

BOOK REVIEWS

NEW PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

Three new books of candid black-and-white environmental photographic portraits prompt one to consider the elements of control as used by each photographer. The portrait photographer creates a style base on her/her choice of subjects, size, placement and proximity of figures, camera angle, lens choice, f/stop (depth-of-field), eye-contact, type of environmental space, and expression. All of these elements allow the viewer, a voyeur to the photographic sitting, to sense the relationship between the sitter and the photographer. In documentary photography, the apparent subject of each of the volumes, we might expect the photographer to be less in control of the subject than, for example, in Avedon's *In the American West*, in which subjects are removed from their environments and placed before a white background, framed by the 8x10 film holder's black border. It is not true: the "candid" photographer selectively chooses to relate to his/her subject in a specific way.

In *Photoportraits* by Henri Cartier-Bresson (Thames & Hudson, 1985), we see the subjects, famous as well as unknown, in their environments, Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" capturing an aspect, a fleeting expression, before he moves onto the next photograph. Environments are important, and Cartier-Bresson often shoots horizontally to give the viewer even more; when he shoots vertically, the subject is often tightly compacted into the lower third of the frame. The importance of the subject is stressed only by focus—s/he will be sharp while the background will be out of focus (f-stop control).

Doris Ulmann, *American Portraits* by David Featherstone, (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1985) presents the viewer with softer, more staged portraits, mostly of unknown people, Appalachian, taken in the early part of the century. Much less a captured moment or aspect, Ulmann has stopped people involved with their activities, and carefully composed a painterly memory. Subjects only occasionally look at the photographer, but turn inward; and the result is pensive, introspective.

Milton Rogovin's portraits of *The Forgotten Ones* (University of Washington Press, 1985) are more direct, contrasty, strong visual statements, also of unknown subjects. He employs a sharply focused environment effectively as a device, especially in his "Working People" series, 1977-80, which shows the viewer two aspects of an individual, at work and at home. There is a directness and "street wise" quality to these portraits, with subjects returning the viewer's stare, openly and without qualification.

All three photographers present secure, self-assured subjects from varying classes of society; and each exercises his/her particular controls in making the portrait. Each photographer has a separate vision, as we would hope, and it is up to the viewer, a third party, to perceive the sitter through the photographer's eyes and his/her own preconceptions. Each vision is equally valid and worthwhile; and in the end we learn more about the photographer than the subject s/he has chosen to photograph.

—Janice Felgar

IN.S.OMNIA by Invisible Seattle is the product of a group of free spirits in Seattle, Washington, who believe that using high tech and their literary and graphic art abilities united the activities of Reading/Writing and Production/Consumption much like mail art. You address other human beings who Write and Read, not some mute part of the mass market designated by "Audience"... It is a workshop, an ideal writing laboratory, site of games and adventures, a true "Republic of Letters," using a Bulletin Board System on an IBM-PC. Being an On-Line Literary Magazine, you can talk to your friends. All you have to do is call the *IN.S.OMNIA* computer bulletin board system at (206) 784-7685 with a personal computer or terminal and a modem, or write to Function Industries Press, P.O. Box 9915, Seattle, WA 98109 for \$6.95. The "chapters" are the computer's "Rooms", each one a separate story of discussion. This magazine "is just an invitation to people who read it: Buy a modem and call 206-RUG-SOUL, because we want to hear from you."

Constructivist Architecture in the USSR By Anatole Kopp (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1986) is a stunning analysis of the architecture which reflected the new way of life and political vision held by the Constructivists in the new Soviet Republic, including Tatlin, Rodchenko, the Stenberg brothers, Maiakovskii, Gan, Ginzburg, and many more. Illustrations come from the magazine of the Constructivist architects and their students, many never before published in the West. \$45.00

Black Photographers, 1940-1940: An Illustrated Bio-Bibliography by Deborah Willis-Thomas (New York, Garland, 1984, \$40) is an oversize, lavishly illustrated volume providing information on nearly 70 black photographers active during the first century of photography, including all biographical, chronological, and bibliographical data, as well as two illustrations of his or her work. Bibliography and indices.

The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886 (Seattle, Univ. of Washington Press, 1986, \$40 until 1 July 1986) by Charles S. Moffett accompanies the travelling exhibition of the avant-garde movement of the 1870s and 1880s with over 200 color reproductions of exhibitions as the Impressionists saw those works, demonstrating the eight group shows that reflect individual development as well as the Impressionists saw those works, demonstrating the 8 group shows that reflect individual development as well as the evolution of the movement as a whole. Includes bibliography, contemporary reviews. A stunner!

