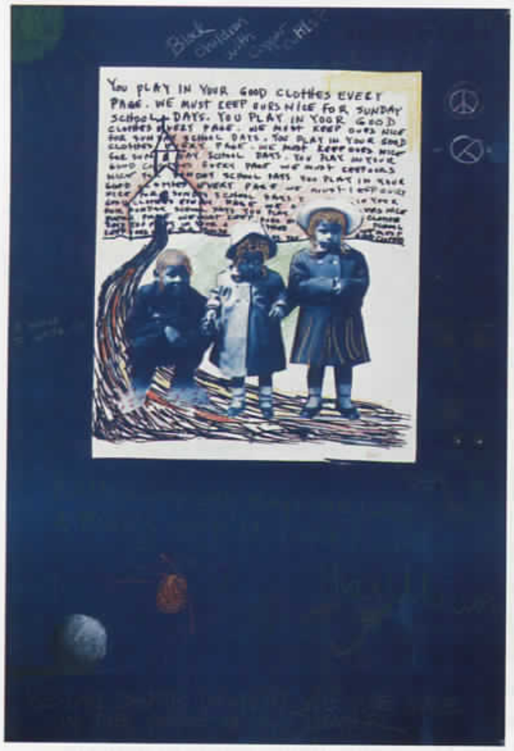
RICHARD BILLINGHAM, *Untitled*, 1994. Color print on aluminum.

Made while he was an art student, Billingham's candid photographs of his unsettled family life resemble the intrusive images captured with video cameras for reality television, which got its start about the same time.

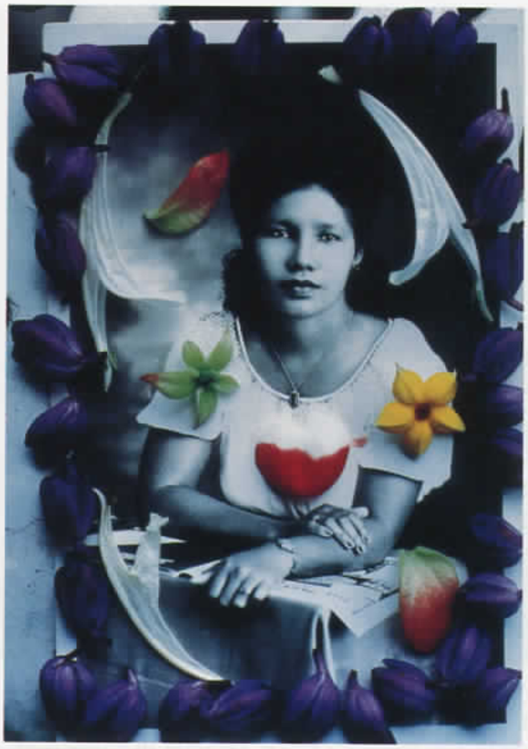


13.47

RADCLIFFE BAILEY, *Untitled*, 1999. Acrylic, photograph, and mixed media on wood. Clarice M. Laubenheimer Collection.

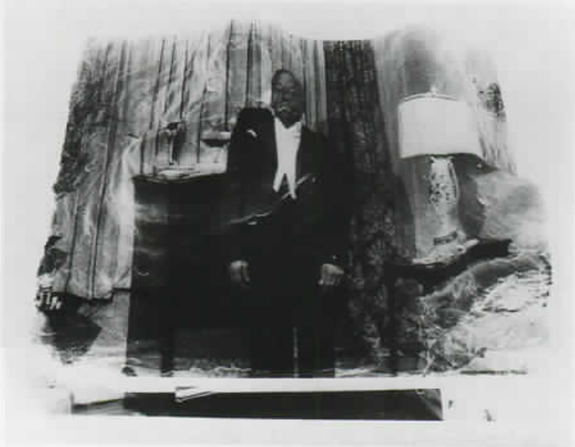

YOU PLAY IN YOUR GOOD CLOTHES EVERY
PAGE. WE MUST KEEP OURS NICE FOR SUNDAY
SCHOOL DAYS. YOU PLAY IN YOUR GOOD

13.48
CLARISSA SLIGH, ***Untitled,*** **from the series** ***Reading Dick and Jane with Me,*** **1990. Cyanotype with crayon added while on exhibit at "Art Awareness," Lexington, New York.**



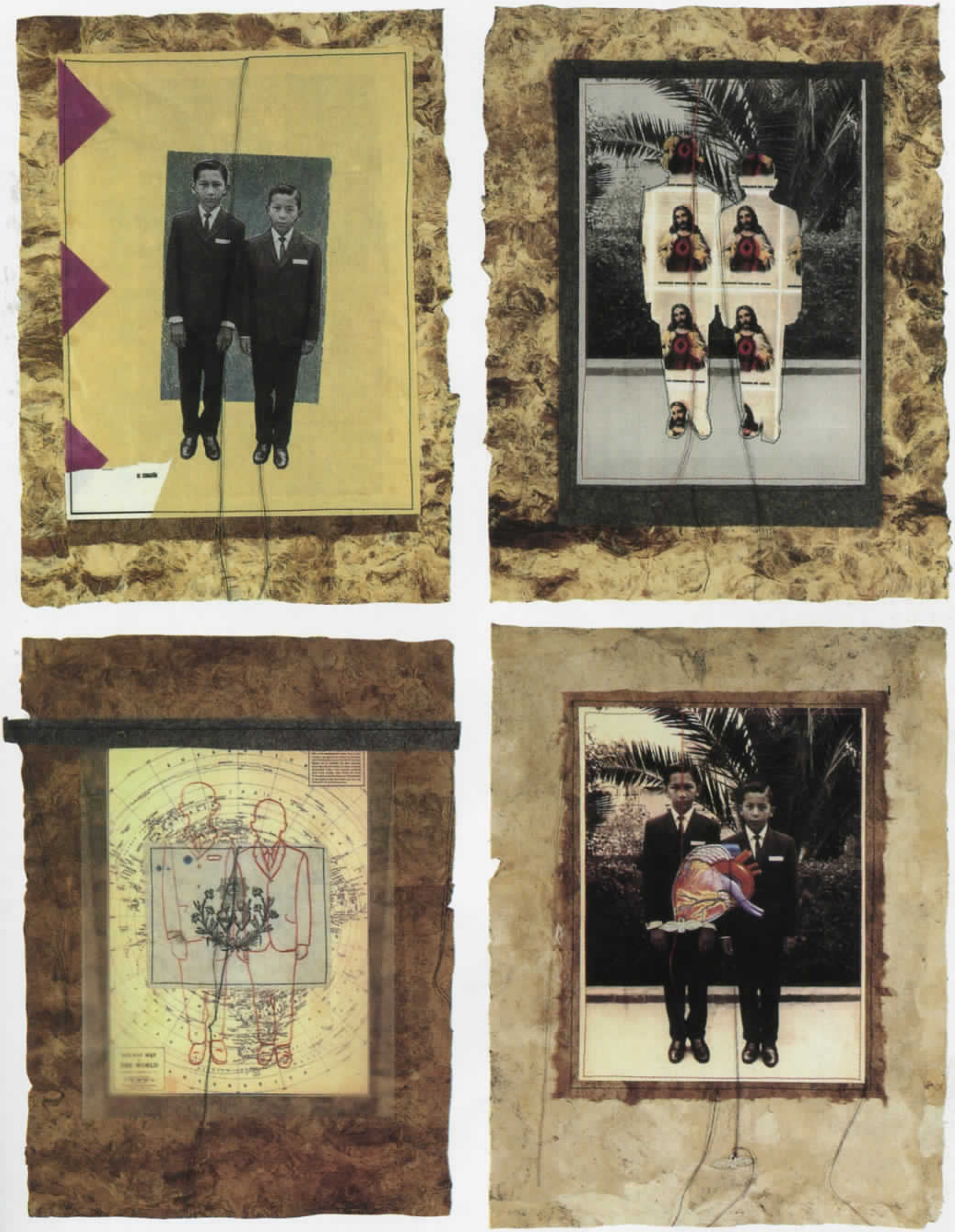
13.50
ALBERT CHONG, ***Aunt Winnie,*** **1995 (original 1940s). Chromogenic color print.**

earlier work *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photographs* (1994) gathered reflections penned by black writers, historians, and image-makers on the impact that a special photograph had on them. Clarissa Sligh (b. 1939), one of the contributors to *Picturing Us,* recalled the lasting influence of a 1956 newspaper photograph of her taken when she was the plaintiff in a lawsuit aiming to integrate the segregated schools of Arlington, Virginia. Today, Sligh is an image-maker who regularly mines her family albums to reveal the ways in which the lives of her ancestors reflect African-American history (Fig. 13.48). The pictures that American Darrel Ellis (1958–1992) worked with during his short lifetime were taken by his father, who died one month before Ellis was born. Ellis altered the shapes in his father's images, creating fleeting light sculptures by projecting photographs on to irregular plaster surfaces and foam molds. He further distorted the pictures by photographing them from extreme angles that flatten and stretch the pictures' space. For Ellis, these mutations expressed a yearning for memories of his father (Fig. 13.49).



13.49
DARREL ELLIS, ***Untitled*** **(Grandfather), 1990.**

In a similar manner, Albert Chong (b. 1958), a Caribbean photographer of African and Asian descent, uses the medium to create a personal dialogue with his ancestors, and to encourage viewers to acknowledge the mixing of cultures. His self-portraits, called "I-traits," usually involve his moving so quickly in front of the camera that his identity is a blur. Other works incorporate old photographs in assemblages put together as part of a ritual to connect with the past. In *Aunt Winnie,* for instance, Chong constructed a homage to his mother's sister from a studio portrait made in the 1940s (Fig. 13.50). Similarly, Mexican image-maker Adolfo Patiño (1954–2005) accentuated the personal and homemade quality of family photographs by sewing them to handmade bark paper. He works in series, frequently repeating whole images or miscellaneous snippets, sometimes using a simple family photograph to elicit the feeling of memory and loss (Fig. 13.51).[42]



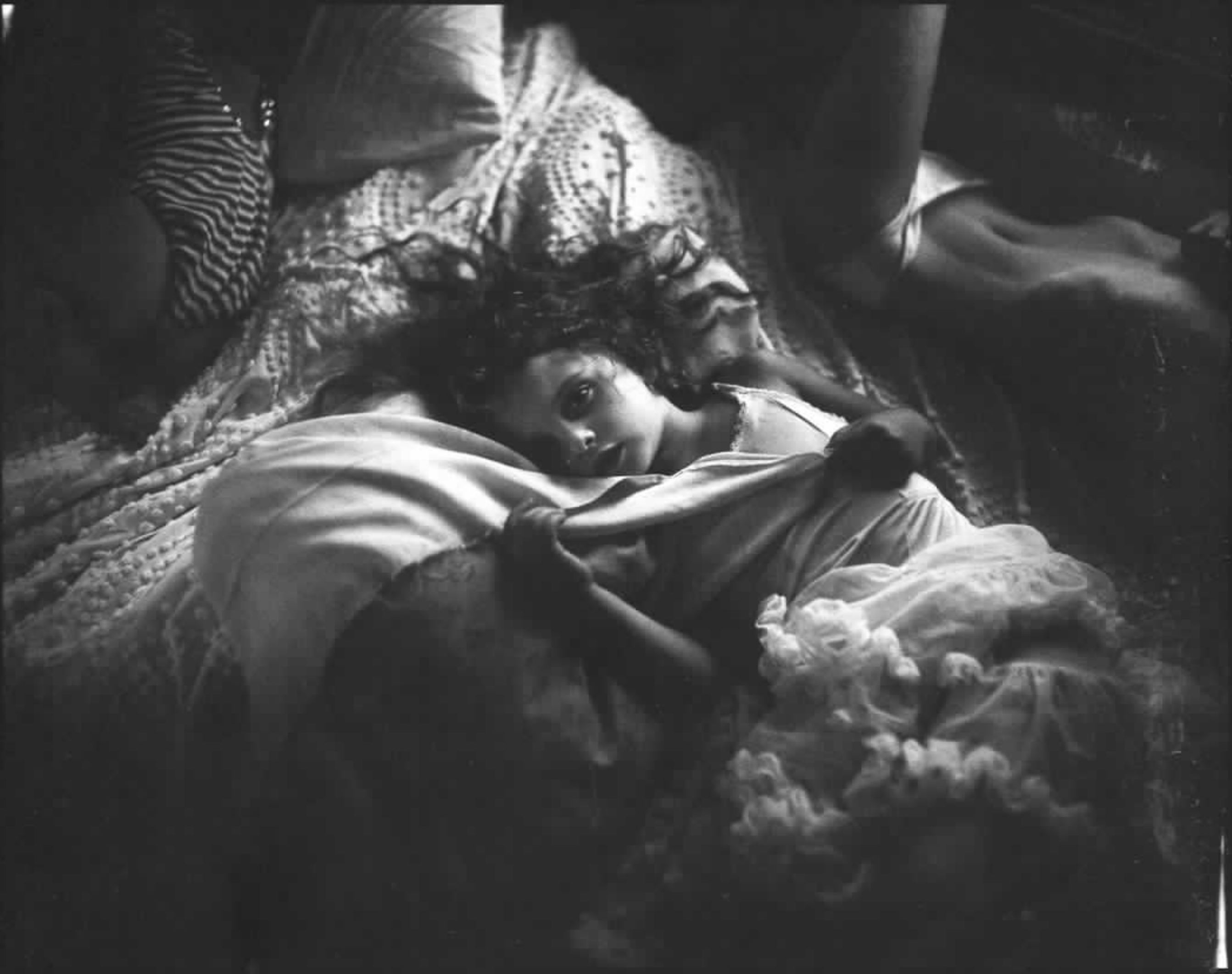
13.51
ADOLFO PATIÑO, *Navegación constante* (*Constant Navigation*), 1991–92, from the series *Elementos para una navegación* (*Elements for Navigation*), from the larger series *Reliquias de artista* (*Relics of the Artist*). Family photographs, Polaroid 669 photographs, negatives, Canon laser copies, Polaroid SX-70 photographs, old postcards, prints on paper sewn with cotton thread on felt, satin, and amate. Enriquez Schneider Family Collection, Mexico.

focus

Looking at Children

During the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, some family photographs provoked boisterous debate about the right of both amateur and professional photographers to show children in poses that revealed genitalia, or to suggest that children possess adult sexual knowledge.[43] Photo-processing laboratories and drugstore photo-developing machine operators were put on notice to report pictures of nude children on the rolls of film brought to them. Laws prohibiting child sexual abuse and the sale of child pornography occasionally punished innocent snapshooters who pictured their naked children romping in a backyard wading pool. In the worst cases, children were temporarily taken away from parents and put in foster care until the legalities were cleared up, and homes were subjected to search and seizure of prints and personal records.

