

Shirin Neshat, sans titre, 1996, tiré de la série *Women of Allah*, 1993-1997

IMAGE / CORPS. LA FIGURE HUMAINE

Photographie contemporaine
Nassim Daghighian

IMAGE / CORPS. LA FIGURE HUMAINE DANS LA PHOTOGRAPHIE CONTEMPORAINE (1980' – 2000')

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Fictions de l'altérité, corps en mouvement, corps social : différences, migrations, travail, pauvreté...

Réel / virtuel : corps politiques en mutation ?

Attention : Ce dossier a été réalisé en 2007 ! Certaines informations peuvent donc ne pas être à jour.

Quelques références bibliographiques

Pour une liste plus importante d'ouvrages sur le thème du corps, voir ma bibliographie générale.

- ARDENNE, Paul, *L'image corps. Figures de l'humain dans l'art du XX^e siècle*, Paris, Regard, 2001
- *Missing Link. Menschen-Bilder in der Fotografie / The Image of Man in Contemporary Photography*, Doswald, Christophe, éd., Kunstmuseum Bern (3.9-7.11.99), Zurich / New York, Stemmler, 1999
- TOWNSEND, Chris, *Vile Bodies. Photography and the Crisis of Looking*, Munich, Prestel, 1998

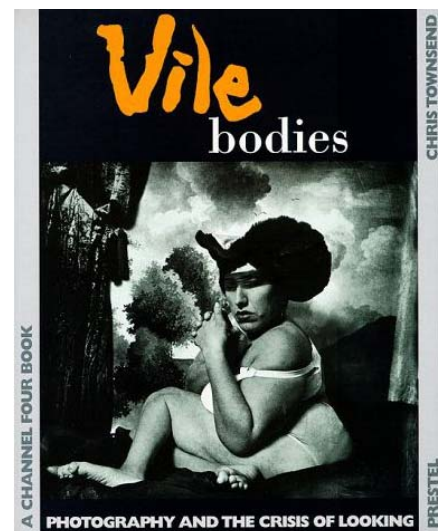
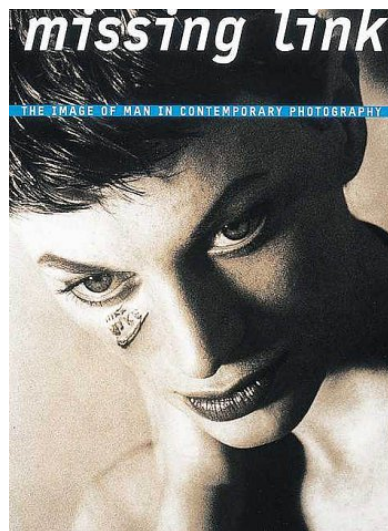
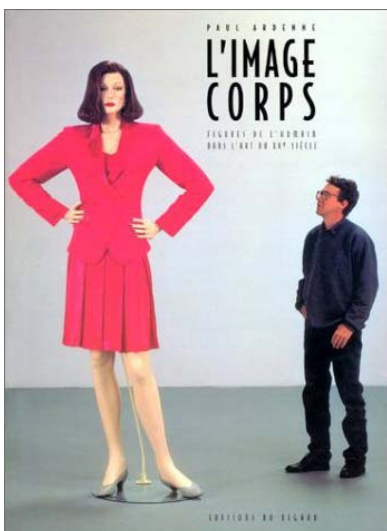


IMAGE / CORPS

Pourquoi avoir choisi cet intitulé pour le cours ?

Le corps est image

Jean-Marie Schaeffer, novembre 2006

Résumé : L'importance de l'image dans notre tradition culturelle tient au fait qu'elle est le lieu de la pensée du corps. Cependant cette supposée généralité anthropologique de la relation entre image et corps est loin d'aller de soi. On développera ici l'hypothèse que la conjonction entre image et pensée du corps, loin d'être universelle, est un trait historique de la civilisation chrétienne. Le travail qui est à la base de cette hypothèse est issu de ma collaboration à l'exposition collective "Qu'est-ce qu'un corps" qui s'est ouverte au mois de juin 2006 au Musée du Quai Branly à Paris.