Instant Litter: Concert Posters from Seattle Punk Culture, compiled by Art Chantry (Seattle, Real Comet Press, 932 18th Ave., East, Seattle, WA 98112) is a softcover book culling some of the 100 best, worst, most political, controversial and graphically interesting music posters off the streets of Seattle, from the early 70s to the present. Kiosk art with glues or staples, *Instant Litter* documents a rich form of contemporary communication, shaper by economic and cultural necessity, which has gone to develop careers of many poster artists, including Lynda Barry. \$10.00

SURREALISM

Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement by Whitney Chadwick (Boston, New York Graphic Society, 1985) 256 pages with 200 illustrations, biographical notes, bibliography and index. Pioneering study with full treatment of lives, ideas and paintings of the remarkable group of women associated with the Surrealist movement. \$39.95

L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism by Rosalind Krauss, Jane Livingston, Dawn Ades (New York, Abbeville Press, 1985) Features 200 exquisite duotones, 24 full-color illustrations, biographies of all the artists represented. Reveals photographs' crucial role in surrealist art and thought, showing how surrealism was actually focused on the endlessly fertile relationship between photography and imagination. Erotic, disorienting, and wryly humorous photos. Biographies, bibliography. \$45.00

ENVIRONMENT

The Colossus of Roads: Myth and Symbol along the American Highway by Karal Ann Marling (Minn., University of Minnesota Press, 1984) \$27.50 cloth, \$12.95 paper

Deals with postcards, roadside architecture, miniature golf, tall tales, etc. Small identification photos, but text is fascinating. Minnesota Colossi included.

Main Streets to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture by Chester H. Liebs (Boston, NYGS, 1985, \$40 cloth, \$19.95 paper) tells fascinating story of how role of the automobile coupled with an emerging commercial revolution helps to shape the architectural environment of 20th century America. First to trace development of modern roadside commerce. 252 black and white photos, 17 in color. Archival images from all regions of the country, showing us how to be a "windshield archeologist" and how to decipher the time live in every city. Auto showrooms, supermarkets, gas stations, motels, restaurants, miniature golf courses and drive-in theaters analyzed.

FASHION

The Black Leather Jacket by Mick Farren (New York, Abbeville Press, 1985, \$19.95) is bound in black leatherette appropriately, tracing the history of the black leather jacket from rock and roll to punks and rockers, as well as the underworld of S & M, bike gangs, and even Television's Emma Peel in her leather jumpsuit from "The Avengers". Spanning 75 years, these 150 black and white photos represent the names that made the leather black jacket a part of 20th century history.

BOOKS ABOUT BOOKS

Books are Basic: The Essential Lawrence Clark Powell, edited by John David Marshall (Tucson, Univ. of Arizona Press, 1985, \$12.50) was written by my Dean at Library School—author, editor, raconteur, and for nearly 3 decades as head librarian at UCLA. This is a bookman's bookman, a librarian's librarian who loves books and does everything possible to help bring books and readers together. He left just before the computer revolution, to teach about the love of books at the library school at Tucson. And now he reminds us how books and reading are, in Powell's words, "the realist of all reality," and the heart and soul of any library. Divided into four sections, *On Books and Reading, On Libraries, Librarians and Librarianship, On Writers and*

Writing, and On Lawrence Clark Powell, a librarian with books in his baggage, this is the Bartlett's of bookmanship, and not to be missed by any collector, librarian, library, human being who reads English.

Books In My Life by Robert B. Downs, one of the most distinguished academic librarians of the United States, has recently been published by the Center for the Book, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540. Free upon request. This booklet brings the wisdom of another lover of books and his own life story entwined with books.

PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS RECEIVED

Henri Cartier-Bresson: Photoportraits (New York, Thames & Hudson, 1985) includes spontaneous studies of more than 250 subjects both great and unknown. \$50

Doris Ulmann, American Portraits by David Featherstone (UNM Press, 1985) \$60.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper

Jews & Germans: Aspects of the True Self by Mark W. Berghash (CMP Bulletin, vol. 4, no. 5, University of California, Riverside.

Milton Rogovin: The Forgotten Ones (Seattle, Univ. of Washington Press, 1985) \$35.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper

Let Truth be the Prejudice: The Life and Photographs of W. Eugene Smith by Ben Maddow (New York, Aperture, 1985) \$50.00

Constructs: Photographs by Barbara Kasten with 13 contemporary poems. (Boston, New York Graphic Society, 1985) \$22.50

Lucien Clergue: Eros & Thanatos (New York Graphic Society, 1985) \$45.00

The Work of Atget: Modern Times, vol. IV (NYGS, 1985) \$45.00

Ronald W. Woblaue: Eye of the Storm (Boston, David Godine, 1985) \$25.00 softcover, \$35.00 hardcover

The Essential Landscape: The New Mexico Photographic Survey with essays by J. B. Jackson (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1985) \$50.00

Cape Code: Henry David Thoreau's Complete Text with the journey recreated in pictures by William F. Robinson (Boston, New York Graphic Society, 1985) \$35.00

Hidden Seascapes: Photographs by Feodor Pitcairn with text by Kirstin and Feodor Pitcairn (Boston, NYGS, 1985) \$70.00

Manhattan: An Island in Focus with photographs by Jake Rajs (New York, Rizzoli, 1985) \$45.00

Spirit of Sport, ed by Constance Sullivan (Boston, NYGS, 1985) \$35.00

Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project by Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, JoAnn Verburg, Gordon Bushaw, Rick Dingus, with an essay by Paul Berger. (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1985) \$65.00