American art photographer Sally Mann (b. 1951) was surprised to find her work at the center of angry criticism from religious and conservative critics, as well as from those who deplored what they felt to be the vulgarization of the American family. Only 20 per cent of the photographs that Mann published in the book *Immediate Family* (1992) showed her children topless or nude, yet for many the volume came



13.52
SALLY MANN, *Naptime*, 1989, from her book *Immediate Family*, 1992.

to symbolize disturbing changes in American life, including how early it was that children were now becoming acquainted with the demeanor of adult sexual behavior. In addition, some of Mann's pictures, such as *Naptime* (Fig. 13.52), angered viewers who were repulsed by their own identification of erotic innuendo in the image of a young girl with tousled hair and pouting lips who is awaking from sleep.

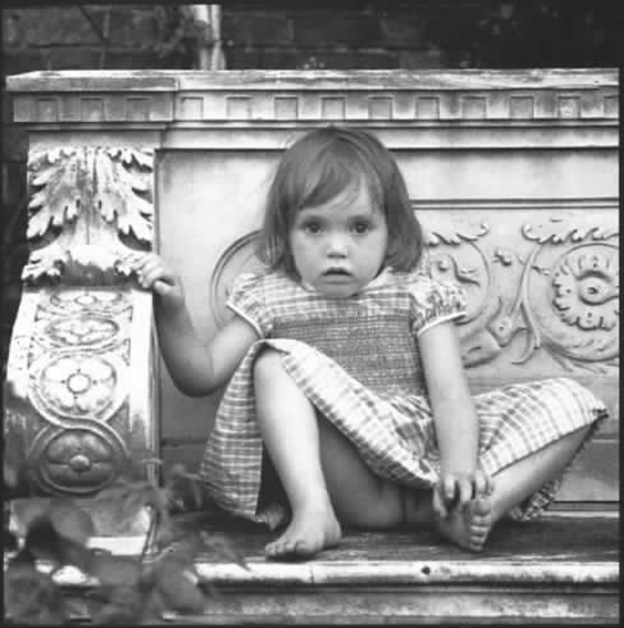
Unlike the response to Mann's photographs, the explicit prepubescent frontal nudity pictured during the Pictorialist era by photographers such as Alice Boughton (see Fig. 6.28) seems to have gone unremarked. This was perhaps because in the years before the immense use of sexuality in mass-market advertisements, the poses and expressions of children did not so readily suggest sexual awareness or pleasure.

Those who defended Mann's pictures asserted her right to make the images, and maintained that these were truthful portrayals of children's expressions of sexuality. Her advocates were quick to note that male photographers such as Harry Callahan (see Fig. 11.10) were not rebuked for photographing nudity in intimate family pictures. Mann's detractors held that, as an adult, she could comprehend the sexually expressive qualities of the photographs in a way that the children could not. Therefore, they accused her of abdicating her parental responsibility to protect her children from lewd gazes of strangers.

The display of child sexuality became an issue that cut across political divisions, uniting some feminists and some conservative activists in censorship efforts. Within photographic circles, the topic initiated new inquiries into the motivations of nineteenth-century photographers Julia Margaret Cameron and Lewis Carroll (see Fig. 3.16), both of whom showed nude or nearly nude children.[44] Critic Anne Higonnet helped to frame the discussion by contrasting representations of the innocent child, pictured in photographs and paintings as not understanding sexuality, with the knowing child who is sexually precocious. In her study and others, social history and psychological theory directed attention to the photographer, the viewers of such pictures, and the condition of women in the societies that provided a market for such images.

Regardless of circumstance, the fact that a child stood before the lens in a state of undress became the salient point in a number of legal actions. Across the United States, some photographers and arts publications were scorned or punished for presenting images of childhood sexuality. For example, in New York City, the publication *Nueva Luz* (*New Light*), issued by En Foco (In Focus), an organization dedicated to promoting photography by people of color, was criticized by the *New York Post* for publishing photographs by Ricardo T. Barros (b. 1953) that showed his nude wife and children.[45] The newspaper was outraged that the organization received public money with which it supported *Nueva Luz*.

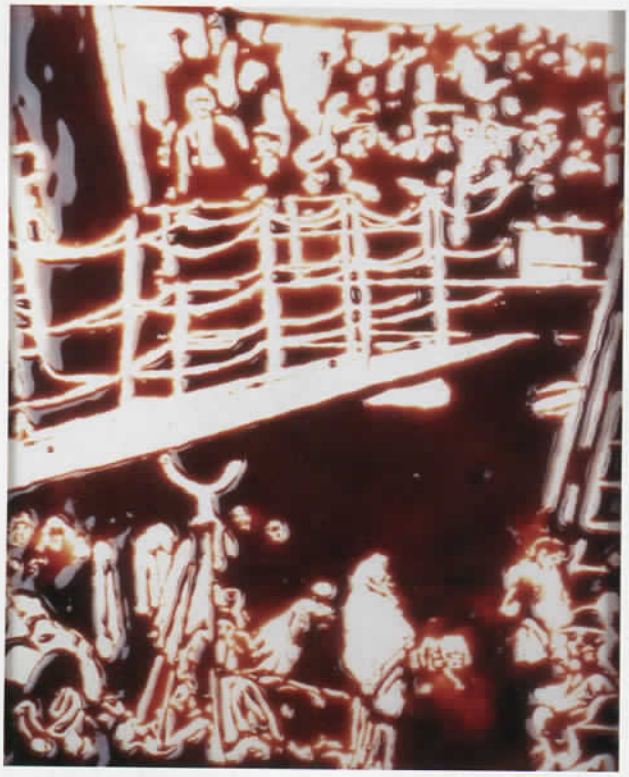
The most notorious incident involving public hostility to sexual images took place in 1989. The threat of losing public funding drove the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., to cancel an exhibit of Robert Mapplethorpe's (1946–1989) photographs, some of which were explicitly homoerotic prints, and a few others of which showed glimpses of children's genitalia. The parents of the children in the Mapplethorpe pictures knew the pictures and gave their permission for the prints to be exhibited. One of those pictures, titled *Rosie*, shows a little girl innocently raising her skirt while adjusting her pose (Fig. 13.53). Eventually the same Mapplethorpe exhibition was exhibited in Cincinnati, Ohio, where it gave rise to a much publicized trial, which, though won by the defendants, raised public ire at the use to which tax dollars were being put. Along with the uproar about Andres Serrano's pictures (see Fig. 13.20), the publicity surrounding the Mapplethorpe show culminated in reduced national and local spending on the arts.



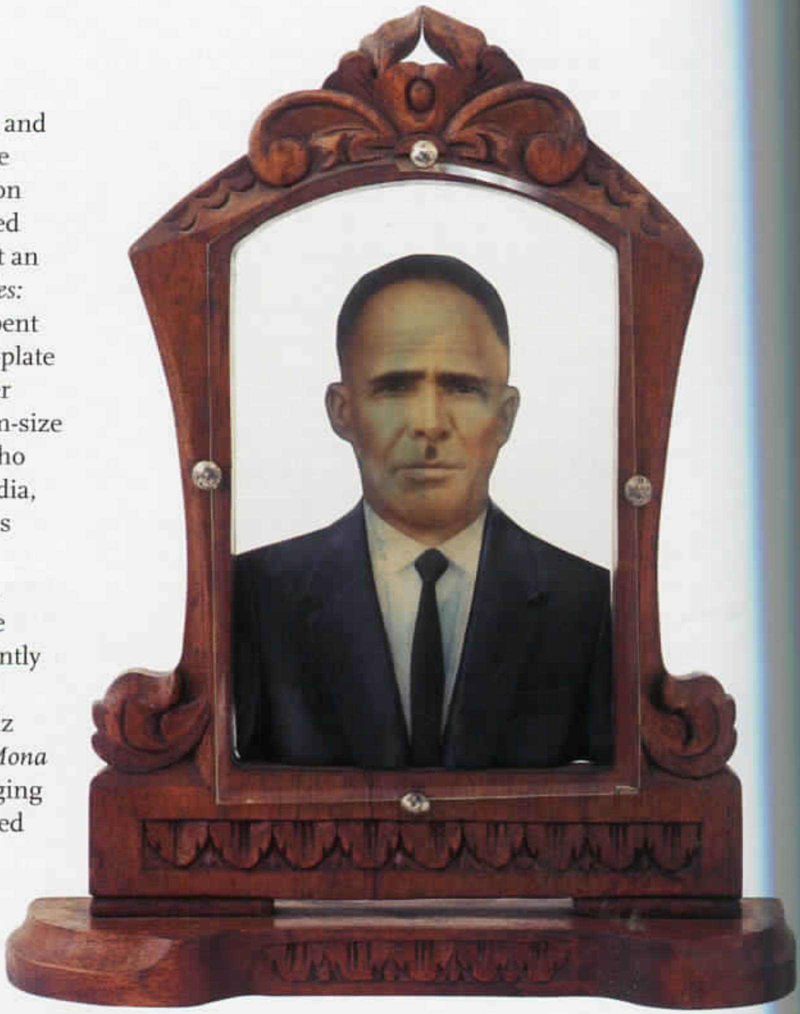
13.53
ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE, *Rosie*, 1976.

The rescue and reuse of family photographs further encouraged the growing interest of historians, curators, and artists in past photographic processes, such as cyanotype (which Clarissa Sligh employed). A personal investigation of alternatives to silver-based photographic processing led American photographer Bea Nettles (b. 1946) to concoct an enduringly popular 1977 volume called *Breaking the Rules: A Photo Media Cookbook*. Sally Mann (see pp. 474–75) spent the 1990s learning the tricky visual language of the wet-plate COLLODION process, and Cuban-American photographer Abelardo Morell (b. 1948) has revitalized the use of room-size camera obscuras. Brazilian-born Vik Muniz (b. 1961), who is known for his humorous and irreverent use of art media, revived the look of the *CLICHÉ VERRE* in a series of images based on Rembrandt's etchings. To produce the work, Muniz photographed a composition made of nails, pins, and paperclips, after carefully arranging them to give the illusion of etched lines. Muniz also photographed his gently irreverent version of Alfred Stieglitz's *The Steerage* (see Fig. 6.24), drawn with chocolate syrup (Fig. 13.54). Muniz often draws iconic images such as Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or Stieglitz's *The Steerage* from memory, acknowledging how they have achieved a permanent place in the extended family of cultural recall.

Some nineteenth-century processes now even have their own websites. During the late 1990s, as film-based black-and-white photography was being replaced by digital means, interest in the medium sparked a renewed interest in the darkroom with its sinks, trays, and chemical mixes.



13.54
VIK MUNIZ, ***The Steerage (after Alfred Stieglitz)*****, 2000. Silver dye bleach print. The Jewish Museum, New York.**



13.55
ARTIST UNKNOWN, ***Hombre (Man)*****, c. 1950. Hand-painted photograph over wood, plaster, woodframe, glass. Private collection.**

Even the tedious and physically hazardous DAGUERREOTYPE method made a return during the late twentieth century. For his 2006 series, *A Couple of Ways of Doing Something*, Chuck Close took up the daguerreotype process, asserting that photography never got any better after 1840. One enterprising photographer, Robert Shlaer (b. 1943), employed the technique during a four-year project retracing John C. Frémont's 1848 trip through the American West, deducing from engravings the actual scenes of now lost daguerreotypes made by the expedition's photographer.[46] In 2001, a Boston exhibit invented a name for the use of nineteenth-century techniques in contemporary photography, calling such work "crafted" images.