Nous avons l'habitude de dire que la culture occidentale est une culture de l'image, entendant par là que notre rapport à nous-mêmes et au réel est façonné profondément par des schémas, des stéréotypes et des idéaux qui sont incarnés dans des images. Comment nier en effet que la montée en puissance des images au fil de l'histoire et l'accélération prodigieuse de ce mouvement depuis l'entrée dans l'ère de la reproductibilité technique font partie des traits les plus remarquables de l'histoire européenne ? On rapporte souvent cette importance des images à une sorte d'iconophilie indifférenciée, un amour des images, sinon énigmatique, du moins contingent.

L'hypothèse que j'aimerais développer ici est que l'importance de l'image dans notre tradition culturelle tient au fait qu'elle est le lieu de la pensée du corps. En disant cela je ne dis rien de nouveau: on a noté à plusieurs reprises qu'en Occident, ou pour être plus précis en Occident chrétien et post-chrétien, la question de l'image et celle du corps sont intimement liées. C'est notamment la thèse de Hans Belting [BELTING, Hans. *Pour une anthropologie des images*, Paris : Gallimard, 2004]. En fait, il va plus loin, puisque pour lui cette thèse a une valeur anthropologique. Il n'est pourtant pas indifférent que Belting soit spécialiste de l'iconologie chrétienne et que l'essentiel des matériaux sur lesquels il se fonde provienne de la tradition chrétienne et post-chrétienne. La supposée généralité anthropologique de la relation entre image et corps est en effet loin d'aller de soi, le grand contre-exemple étant la tradition picturale extrême-orientale qui semble tout faire pour éviter la représentation du corps *qua* corps. Même la continuité entre la tradition antique et la tradition chrétienne fait problème. En effet, si la charpente philosophique de la conception chrétienne de l'image, à savoir la pensée du modèle, se nourrit effectivement du dualisme platonicien, ce n'est là, on le verra qu'une de ses sources. Ensuite, et c'est sans doute le point le plus important, il est douteux que la conception antique de la beauté corporelle puisse être interprétée comme traduisant une relation entre immanence et transcendance, ce qui est le cas du beau dans la tradition chrétienne.

J'aimerais donc dans ce qui suit développer l'hypothèse que la conjonction entre image et pensée du corps, loin d'être universelle, est un trait historique de la civilisation chrétienne. Le travail qui est à la base de cette hypothèse est issu de ma collaboration à l'exposition collective "Qu'est-ce qu'un corps" qui s'est ouverte au mois de juin 2006 au Musée du Quai Branly à Paris, exposition dans laquelle je suis responsable de la partie consacrée à l'Europe (les autres aires géographiques explorées sont l'Amazonie, l'Afrique de l'Ouest et la Nouvelle-Guinée). Etant donné les limites qu'impose un exposé, la réflexion qui suit restera cependant très squelettique. Je m'en excuse d'avance.

Dualisme, créationnisme et Incarnation

D'où vient notre tendance à penser conjointement la question de l'image et celle du corps ? Pour simplifier on peut dire qu'elle a été irriguée par trois sources principales: le dualisme, le créationnisme monothéiste et la pensée de l'Incarnation.

Le dualisme ontologique affirme que l'homme est double: corps d'un côté, âme de l'autre. Cette doctrine nous a été léguée par l'Antiquité, mais c'est à travers la manière dont la Chrétienté en a recueilli l'héritage qu'elle a imprégné notre culture. Le dualisme implique l'idée que le corps n'a pas le principe de sa consistance en lui-même mais dans une réalité «autre» dont l'âme (raisonnable) est la trace dans l'homme. Le destin du corps dépend donc de la relation qu'il entretient avec l'âme. S'il se soumet à elle, il peut devenir le signe sensible de la réalité «autre» dont il tire son être. A l'inverse, plus l'homme se laisse régenter par le corps, plus il se rend dissemblable à ce qui le fonde. Dans la mesure où cette dissemblance traduit un éloignement par rapport à la source de son être, elle correspond toujours à une perte de puissance.

Le créationnisme monothéiste a imprégné l'Europe à travers l'Ancien Testament et à travers la reprise de celui-ci par la Chrétienté. Il situe l'origine du corps dans l'acte créateur *ex nihilo* d'un Dieu qui a fait l'homme à son image. Le corps humain est donc non seulement, comme celui de toute créature, un indice de la puissance créatrice de Dieu: il en est aussi le signe iconique. Cette relation d'image qui relie l'homme à son Créateur est asymétrique. Dieu est en effet au-delà de toute image, puisqu'une image est par définition une chose sensible et que Dieu ne fait pas partie des réalités sensibles. L'homme ne saurait donc accéder directement au Modèle Divin. A cette asymétrie s'ajoute le caractère déchu de l'homme-image. En effet, à cause de la Chute, l'homme n'est plus une image conforme de Dieu: le péché a introduit de la dissemblance dans la relation qu'il entretient avec le Créateur.