25 Years of Space Photography: Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, with essay by Christopher Knight. (Pasadena, CA, Baxter Art Gallery, in assoc. with W. W. Norton, 1985)

New American Photography by Kathleen McCarthy Gauss (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1985) \$38.50

BOOKS FROM NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART:

Diverse Images: Photographs from the New Orleans Museum of Art (Garden City, NY, Amphoto, 1979) available from University of New Mexico Press. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper

Leslie Gill: A Classical Approach to Photography 1935-1958 (New Orleans Museum of Art, dist. by UNM Press) \$12.50

Edward Weston & Clarence John Laughlin: An Introduction to the Third World of Photography (NOMA, dist. by UNM Press) \$8.95

EXHIBITION CATALOGS

Choices: Making an Art of Everyday Life includes Marina Abramovic/Ulay, James Lee Byars, Spalding Gray, Alex Grey, Tehching Hsieh, Linda Montano, Morgan O'Hara, Michael Osterhout, United Art Contractors and Ian Wilson. A black covered paperback with a crimson satin ribbon as a bookmark, **Choices** is an important exhibition at the New Museum (2/1 - 3/30/86) as well as an important catalog. These artists live and make art as one experience—their lives entwined with art, and these conversations, chronologies, documentations prove it. A most moving experience of life, a most deeply felt catalog. \$8.50 including postage and handling. New Museum of Contemporary Art, 583 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Festival of Fantastics, Roskilde, May 27 - June 2, 1985. Includes 10 avantgarde artists from USA and Europe, including Eric Andersen, Geoffrey Hendricks, Jackson Mac Low, Anne Tardos, Bob Watts, Philip Corner, Alison Knowles, Ann Noel, Ben Vautier, and Emmett Williams. Performances were held throughout the town, as well as exhibitions held in various galleries. Available is the catalog from the Festival (\$2.00), 15 slides from the exhibition (\$15.60), 15 slides from Husarstalden (\$15.60), 24 slides from the events (\$25.00), NORTH No. 15 (published in connection with the festival by the art magazine) \$7.80, and videos of all events. For more information, contact Gallery Sct. Agnes, Skonagergade 9, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark.

Siah Armajani: Bridges, Houses, Communal Spaces, Dictionary for Building at ICA, University of Pennsylvania, 34th & Walnut, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Charles F. Lummis: The Centennial Exhibition, edited by Daniela P. Moneta, published by Southwest Museum, dist. by University of New Mexico Press. \$14.95 paper

Women Photographers in America 1985, a national juried competition of women fine art photographers available from Women in Photography, P.O. Box 27142, Los Angeles, CA 90027.

Disarming Images: Art for Nuclear Disarmament by Nina Felshin accompanies an exhibition which ends at the Bronx Museum of the Arts in late 1986, sponsored by the Bread and Roses cultural arm of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, AFL-CIO and published by

Adama Books, 306 West 38th St., New York, NY 10018 shows powerful works of art, brilliantly illustrated with an extensive essay. \$14.95

Liberty...And the Pursuit of Liberty, catalog of the 1986 Women's Caucus for Art National Conference Exhibitions is available for a pre-publication price of \$9.95 to WCA, New York City Chapter, 11 St. Mark's Place, Suite 13, New York, NY 10003.

A Circle of Life by Ruth Weisberg, an exhibition of recent work by this gifted artist and spokeswoman for so many who aspire to success as women artists, is a catalog from the Fisher Gallery, USC, University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90089-9282 for \$12.50 plus postage, which documents a recent exhibition and which will travel to Carnegie Mellon University in the autumn of 1986. With 11 color plates, black and white photographs, biography, chronology, bibliography, and essays by Selma Hollo, Ann Sutherland Harris, and a checklist of the exhibition, every contemporary collection should include this exhibition of prints, drawings, as well as large oil paintings.

Letterism and Hypergraphics: The Unknown Avant-garde, 1945-1985 by Jean-Paul Curtay is the catalog of a recent exhibition at Franklin Furnace, curated by a member of a movement which has had little critical and/or visible documentation in this country. After 35 years of semi-obscurity in Europe, Letterism has been rediscovered and assessed and seems to be today as a sort of Super-Futurism. Included are the first "metagraphic" artists' books from 1950, photographs from 1953, a reconstitution of what is probably the first video installation, phonetic poems by Isou and his followers from 1945 on, and the near complete work of the first artists who worked on magnetic tape, Francois Dufrene, as well as more recent and contemporary works by artists from France, Italy and Germany. Chronology, exhibition checklist, and major critical essay by Curtay. Available from Franklin Furnace, 112 Franklin St., NYC 10013.



ON THE COVER: Buster Cleveland, represented by Gracie Mansion Gallery in New York City, has designed the cover of *Umbrella* for this issue. Although created more than 2 years ago, this cover is a fantasy—a dream that money will rain down upon *Umbrella*. So may it be—April Fools!