Artists' reuse of ordinary photography supplemented scholarly attention to vernacular photographic practice, such as the heavily overpainted photographs studied by Christopher Phinney in his investigation of camerawork in

India, and Mexican *foto-esculturas* or photo-sculptures. This hybrid between the flat photograph and the spherical sculpture was invented in the 1920s and became popular through the 1950s. It was customary for the sitter to direct the session, or to suggest flattering modifications to the photograph that would be used to make the *foto-escultura*. The practice of photo-sculpture evolved from the public's longing to magnify the vivid sense of personal presence. Not surprisingly, photo-sculptures became meaningful additions to funeral ceremonies (Fig. 13.55).

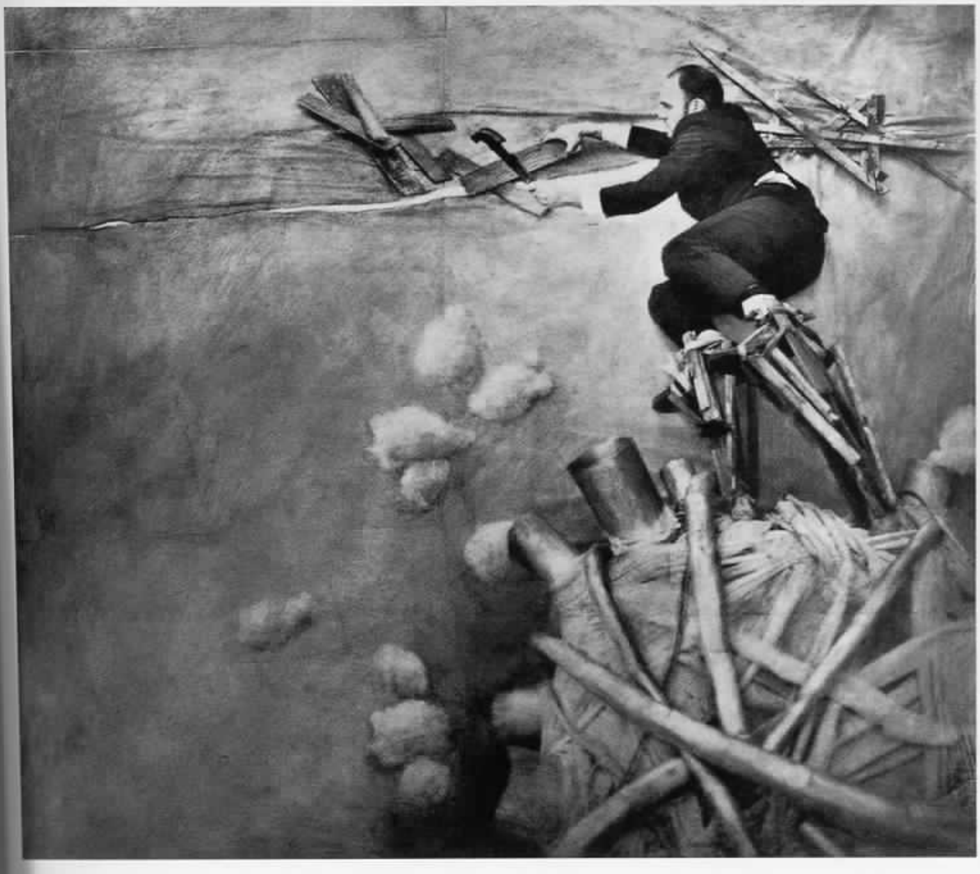
NATURE AND THE BODY POLITIC

Of the millions of images of nature made by amateur and professional photographers, most operated within the enduring nineteenth-century visual vocabulary of awe and magnificence. Photographs from space followed the tradition of the sublime landscape, accentuating the distance of other galaxies and the breadth of celestial bodies (see Figs. 11.35, 11.37, and Fig. 14.21). As a matter of fact, the hold of the nineteenth-century sublime upon wilderness imagery remained so strong that a few contemporary landscape photographers preferred to operate primarily with cumbersome old equipment, like that used by Carleton Watkins and other nineteenth-century photographers of the American West.

In the late twentieth century, images of nature did not receive as much critical scrutiny as did the concepts of gender and ethnic identity. Occasionally a voice was raised to protest the intrusion of cameras in precincts where endangered species might be disturbed by the presence of the photographer and equipment.[47] A few critics pointed out that photographs and films of animals were not objective, but modeled on an idealized view of Western family life. Some artists, such as Scottish-born sculptor Andy Goldsworthy (b. 1956), created on-site and gallery installations of natural materials, which were either returned to nature or allowed to decay, their only record being a photograph.

Invocations of magic and ritual, which regularly informed installation and performance art in the late twentieth century, were sometimes felt in photographic practice. Adam Fuss's photograms (see Fig. 13.14) sometimes seem like traces of ceremonial acts, and Robert ParkeHarrison's (b. 1968) *Earth Elegies* (1999–2000) portray him dressed in a priest-like black suit, while he tries to mend a simulated rupture in the earth. Equally sacramental is *Patching the Sky* (1997), in which the formally dressed artist-shaman stands on a makeshift platform attempting to suture a spot in the unmistakably artificial heavens (Fig. 13.56).

More often, nature was a distant presence with which humans could not convincingly connect, but for whose fate they were implicitly responsible. In photography, this feeling of alienation had been foreshadowed by New Topographics



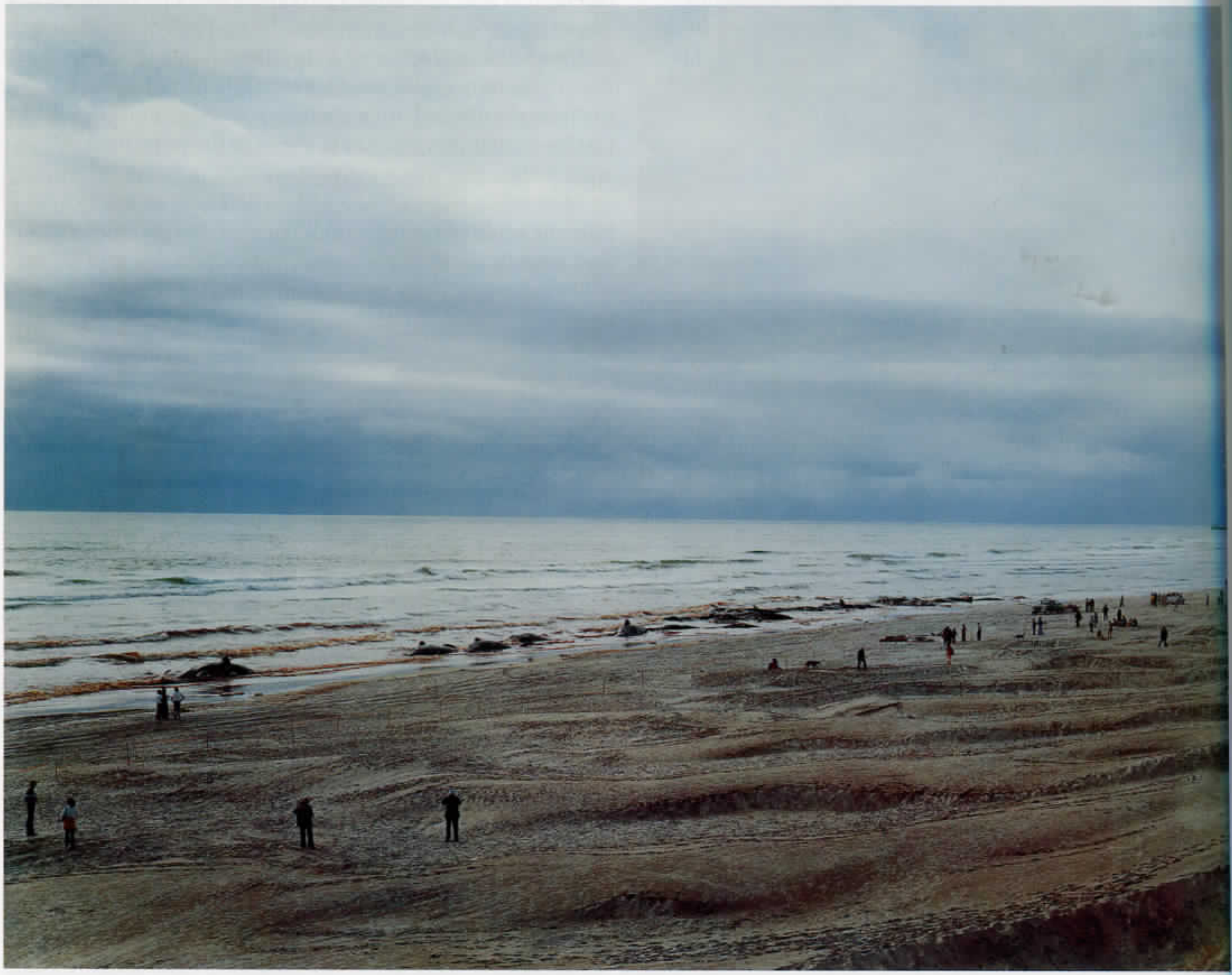
13.56
ROBERT PARKEHARRISON, *Patching the Sky*, 1997. Photogravure with beeswax.

Performance art was one of the forces that helped shape photography in the late twentieth century. It is a short step from photographing a performance to make a record of it, to performing for the camera. ParkeHarrison's rituals exist for the moment, and for the record.

photographers, such as Robert Adams (see p. 357), who declared that "Scenic grandeur is today sometimes painful."[48] Where nineteenth-century artists sought spiritual sustenance through sublime and beautiful displays in the natural world, contemporary artists tend to express the loss of transcendence.

American Joel Sternfeld (b. 1944) mastered the distanced landscape photograph, as in his view of dead and dying whales (Fig. 13.57). In his early twenty-first century work, he has begun to use digital manipulation to reprint these images. The resulting increase in the overall sharpness of these pictures tends to befuddle the eye and increase the sense of detachment. Since the 1970s, American John Pfahl (b. 1939) has been cleverly undermining landscape views with additions that prevented viewers from easily comprehending the spatial relationships before their eyes (Fig. 13.58). Where Pfahl constructs physical impediments to seeing in a landscape view, some photographers exploit obstructions that were already there, especially the automobile. To contrast with postcard and travel-magazine idealization of an uninhabited wilderness, they focus on the inevitable cluster of tourists' automobiles parked near the scenic outlook. Putting the human subject before nature, not being able to discern what is happening in nature, or being at a fixed, dream-like remove from the landscape has characterized the human separation from the natural world.

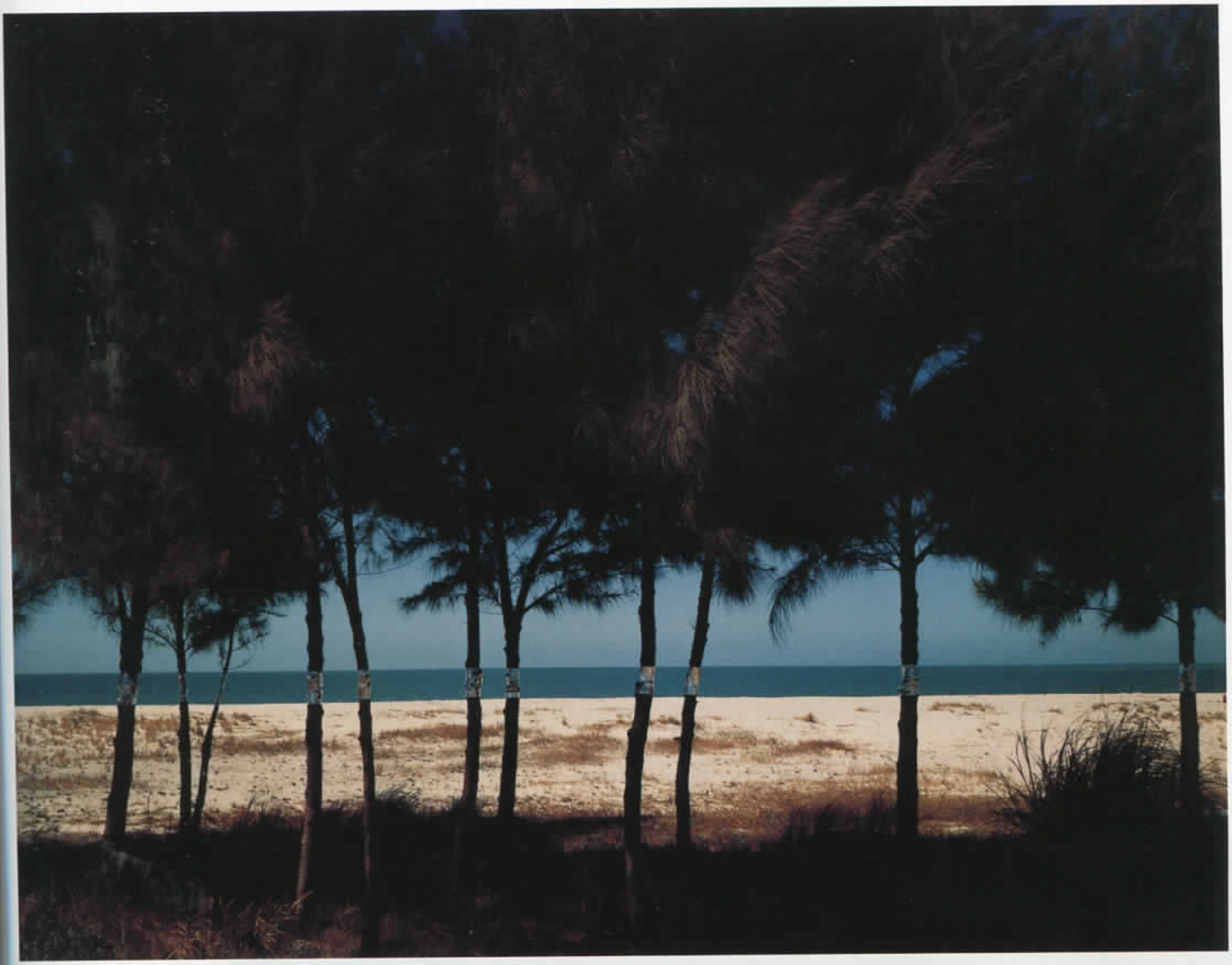
As Andres Serrano's work showed (see Fig. 13.20), beauty and repugnance can be effectively mingled in the same work.