La troisième source est la doctrine de l'Incarnation – la thèse de Dieu fait Homme. C'est sans aucun doute l'élément le plus décisif dans la naissance de la conjonction de la pensée de l'image et de celle du corps. D'abord, l'Incarnation permet de comprendre que, malgré le caractère irréprésentable de Dieu, une circulation puisse exister entre lui et l'homme. En s'incarnant, Dieu s'offre en effet aux humains sous une forme qui participe à la fois de la transcendance spirituelle et du corps humain: à travers le Christ, Dieu prend visage et se fait voir de l'homme. Ensuite, l'Incarnation ou plus précisément la Passion, qui en est l'événement central, inverse le mouvement qui, depuis la Chute, avait éloigné l'homme de Dieu. Par son sacrifice, le Christ rouvre à l'homme la possibilité de se rapprocher de nouveau de Dieu.

Modèle, image conforme et image non conforme

En combinant ces trois sources – dualisme, créationnisme, pensée de l'Incarnation - l'Europe en est venue à penser le corps-image selon des lignes de force qui, au-delà des vicissitudes historiques de leurs ancrages religieux ou philosophiques, se maintiennent jusqu'à aujourd'hui et régissent nos représentations, des plus sublimes aux plus triviales. Il s'agit d'une structure de pensée qui comporte trois moments essentiels:

- Le corps humain est pensé par rapport à un modèle qui est conçu à la fois comme sa source et comme son idéal. Le corps est donc à la fois une image – un *analogon* – du modèle et son empreinte, sa trace (puisqu'il est créé, produit par lui).
- Le modèle qui assure la consistance du corps est lui-même au-delà de toute représentation. D'où la nécessité d'une interface, d'un lieu de contact et d'échange entre ces deux réalités incommensurables que sont le modèle immatériel ou abstrait d'un côté, le corps sensible de l'autre. Ce qui apparaît d'abord comme une relation duelle est donc en fait une relation à trois termes: le modèle, le corps-image et l'interface qui les met en contact.
- Dans sa facticité immédiate, le corps humain est toujours une image non conforme du modèle. Cette distance qui le sépare de son modèle se mesure en termes visuels par son degré de dissemblance avec l'image conforme ou idéale. La fabrique sociale du corps consistera à amener l'homme à imiter l'image conforme, et du même coup à se rapprocher de la perfection du modèle.

La tension entre modèle et copie permet de comprendre l'ambivalence de notre attitude face aux images. Tantôt nous les célébrons comme ce qui nous donne accès au modèle, tantôt nous les condamnons comme vaines apparences qui nous en détournent. Notre iconodulie est ainsi toujours prête à verser dans l'iconophobie, pour peu que ce que l'image donne à voir nous paraisse traduire l'éloignement plutôt que la proximité du modèle. D'où, par exemple, la condamnation par saint Paul de ceux qui, au lieu de se tourner vers les perfections invisibles de Dieu, confectionnent des images à la gloire des créatures (Epître aux Romains, 1:20 – 1:25). La même ambivalence structurelle permet aussi de comprendre la tension bipolaire qui est inhérente à notre pensée du corps et dont les images n'ont cessé d'être le véhicule. Le corps glorieux s'opposera ainsi au corps souffrant et la beauté idéale à la contingence biologique. La chair conçue comme manifestation de l'intériorité spirituelle trouvera sa négation dans l'obscénité de la chair sexuée et animale. Le corps géométrisé sera déstabilisé par le fouillis des organes. Le corps conforme sera subverti par le corps grotesque, voire monstrueux. Et ainsi de suite, selon des déclinaisons innombrables de la même opposition entre image conforme et image non conforme.

Du modèle transcendant au modèle intérieur.