13.57

JOEL STERNFELD, ***Approximately 17 of 41 Whales which Beached (and Subsequently Died), Florence, Oregon,*** **June 18, 1979. Dye-transfer print. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Gift of Hallmark Cards, Inc., Kansas, MO.**

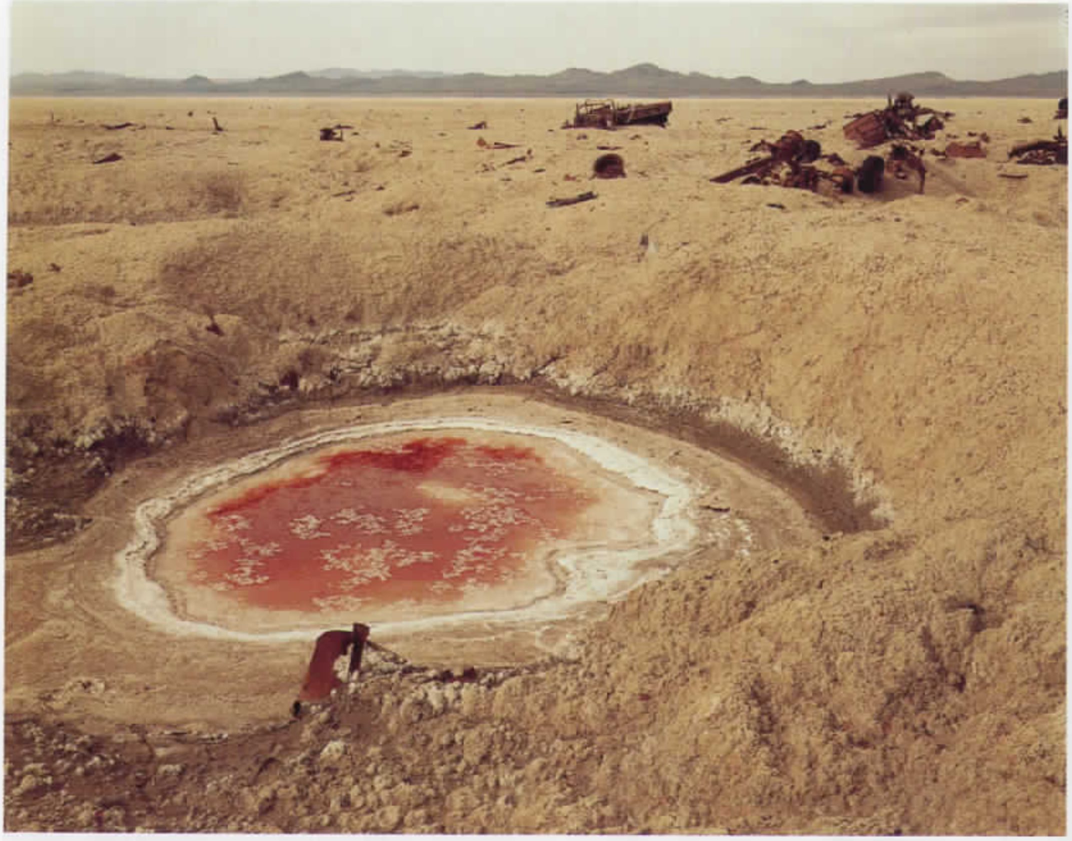
Sternfeld uses physical distance to symbolize emotional detachment. The tragic death of the whales takes place in a space remote from the viewer, as if it were impossible to care about their plight.



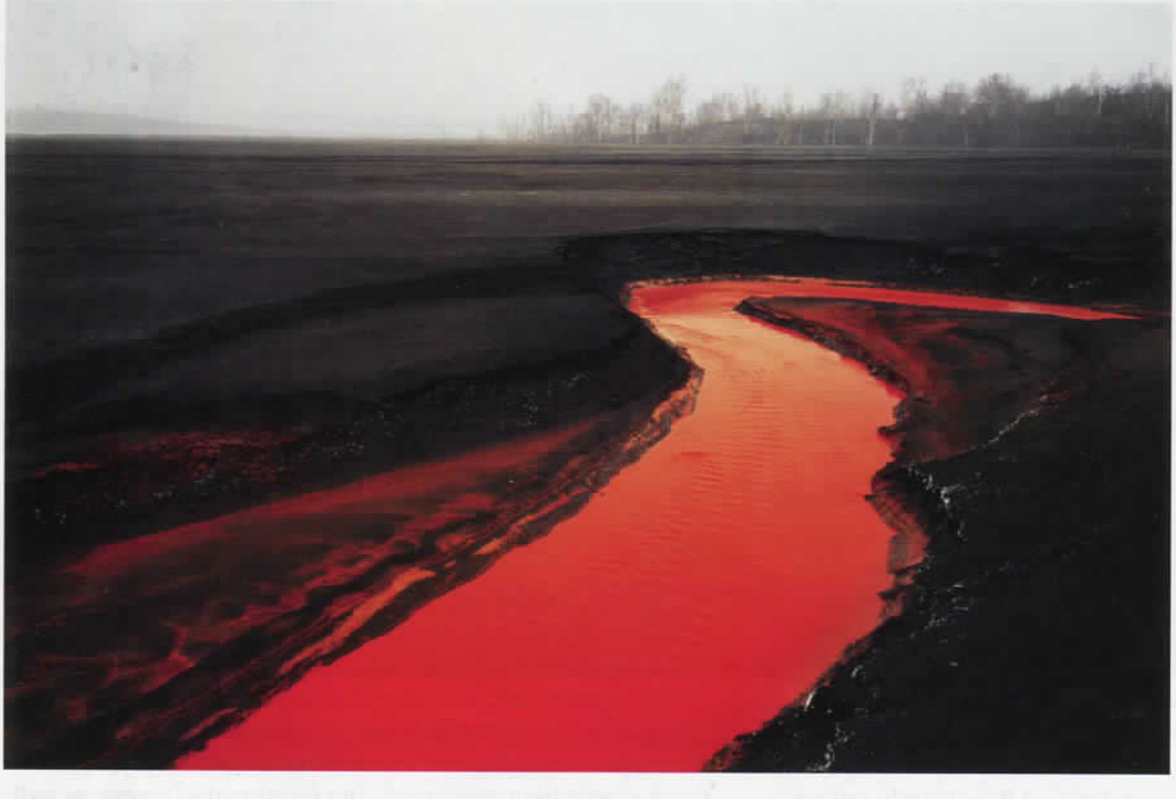
13.58
JOHN PFAHL, *Australian Pines*, 1977.

A similar effect sometimes occurs in photographs of nature as a wounded victim. Pictures of strip mines, clear-cut forests, and oil spills flaunt intense coloration and spectral glamour. In Richard Misrach's (b. 1949) pictures of Bravo 20, a bombing range in northwestern Nevada, the crater and rusting convoy teeter on the edge of abstraction and apocalypse (Fig. 13.59). When the work of Canadian Edward Burtynsky (b. 1955) made its appearance in a 2004 show and book covering his twenty-year career, it revealed a similar tack. Burtynsky exposes the paradoxical relationship between beauty and destruction. He concentrates on landscapes made spectacular through pollution, mining, and industrial decay (Fig. 13.60). Underlying his work is the worldwide reach of industrial development driven by the relatively cheap cost of oil. For example, his 2002 series *Shipbreaking* features the beauty of the Chittagong Delta of Bangladesh, inflected by the rusting orange hulks of oil freighters that have been strewn on the beach, awaiting disassembly for their metal scraps.

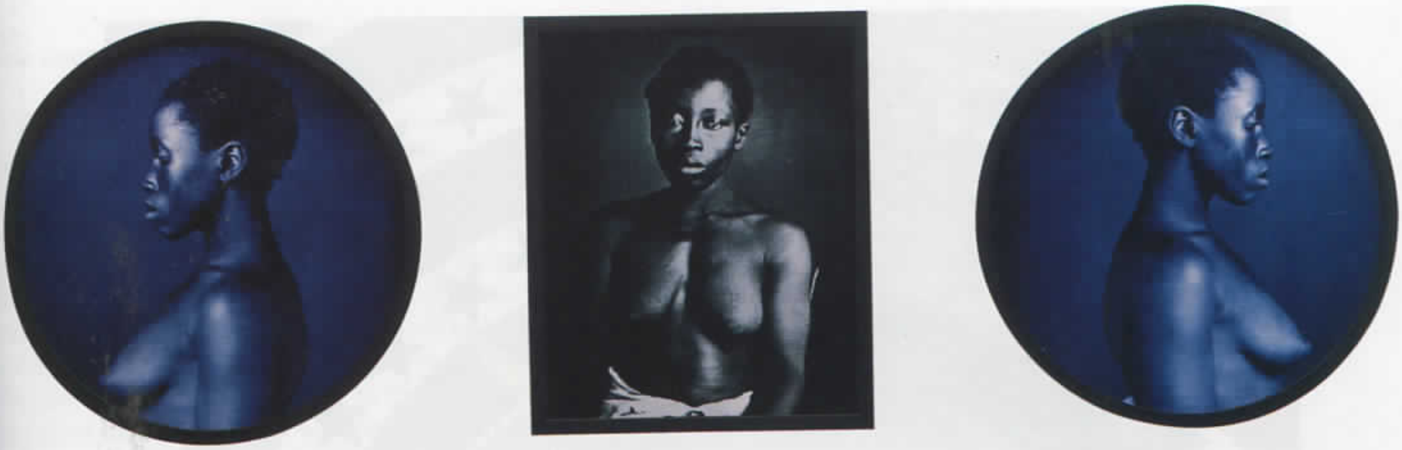
Within Postmodern theories of representation, the body was repeatedly theorized as the point at which society's values shape human personality. Cindy Sherman's multiple self-portraits, in which she is always and never herself (see Fig. 13.6), and Annette Messager's fragmented body parts (see Fig. 13.1) epitomized the Postmodern attitude that personality is ever changing. Similarly, the disjunction between words and pictures in Lorna Simpson's pictures of the human body (see Fig. 12.48) showed the force of societal labeling. History, the body, appropriation, and issues of ethnic identity met in Carrie Mae Weems's (b. 1950) reuse of nineteenth-century daguerreotypes made by J. T. Zealy to support Louis Agassiz's racial theories (see p. 38). By rephotographing, reshaping, and framing the images, as well as adding a somber blue tone to the circular outer pictures,



13.59
RICHARD MISRACH, *Bomb Crater and Destroyed Convoy*, 1986. Chromogenic color print.



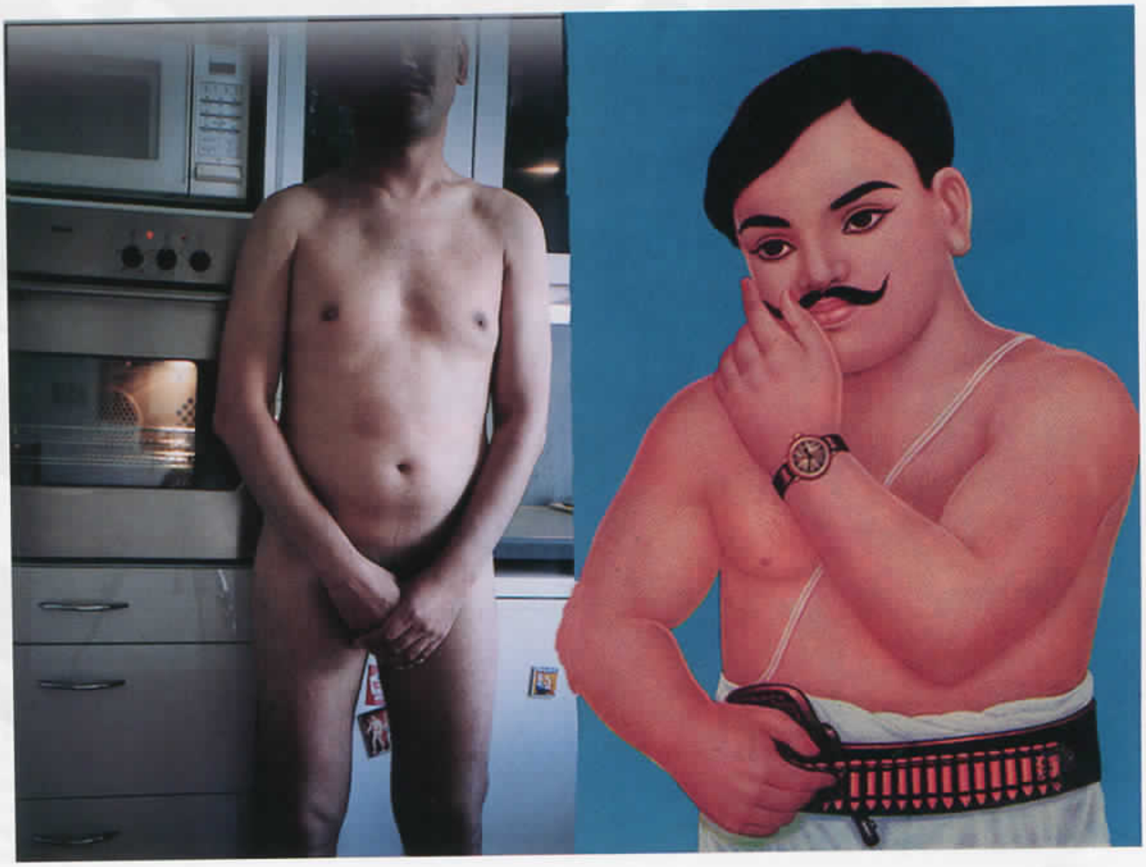
13.60
EDWARD BURTYNSKY, *Nickel Tailings No. 34, Sudbury, Ontario*, 1996.



13.61
CARRIE MAE WEEMS, ***Diana Portraits*****, from the *Sea Island* series, 1992. Ektacolor prints, three panels.**

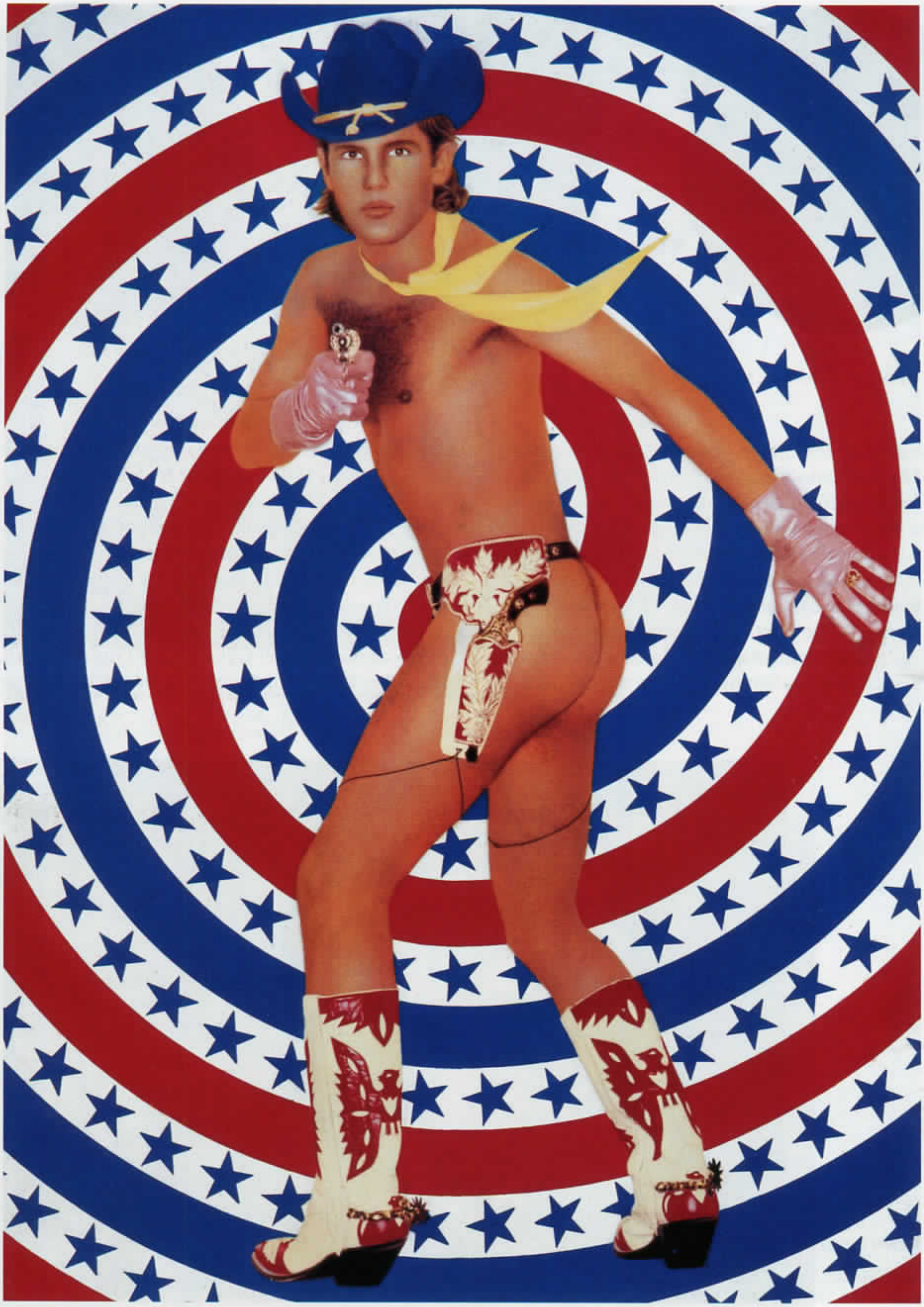
Weems transformed scientific photographs that made a spectacle of the body into an affecting memorial (Fig. 13.61).

Other sorts of personal identity also focused on the body. Sunil Gupta (b. 1953), an Indian-born Canadian citizen who lives in London, produced the photographic series *Exiles* (1987), depicting gatherings of gay Indian men. His work continues to contrast his daily life with that of ideals (Fig. 13.62). While Gupta appreciates experimental techniques such as photomontage and digital representation, he nonetheless chose a straightforward view of the plight of those who are seldom represented except in pornographic pictures. In his choice of visual presentation, Gupta, who is gay and HIV positive, is typical of people seeking greater social visibility. As video-maker and writer Marusia Bociurkiw aptly pointed out, "the absence of photographic representations amid a larger culture so heavily saturated by media images can make the act of production seem transgressive."[49] In that spirit, perhaps, the French collaborators Pierre et Gilles (Pierre Commoy, b. 1949, and Gilles Blanchard, b. 1953) have been creating sensuous,



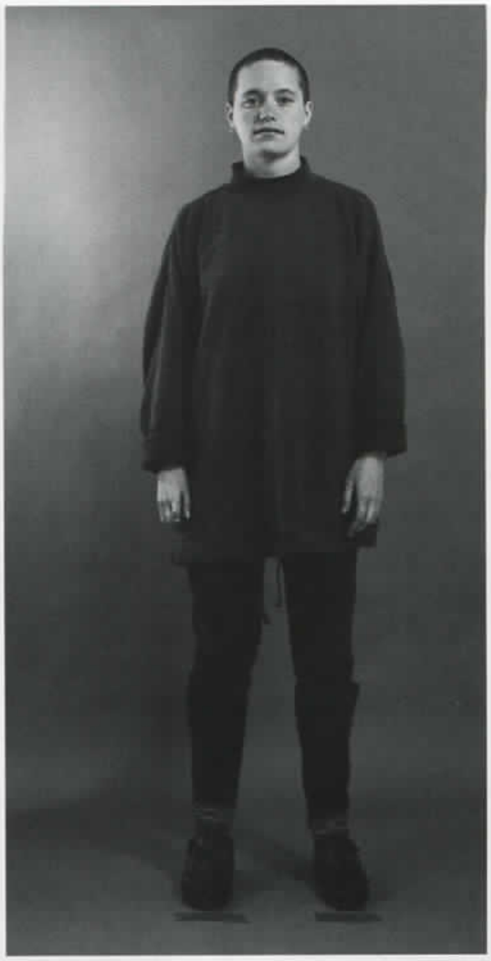
13.62
SUNIL GUPTA,
***Untitled* from *Trespass II*, 1993**

To confront South Asian values and heritage, Gupta compares modes of contemporary life by contrasting his own nude body with a depiction of a robust figure who has a gun tucked into his bullet belt.



13.63
PIERRE ET GILLES, *Le Cowboy—Victor*, 1978. Painted photograph.

Adamantly anti-digital, Pierre et Gilles insist on the craft of hand-painting their photographs, which they assert show the beauty inherent in popular culture items such as pulp comics. Their work appears on posters and postcards, as well as in gallery prints.

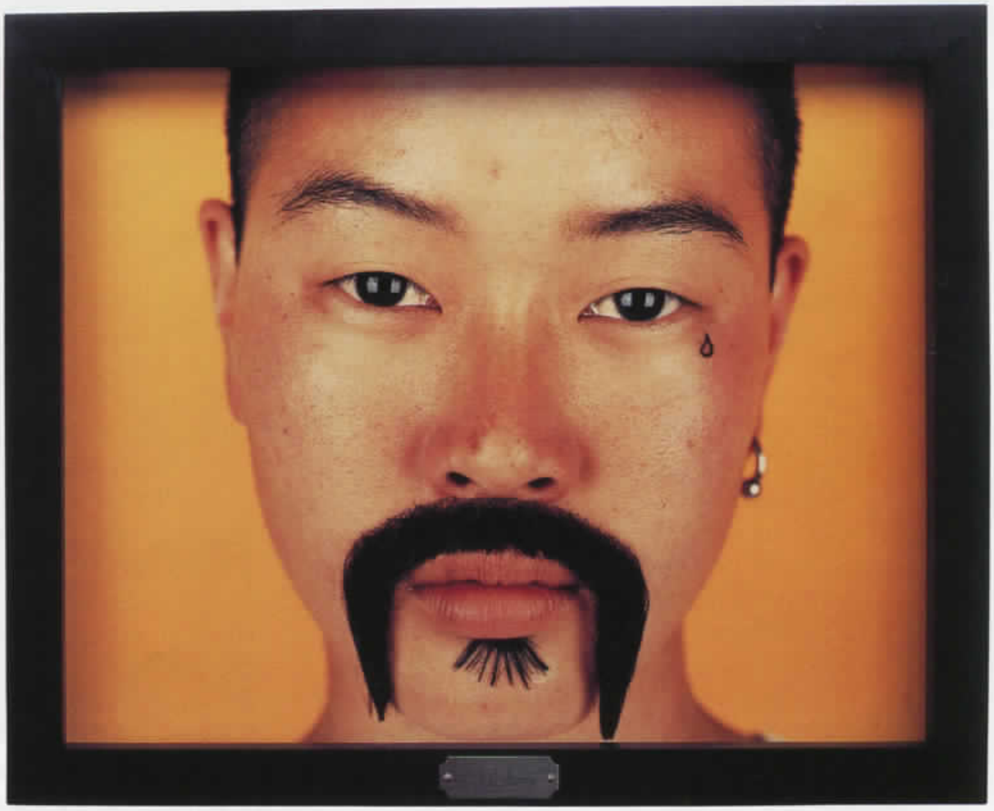


13.64
LINN UNDERHILL, *Untitled*, from *Returning the Gaze*, 1995.

color-laden, often homoerotic photographs since the mid-1970s (Fig. 13.63).