Outre la tension entre image conforme et image déchu, il y a, au cœur même de notre pensée de l'image – corps, une grande difficulté, celle de la transcendance du modèle. Comment l'image peut-elle prendre modèle sur quelque chose qui est au-delà de toute vue et donc se refuse à toute saisie ? On a vu que c'est la doctrine de l'Incarnation qui remédie à la difficulté liée au caractère non accessible du modèle. Mais si la théorie de l'Incarnation permet de résoudre le

problème du gouffre ontologique qui sépare le modèle de l'image, le comblement de ce gouffre aura un prolongement non prévu, et qui jouera un grand rôle dans l'évolution des conceptions européennes du corps: l'Incarnation va à peu à peu défaire la thèse de la transcendance du modèle. Elle va l'humaniser, ouvrant ainsi la voie à la conception moderne et contemporaine selon laquelle le modèle est immanent à l'homme.

En effet, en s'incarnant, Dieu se donne lui-même figure humaine et produit ainsi une Image conforme de Celui qui est au-delà de toute image. La relation consubstantielle entre le fils et le Père, et donc entre l'Image conforme et le Modèle, abolit cette hiérarchie entre modèle et image : le Père est dans le Fils et pareillement le Fils est dans le Père. La notion même d'image s'en trouve bouleversée, en ce que le dénivellement, la disparité entre le modèle et son image disparaît. En effet, dès lors que Dieu s'incarne, prend figure humaine, comment éviter qu'au-delà d'une relation de ressemblance ceci n'instaure une véritable parenté d'être entre le Modèle et l'homme-image ?

Le passage du Dieu-modèle à un Dieu-miroir va donc aboutir à l'intériorisation du modèle. Si ce passage est une affaire de siècles, il se trouve néanmoins condensé de manière exemplaire chez Dürer dans son *Autoportrait* de 1500 et dans la *Veronica* de 1513. L'*Autoportrait* de 1500 [fig. 1, voir en fin d'article] est une œuvre unique dans l'histoire de l'art. Comme Panofsky l'a montré, elle est directement inspirée par les portraits du Christ en Sauveur du monde, en vogue à la fin du XV^e siècle, tel le *Salvator Mundi* de Memling [fig. 2]. De cette influence témoignent la position de la main droite, la posture hiératique, le schéma de la composition. Ce qui est plus significatif encore, ce sont les transformations que Dürer a fait subir à son propre visage afin d'adapter ses traits à ceux traditionnellement donnés au Christ: il a notamment agrandi ses yeux et affaibli les lignes de son nez ainsi que la charpente osseuse. Que l'identification au Christ se fasse par le biais d'un autoportrait souligne le fait qu'il s'agit bien d'un mouvement d'intériorisation de l'Image conforme et donc du Modèle: le modèle transcendant est remplacé par un modèle intérieur. L'écart qui s'ouvre entre l'image optique perçue par l'artiste dans le miroir et l'image idéale qu'il lit dans cette image-reflet et qu'il demande à sa main d'exécuter, montre que l'altérité divine s'installe à l'intérieur même de l'homme sous la forme d'une image idéale de soi. Mais le mouvement d'assimilation réciproque entre l'Image conforme et l'intériorité humaine ne s'arrête pas là. Dans un deuxième moment, Dürer va en effet reprojeter cette image idéale de lui-même sur la figure du Christ. Ceci se passe en 1513, dans la gravure de la *Veronica* [fig. 3] : il y utilise en effet l' *Autoportrait* de 1500 comme modèle pour le visage du Christ. Après s'être vu en Christ, il voit le Christ sous ses propres traits. On passe ainsi d'un autoportrait de l'artiste en Christ à un portrait du Christ en autoportrait de l'artiste. La relation entre la figure divine et la figure humaine a cessé d'être asymétrique pour devenir symétrique. L'homme cherchera désormais sa complétude dans une image idéale incarnant un modèle dont il sera lui-même le créateur et l'origine.

L'image-corps comme paradigme culturel

En simplifiant fortement on peut dire que le destin historique de l'image depuis le moyen âge peut se comprendre si on pense ensemble la tension constituante entre image conforme et image non-conforme et l'évolution historique qui pousse vers une intériorisation de plus en plus forte du modèle. Je n'ai évidemment pas la place ici pour développer cette idée. Aussi me bornerai-je pour finir à esquisser rapidement deux constellations historiques particulièrement significatives, la première consacrée au moment «esthétique» de l'intériorisation du modèle, la deuxième à ce qui constitue le point d'aboutissement actuel de ce mouvement d'intériorisation. Dans les deux cas je montrerai comment la tension entre image conforme et image non-conforme s'y manifeste.