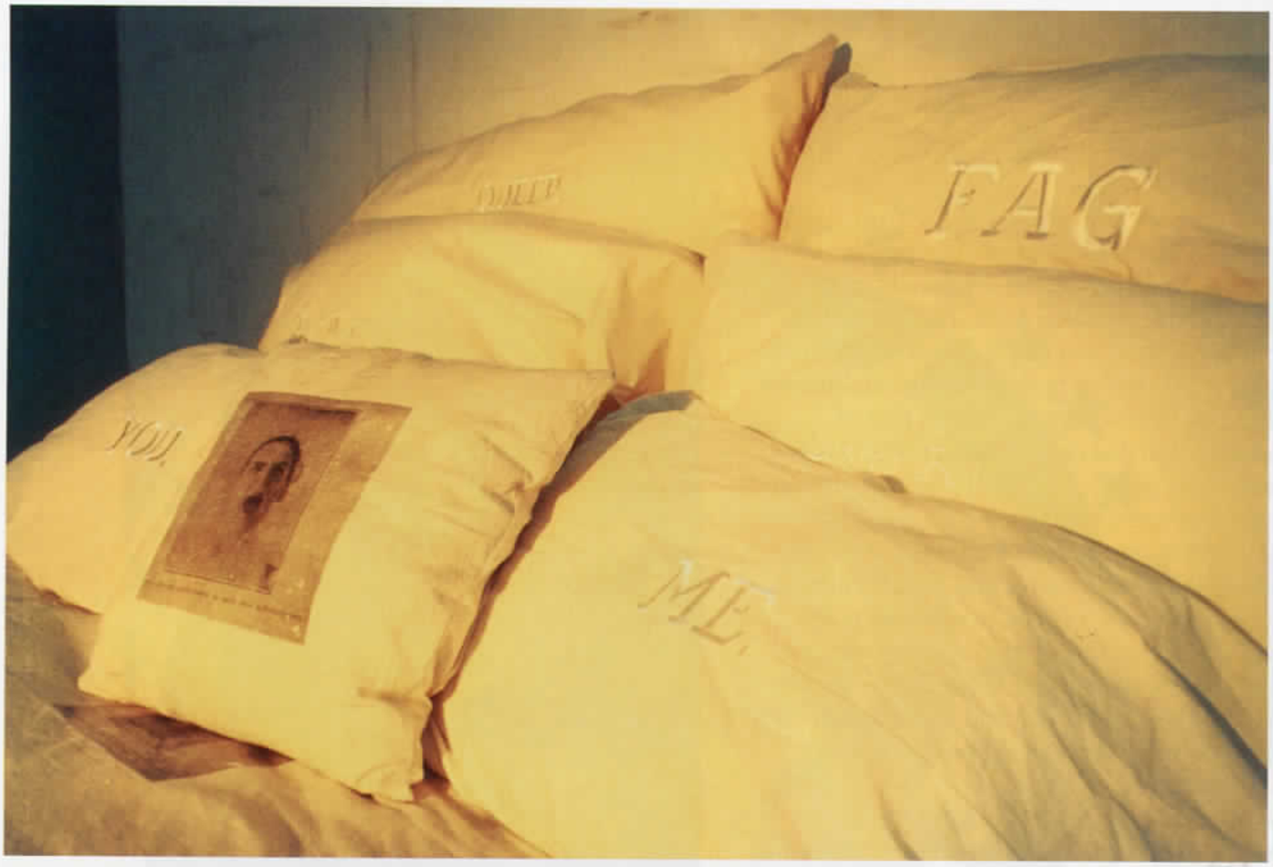
American photographer Linn Underhill (b. 1936) undermined the conventions for women's portraits by deliberately avoiding the association of the female body with nature. She refused to fragment the body or to deflect the sitter's gaze from the camera, and hence the viewer. Printed life size, and hung nearly ceiling to floor, Underhill's images unsettled viewers who were accustomed to the hint of submission and seduction that characterized formal studio portraits of women (Fig. 13.64). Underhill's women present themselves as uncomplicated everyday people, but Catherine Opie's (b. 1961) sitters in the 1991 series *Being and Having* manifested obviously fake accessories, as if gender clues were something they put on or took off at will (Fig. 13.65). *Chicken* sports a false mustache and even a phony tear. In a later series showing lesbian couples, Opie, like Underhill, reverted to a less experimental format and conventional studio techniques, validating the sitters' frankness with photography's styleless style.

During the period, homoerotic desire was depicted by artists in direct images of sexual arousal, and in pictures that critique received ideas about gays and lesbians. Following the lead of advocates and artists, scholars took renewed interest in the history of homosexuality and its images. The then



13.65
CATHERINE OPIE, *Chicken*, 1991, from her series *Being and Having*, 1991. Chromogenic print. Patrick Breen Collection.

Opie's images often fuse stereotypes of outward physical appearances, in an attempt to make the viewer struggle to interpret ethnic and gender identity. In this image, the obviously false facial hair and artificial tear do not effectively change the appearance of the person wearing them—a lesson, perhaps, in the futility of gender pretense.



13.66
GARTH AMUNDSON, Detail from the installation *Dr. Kempf's Nightmare*, 1995. Muslin, embroidery, and transfer, queen-sized bed.

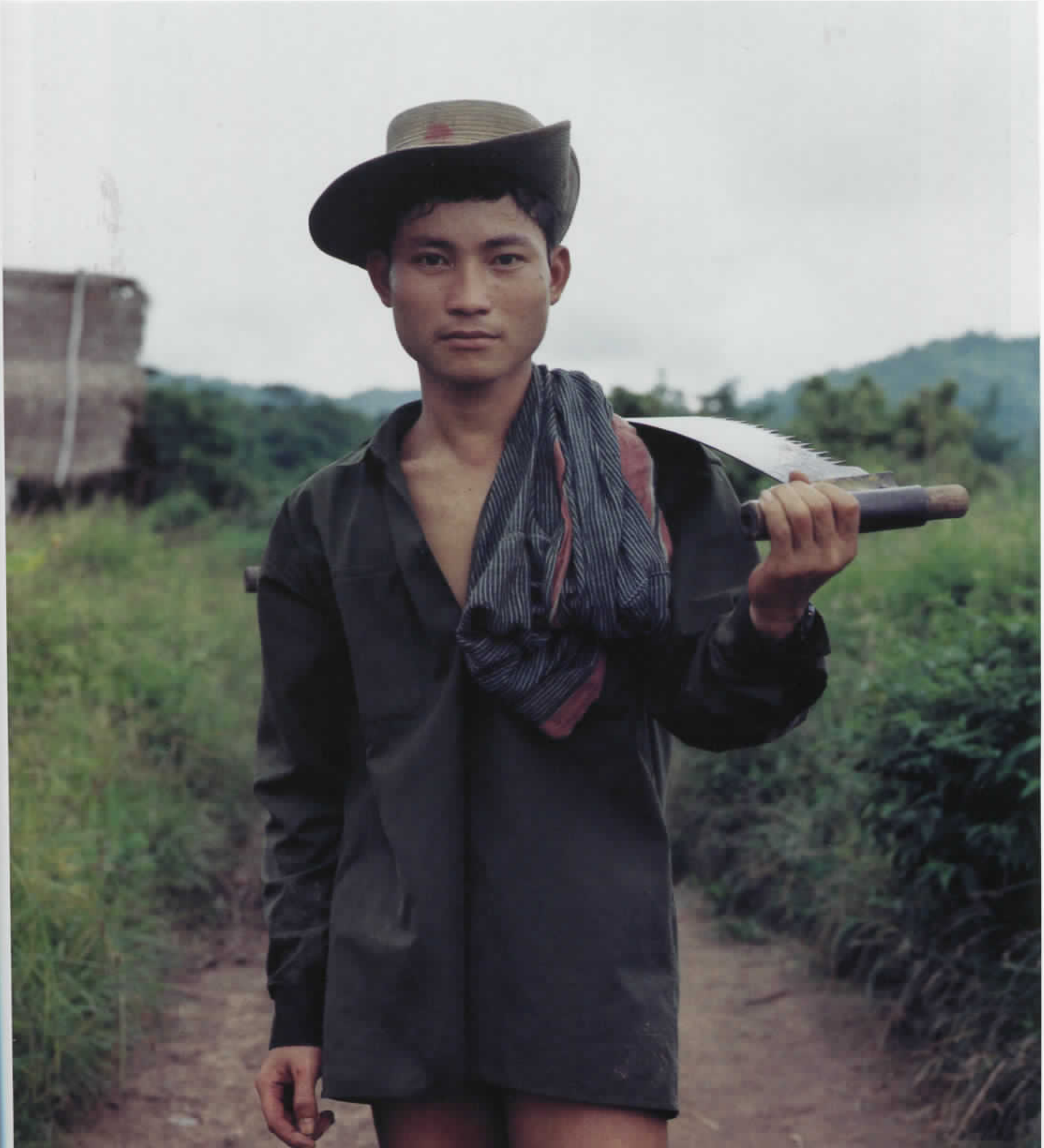
Amundson hand-stitched the pictures to muslin sheets that were also embroidered with derogatory labels for homosexuals. Putting the pictures and words on a bed, Amundson not only made reference to erotic desire, but used the display as a ceremonial wedding or acceptance of his homosexuality.

largely unknown work of French Surrealist photographer Claude Cahun (see Fig. 8.29) was studied and widely exhibited. Indeed, Cahun's self-portraits were recast as a forebear of Cindy Sherman's investigation of feminine roles.

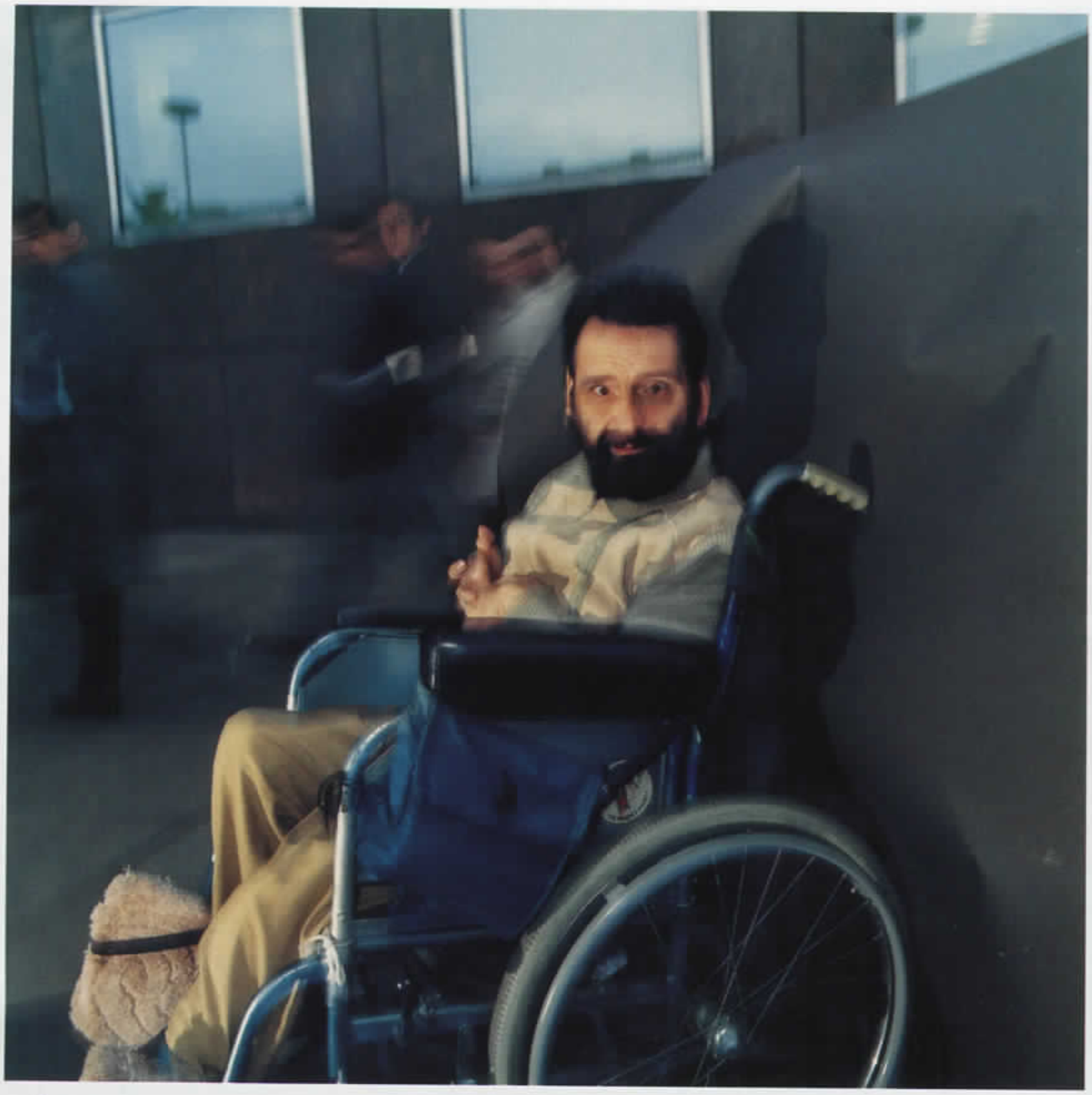
Because pictures of homosexuals in the mainstream media emphasized stereotypical looks and behaviors, the body became the locus of politically oppositional gay photography. Still, in Garth Amundson's (b. 1963) pictures, the body is implicitly rendered. For his 1995 piece *Dr. Kempf's Nightmare*, Amundson recast medical photographs gathered by psychiatrist Edward J. Kempf at the turn of the nineteenth century as part of his attempt to prove homosexuality an illness (Fig. 13.66).

The AIDS crisis of the mid-1980s sparked a variety of artistic responses, the best-known of which is probably the Names Project Quilt, with panels sometimes adorned with photographs commemorating individuals who died of the disease. Pictures of emaciated people suffering with AIDS, taken by photographers such as Nicholas Nixon (b. 1947), or those used in advertisements sponsored by the international clothing company Benetton (see p. 488), were subject to debates about what was considered to be an indulgent and counterproductive voyeurism. Activist groups, such as ACT UP, argued for "the visibility of PWAs [People With AIDS] who are vibrant, angry, loving, sexy, beautiful, acting up and fighting back."[50] In response, media-savvy photographers created photographs of healthy-looking AIDS patients, and showed the pictures not only in galleries but also in poster form in the streets. Photography was also the backbone of the safe-sex campaigns around the world, most notably in the internationally traveling exhibition "Visual Aids."

As happened in South Africa under apartheid, people whom society has marginalized have been concerned not only to critique disparaging imagery, but also to originate depictions that had been absent or censored. For instance, when Burmese-American Chan Chao (b. 1966) photographed students and ethnic members of the Burmese resistance, he created large, direct portrait studies, concentrating less on the sitters' military exploits, which were played up in the press, than on their routine daily lives in the encampments along the border between Thailand and Burma (Fig. 13.67). A comparable approach has been taken worldwide by people with disabilities, who attempt to redress photographs that show them as victims. British photographer, writer, and



13.67
CHAN CHAO, *Member of KNLA*, from his series *Something Went Wrong*, 1999. C-print.



13.68
DAVID HEVEY, ***Untitled,*** **from** ***Beyond the Barriers: Disability, Sexuality, and Personal Relationships,*** **1992.**

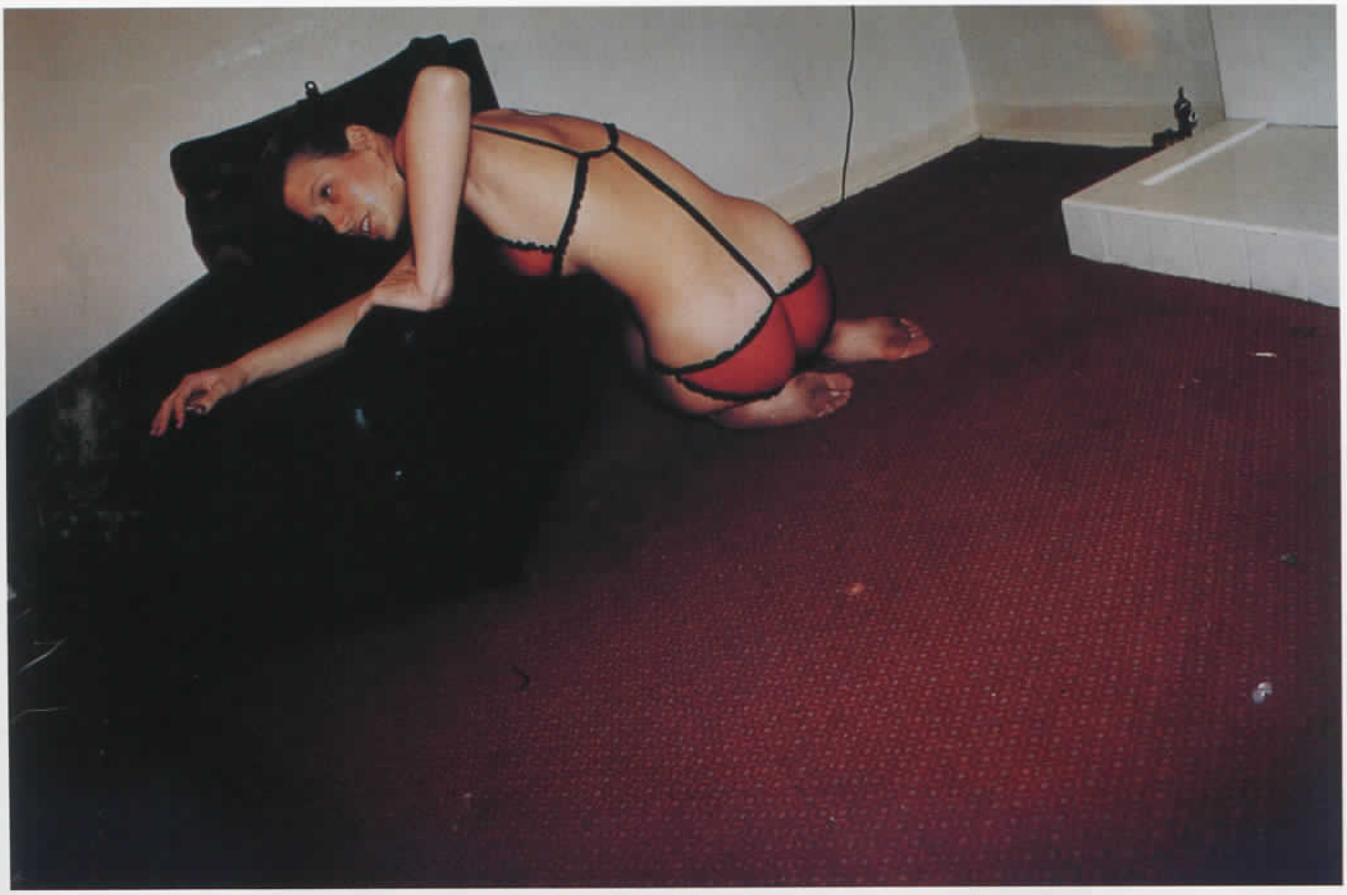
activist David Hevey (b. 1959) has tried to devise what he calls a "post-tragedy form of disability representation" (Fig. 13.68). Hevey faults Postmodern theory for not taking into full account the "distribution, audience and production" of images.[51] Like Jo Spence, whom he greatly admired, Hevey distrusts academic nit-picking and bickering, which he believes obliterates the larger issues of class with psychoanalytic analysis.

ENTER FASHION

In an era of exceptional hybridization among photographic genres, none was more surprising than that of fashion photography, art, and social concern. The merger was somewhat precedented in the experimental photography of the 1930s, but the vast growth of goods and media since that time produced a much larger, more dynamic consumer economy in which styles and images changed rapidly and ideas had a short shelf life.

Many art photographers, such as Nobuyoshi Araki, Nan Goldin, Jack Pierson, Cindy Sherman, and Larry Sultan, created fashion advertisements that strongly resembled the implicit narratives of gallery work. In fact, Goldin was able to move some of the lingerie advertisement photographs that she took in the run-down Russian Baths in New York City into her open-ended slide show "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency."

Of course, mainstream fashion magazines continued to feature models whose engaging cuteness or chill beauty reliably sold conventional clothing and cosmetics. But during the last decades of the twentieth century, the urban music and club scene bred an anti-fashion industry and, with it, progressive magazines such as *i-D* and *Dazed and Confused*, which featured clothing and settings that would never have been published in more commercially oriented publications.



13.69
CORINNE DAY, *Georgina, Brixton*, 1993. C-print.

Late twentieth-century cutting-edge fashion photography favored a gritty realism. In Day's image, a littered room sets the scene for a model with dirty feet who is wearing designer lingerie.

At the same time, the rapid expansion of the youth market and youth culture, which began accelerating after World War II, fostered the increasing development of clothing, jewelry, and cosmetics just for teenagers and young persons.

Fashion-forward clothing advertisements also abandoned the idealized, pristine locales of high fashion for the grime and disarray of the real world. Likewise, tall, slim, carefully coiffed and rigidly posed models were replaced by everyday people who did their own make-up and had "bad hair days."

Former model Corinne Day (b. 1965) frequently set her fashion shoots in actual lofts and apartments, where dirty coffee cups, old newspapers, littered rugs, and grungy furniture created an ambiance far from the glamorous, squeaky-clean settings of high-fashion photography (Fig. 13.69). Fashion photographers tended to picture evocative interpersonal relationships, putting the product second. For example, in one of Day's pictures, a model's face is blotchy and red from crying because of an off-camera event; in another, a naked young man sprawls across a bed while looking questioningly into the camera's lens. Their anti-establishment approach was dubbed "Slacker photography."

Another British photographer, Nick Knight, frequently conceived his photographs as demimondaine night-time scenes. Like Corinne Day, Knight photographed some internationally known models, but he also favored ordinary people inhabiting favorite hang-outs. His pictures for One in Ten, an anti-breast cancer campaign, broke from the topic's sentimentality to show women who had been treated for the disease wearing heavy make-up and posed in sexually alluring postures (Fig. 13.70). The term "heroin chic" arose to describe unkempt settings and models shown with bruises and red-rimmed, unfocused eyes.

Because of its world-weary appearance, the photography of underground or fashion-forward clothing was sometimes labeled Postmodern, though it mostly lacked the theoretical intricacy of art theory. Alternative fashion photography continues to hasten the breakdown of barriers that have separated the medium's genres. It is not unusual or shameful for a documentary photographer, such as Mary Ellen Mark, to do fashion work. The ungainly yet descriptive moniker "fashion-plus-culture" has emerged to describe this continuing trend.

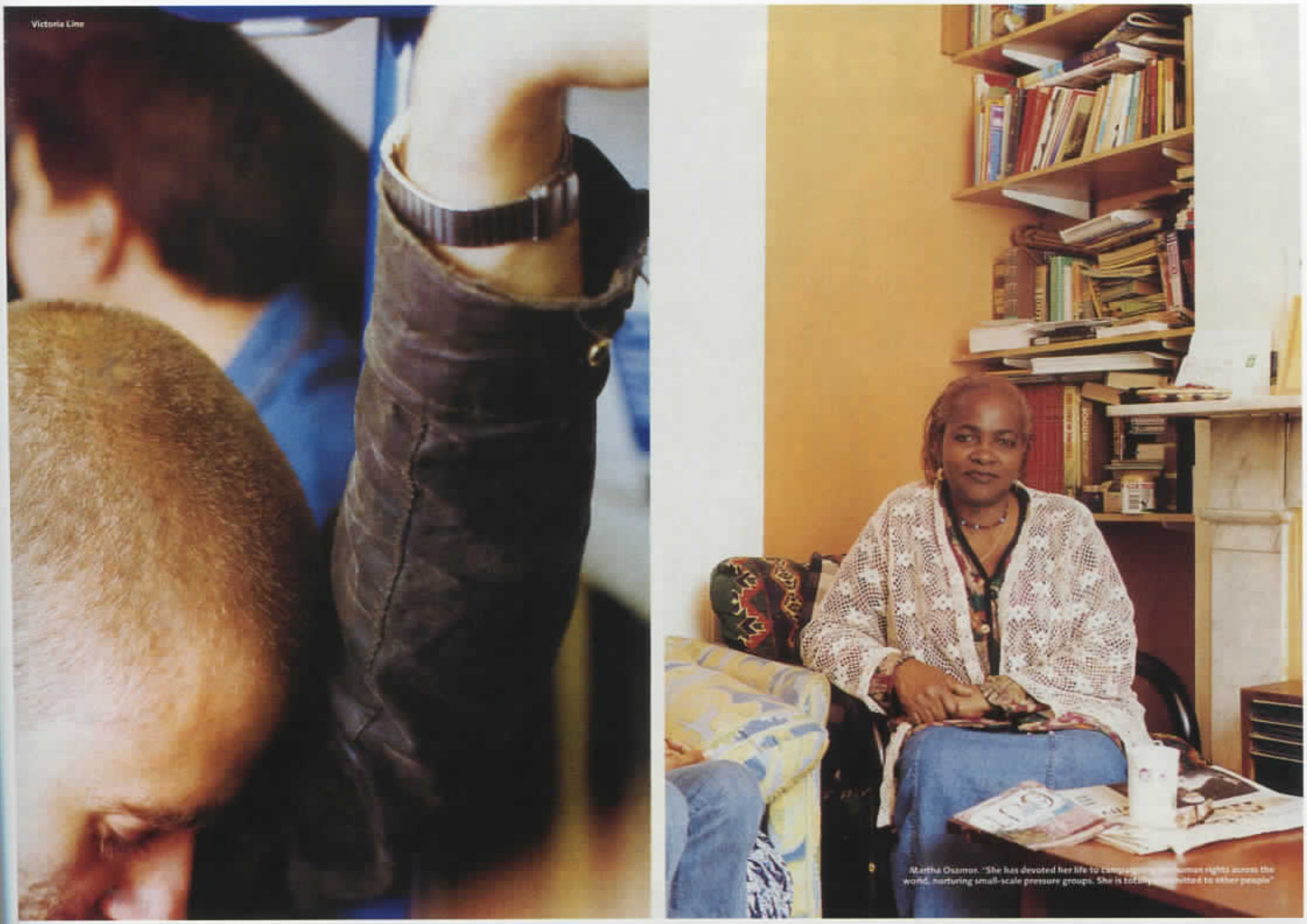
Fashion and social trends met in a different way when Wolfgang Tillmans guest-edited *Big Issue*, a magazine sold

13.70
NICK KNIGHT, ***One in Ten.*** **Photo Nick Knight; styling Katy England. Show Studio and Dazed and Confused, 2001.**