Beauté, obscénité, banalité

Dès lors que le modèle de perfection est rapatrié dans l'intériorité subjective, le corps humain profane peut lui-même devenir le véhicule de l'Image conforme. Ce moment, nous l'avons vu, est celui de la Renaissance. Avec la recherche de l'harmonie et des proportions, la pensée de l'image entre ainsi dans ce qu'on a appelé «l'ère du Beau». A travers la dialectique entre l'extérieur et l'intérieur, le Beau peut en effet être lu comme une sécularisation du schéma de l'Image conforme. Comme la physique galiléenne entreprend de géométriser l'espace et de réduire les objets à des vecteurs de force, la peinture se propose de fonder la beauté visible du corps humain sur une harmonie intérieure.

C'est dans le Nu que cette quête du Beau trouve son terrain privilégié. Le Nu, contrairement à la nudité, est indissociable d'une spiritualisation du corps, car de même qu'il n'y a de science des proportions que du corps humain (et non pas du corps animal), il n'y a de Nu qu'humain. Le Nu n'est ainsi ni la nudité de la créature, ni l'opacité du corps animal, ni la chair du corps sexué; il en

est tout au contraire le démenti (ou le déni) le plus fort. Comme beau idéal, le corps échappe au temps organique et se cristallise en une présence immuable soumise à la seule loi de la forme (donc à la seule loi du modèle). Le Nu devient ainsi, comme François Jullien [Jullien, François. *Du nu*. Paris : Seuil, 2001] le rappelle, le théâtre où viennent s'abolir toutes les oppositions, toutes les tensions, dans lesquelles se trouve pris le rapport que l'Europe entretient avec le corps et avec l'image: sensible vs spirituel, matière vs forme, temporalité vs éternité, perception vs Idée.

Mais ce décorum du Nu et de l'imitation de la « belle nature » est inquiété par l'« autre corps » et une autre image qui ne cessent de suivre le corps idéal et l'image conforme comme leur part maudite. Si le beau idéal s'inscrit dans la filiation de la voie ascendante comme spiritualisation du corps, qu'arrive-t-il lorsque l'image du corps emprunte la voie descendante ?

Qu'arrive-t-il, par exemple, lorsque le corps prend figure sous un regard désirant, donc lorsqu'il est sexué ? Il cesse alors de se placer sous le regard de l'intériorité spirituelle et se met sous celui d'un autre corps: le beau idéal est remplacée par le commerce des corps placé sous le signe de la pulsion scopique. La sexuation du corps – et tout particulièrement du corps féminin – a donc de tout temps été un danger pour le Nu, celui du risque de voir la belle image déchoir en pornographie.

Parfois c'est l'idée même de l'existence d'un modèle sous-jacent qui devient source d'interrogation: et si, au lieu d'être le signe d'une harmonie interne, l'apparence du corps – l'image – n'était que la trace immanente de cet apparaître lui-même ? L'image photographique est un des lieux où cette éventualité d'une image sans profondeur n'a cessé d'affleurer. Sa double nature d'empreinte et d'image analogique la prédestine en quelque sorte à cela. Par nécessité technique elle est en effet une empreinte du corps dans son être-là physique, sexué et social le plus immédiat et le plus opaque. Chaque fois qu'elle reste fidèle à cette spécificité qui la caractérise, elle défait l'idée même de beau idéal, donnant à voir le corps dans l'être-là obstiné. D'un autre côté, tablant sur l'effet de réalité induit par la connaissance que nous avons de son statut d'empreinte couplé à l'effet de sa puissance analogique, l'image photographique est capable, mieux que toute autre image, de donner le change, de maquiller la réalité: fadeur des peaux de l'érotisme «soft», corps lénifiés des idéaux publicitaires, hygiénisme de la nudité célébrée par les propagandes totalitaires..., autant de fictions qui singent l'image conforme, célébrant la coïncidence improbable de la réalité et de l'idéal.

Ordre et désordre

Permettez-moi pour finir par quelques mots très rapides sur l'aboutissement actuel du mouvement d'intériorisation du modèle. Je pense qu'on peut montrer que c'est la génétique qui est l'aboutissement de ce mouvement : quel que soit son statut scientifique, elle est *aussi* la forme moderne de la pensée du modèle. Telle est la vision implicite de ce que le co-découvreur de la double hélice, Francis Crick, a appelé le « dogme central » de la biologie moléculaire. Ce « dogme » pose la thèse du caractère tout à fait singulier de la molécule d'ADN. Alors que les molécules « banales » agissent les unes sur les autres, les interactions de l'ADN avec les autres molécules sont à sens unique. Il s'agit d'une relation hiérarchique et asymétrique: l'ADN agit sur et in-forme les molécules « banales », mais celles-ci n'agissent pas en retour sur elle. Elle est donc bien le modèle – à la fois la source et l'idéal – dont les protéines synthétisées sont autant d'images fidèles.