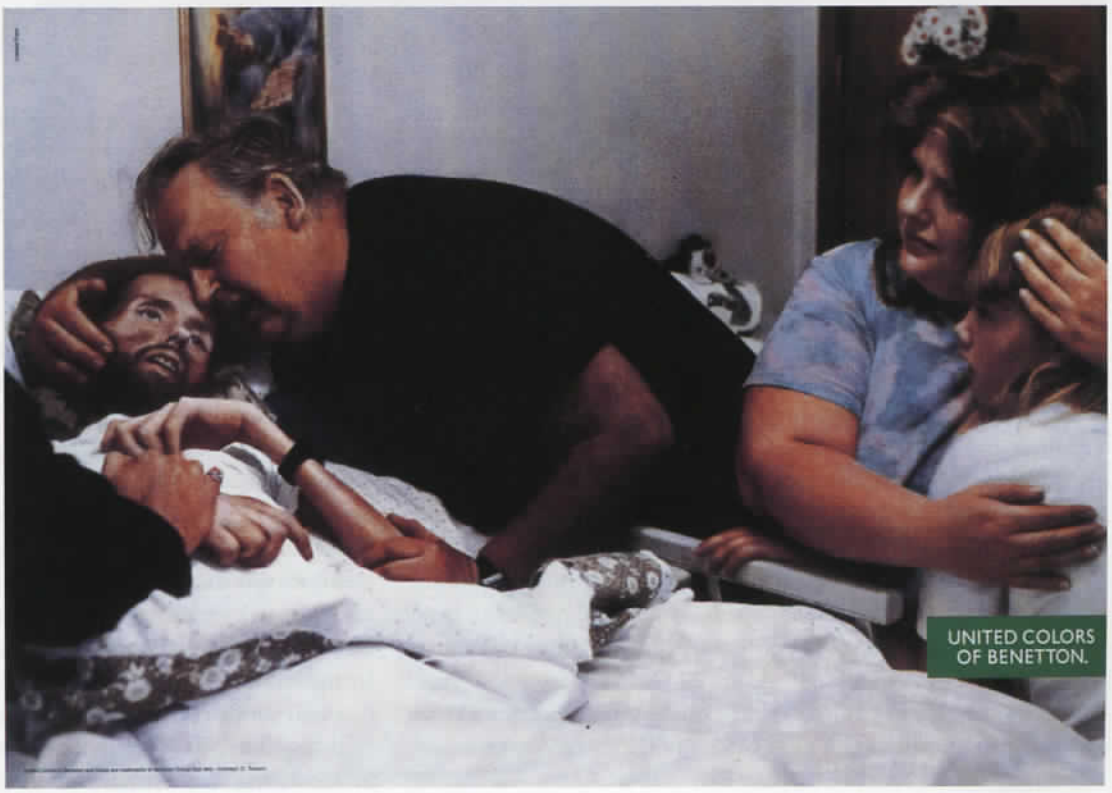
on the streets of the United Kingdom by the homeless. He made the weekly periodical desirable by exhibiting in its pages a mix of photographs from different genres similar to those appearing in upscale galleries (Fig. 13.71). The most notorious combination of fashion and politics was made by the Benetton Group, an international clothing retailer. In the mid-1980s, Benetton began to market multiculturalism by attiring models from different ethnic groups in its clothing. By the 1990s, the United Colors of Benetton ads turned away from displaying the company's products and toward showing people in distress, such as Haitian refugees, prisoners on death row, or persons with AIDS (Fig. 13.72). The fact that these images were widely criticized for reinforcing class, ethnic, and gender stereotypes did not deter the company from expanding its efforts.

During the 1990s, Benetton revived a strategy used by corporations in the 1950s, such as Pepsi-Cola, which hired accomplished photographers such as Esther Bubley (see p. 285) to create "documentary advertising" for a multilingual magazine. Called *Panorama*, Pepsi's bi-monthly aimed to lessen the hold of Coca-Cola on the Latin American market by featuring international friendship and understanding.[52] Under the leadership of designer Tibor Kalman (1949–1999), Benetton created the magazine *Colors*. In the most famous issue, public figures were made to look like people of color, while people of color turned white. The ad campaign and magazine sparked consumer protest, and provoked Benetton dealers in Europe and the United States to sue the company on the grounds that the advertisements had a negative effect on sales. Benetton advertisements prompted the international use of new composite words, such as advertorial (advertising + editorial) and infotainment (information + entertainment). In the early twenty-first century, just as the promise of linking advertising and social concerns was being reconsidered, *Colors* was revamped, turning away from iconoclastic images, while dwelling on less disquieting social movements.

After the Benetton furor, it seemed unlikely that another manufacturer would attempt to join advertising and political

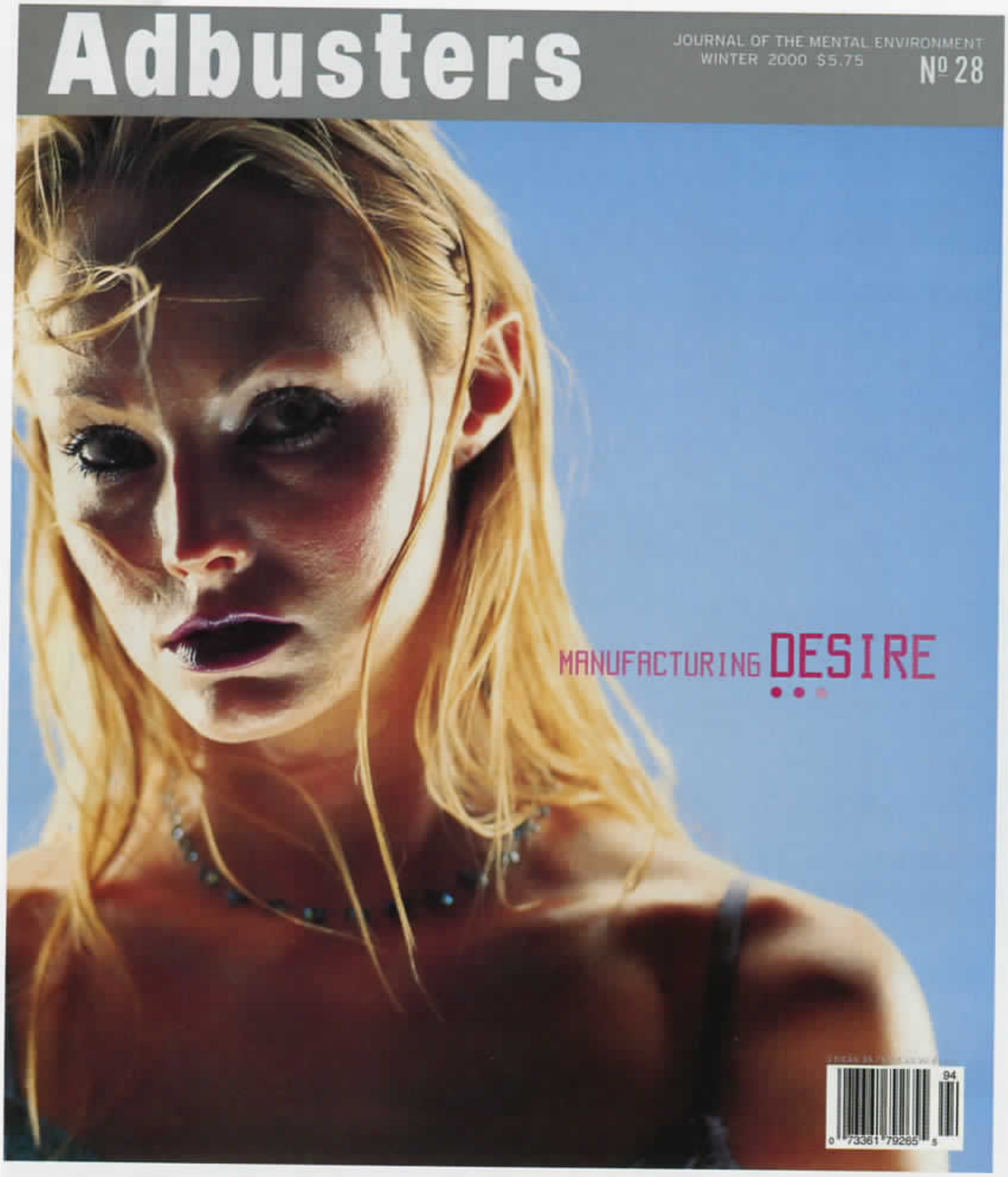

Victoria Line
Martha Osamor. "She has devoted her life to campaig[illegible] human rights across the world, nurturing small-scale pressure groups. She is tota[illegible]mitted to other people"

13.71 (above)
WOLFGANG TILLMANS, ***Victoria Line and Martha Osamor*****, from the *Big Issue*, special edition "The View from Here," August 28–September 3, 2000, no. 401.**


UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

13.72
THÉRÈSE FRARE, *Pietà* (AIDS patient), 1992.

The Benetton company linked themes of social awareness to the drive to create consumer loyalty by incorporating photographs of people afflicted by poverty and disease.



13.73
Cover of *Adbusters*, Winter 2000, no. 28.

At first glance, the pouty blonde looks like the standard cover-girl using sexuality to sell magazines. On closer inspection, one sees the heavy make-up which is unable to disguise her scarred cheek and large pores, flaws that would have been eradicated in conventional advertising images.

action. However, the Adbusters Media Foundation, a countercultural enterprise based in Vancouver, Canada, launched the glossy magazine titled *Adbusters* (vol. 1, no. 1, Summer 1989), aimed at unraveling marketing strategies and critical of consumerism. Using the high-tech tools of advertising photography, *Adbusters* deconstructed visual clichés, such as the appearance of the cover girl (Fig. 13.73).

THE PASSING OF POSTMODERNISM

In a 1993 interview, photographer-critic Barbara Pollack spoke for many when she announced her frustration with Postmodernism:

> It's the nineties. I don't have to discuss Lacan any more. The phrase "postmodernism" presumed that everyone had already shared in the modernist expedition. But I consider myself a prime example of people who are saying, "Hey, before you say that modernism is over, let me share in that adventure." There are myths inherent in modernism that may romanticize the role of the artist or may be sexist but have certainly influenced my life. I am ambivalent about giving up those myths.[53]

The major ideas of Postmodern photography were played out by the mid-1980s. Looking back in 1987, Abigail Solomon-Godeau was convinced that critical practice itself was in a critical condition. Within a decade of Douglas Crimp's 1977 article "Pictures," which allied then little-known photographers such as Cindy Sherman with oppositional writing on the nature of language, power, and representation, Postmodern photography had been incorporated into what Solomon-Godeau called the "emporium of photography." Major Postmodern shows in galleries dedicated to presenting art photography signaled what she aptly called "deconstruction in reverse." Instead of analyzing the art market, with its emphasis on originality and genius, Postmodern photography itself began to be marketed as original and inspired, thereby vitiating its critical stance.

How did the passing of the Postmodern happen? Douglas Crimp, one of the first to announce the arrival of Postmodern photography, was also the critic who noticed its slide into an accepted and marketable commodity. In the wittily titled article "Appropriating Appropriation," written for the 1982 catalog accompanying the show called "Image Scavengers," he observed that Postmodern photography was being diluted by the artists who first fashioned it, such as Richard Prince and Cindy Sherman, while simultaneously being subsumed into the art institutions as just another category of art. In that vein, Solomon-Godeau asserted that the conventions of art history and museum practice easily historicized Postmodern photography as the photography after Modernism, just as Post-Impressionist painting followed Impressionism. Thus categorized, Postmodern photography became what it so desperately attempted not to be, another art-historical style/period. In addition, the roaring art market of the 1980s latched on to Postmodern photography, by then predigested in popular arts magazines and newspapers, and found it a profitable investment.[54]

In an important sense, there were several Postmodern moments in recent photographic history. The first, starting with the 1977 "Pictures" exhibit in New York, ended in the mid-1980s, when some of the movement's most persuasive proponents, such as Crimp and Solomon-Godeau, began to question Postmodernist photography's increasingly cozy relationship with the art market. The second period persisted until the mid-1990s, during which time Postmodern theory and photography found a central place in many college art departments, as well as in literary studies, art history, and cultural studies. Future historians may be tempted to date the conclusive demise of Postmodern photographic practice to a particular place and time: New York City, Monday evening, November 8, 2004, when Barbara Kruger's iconic photograph, *Untitled (I Shop Therefore I Am)*, a once heretical and divisive indictment of consumer culture, was sold at auction for $601,600.

Nevertheless, the end of Postmodern photography was less dramatic. By the mid-1990s, Postmodernism was about twenty years old, and of decreasing interest to young artists, for whom the issues it raised about Eurocentrism and colonialism, the construction of social truth, the sources and misuses of gender and ethnicity identity, the conundrums of representing the past and the present, had been absorbed into the majority culture and were part of their education since childhood. As critic Jeff Rian observed, "From the younger perspective, social consciousness is a given."[55] In that sense, Postmodernism was—and is—a highly successful intellectual movement, which reshaped a broad spectrum of high-school and university curricula. Many prior intellectual movements, such as existentialism, cannot make that claim. There is no clear marker for the end of Postmodernism, because many of its most admirable principles are now commonly held.

Postmodernism changed the art and academic worlds in several ways. It shifted emphasis away from traditional art to reproducible media, such as film, photography, and video. Because Postmodernism questioned the tacit assumptions of Western art, it helped to refocus attention on marginal and non-Western art practices. In that sense, Postmodernism was not only a cultural phase, but also an unwitting collaborator in the expansion of Western culture's global reach.

RETAKE

In art, documentary, and advocacy photography, the human body emerged as nature's chief representative. Issues of gender and ethnicity, which could have been pictured in a wide social context, tended to feature individuals, not milieus. Artists, such as Lorna Simpson and Cindy Sherman, created images with echoes of cultural stereotypes. Infused with Postmodern ideas, social documentary photographers questioned the act of representation. Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* exemplified the critique of realism as well as the suspicion of aesthetic appearances. Feminist and Postmodernist photographers portrayed matters of psychological identity. At the cultural moment that marriage and the nuclear family were declining, photographers showed tensions among kids and couples, and turned to the extended family of friends and lovers. During the same period, what would be called the digital revolution was gaining strength. It appeared both in art and in photojournalism, where it sometimes set off shivers about a dystopian future.