L'opposition entre génotype et phénotype est ainsi la forme contemporaine de la pensée du modèle et de l'image: conçu comme « expression » du génotype, le corps n'est rien d'autre qu'une image phénotypique des gènes, seule réalité substantielle. Il faut préciser que l'idée d'un modèle immuable, qui tel un dieu caché contraindrait mécaniquement le développement organique et la reproduction, est une pure mythologie de notre temps beaucoup plus qu'une hypothèse scientifique. Mais le fait que malgré son inadéquation cette idée simpliste continue à nourrir nos espoirs tout autant que nos cauchemars montre que la pensée du modèle conserve toute sa puissance d'attraction.

Pourtant, ce corps ordonné, fait d'après une image qui désormais *est* le modèle, n'échappe pas à la tension constitutive de la conception européenne du corps et de l'image. Il est inquiété par deux soupçons majeurs: celui d'une éventuelle « mauvaise » intériorité, qui ne serait plus celle du modèle mais celle du corps comme sac d'organes, et celui de la possibilité d'un principe d'ordre se désorganisant lui-même de l'intérieur.

L'intériorité organique défie la pensée de l'ordre. Ainsi les écorchés dénouent-ils non seulement le lien entre le corps et la beauté intérieure, mais aussi celui entre la vie et l'ordre: fouillis de nerfs, de muscles, de vaisseaux sanguins et d'os, ils exhibent la vie organique sous le signe d'une profusion des matières et des fluides qui dément le rêve eugénique d'un corps sans scories. Leur

multiplication au XVIII^e siècle est à sa façon le signe d'une ère nouvelle de la représentation du corps humain - le corps comme ce que nous avons en partage avec les (autres) animaux. L'image ne peut prendre en charge ce corps animal – pure matière, vivante ou cadavérique – produit par l'anatomie et la physiologie que pour autant qu'elle réussit à s'émanciper de la quête du beau. Qu'on pense au *Bœuf écorché* de Rembrandt [fig. 4], qui s'inscrit dans la même interrogation que sa *Leçon d'anatomie*. Et comment ne pas y associer l'autoportrait du peintre en dépouille de Saint Barthélemy que Michel-Ange a introduit parmi les personnages du Jugement dernier ? [fig. 5] Corps dépouillé de sa peau là, peau détachée du corps ici: carcasse sanguinolente d'un côté, sac vidé de ses organes de l'autre, plus rien ne sépare le corps humain de celui de l'animal sacrifié. Peut-être plus déstabilisant encore est un deuxième soupçon: et si l'ordre était lui-même producteur de désordre ? L'âge du tout génétique est en effet aussi celui du rêve d'une technologie génétique qui nous permettrait de nous reprogrammer nous-mêmes. Nous rêvons ainsi de corps parfaits dont seraient éliminés les gènes défectueux ou délétères et dont la conservation indéfinie serait garantie par le clonage. Mais si le modèle lui-même était vicié par un principe d'entropie constitutif ? Si le modèle, comme le suggère par exemple Bacon dans *Study of the Human Body* [Fig 6], était producteur de monstres ? Angoisse qui d'une certaine manière a depuis toujours accompagné la pensée du modèle, mais que le christianisme avait réussi à circonscrire en rapportant le désordre à un principe du mal, incarné par le diable et opposé au Modèle divin. Nous n'avons plus cette échappatoire à notre disposition. Aussi sommes nous désormais démunis devant l'éventualité d'un modèle qui serait principe de désordre plutôt que d'ordre, et donc d'une image échappant à toute norme de rectitude.

Source : <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/iconoclasm/schaeffer.htm>



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. Albrecht Dürer, Autoportrait en manteau bordé de fourrure, 1500, huile sur bois de tilleul, 67x49cm

Descriptif de la Fig. 1 : http://www.pinakothek.de/alte-pinakothek/sammlung/kuenstler/kuenstler_inc_en.php?inc=besprechung&which=7571

2. Memling, Christ donnant sa bénédiction, *Salvator Mundi*, 1478, _huile sur panneau de chêne, 38x28cm

Descriptif de la Fig. 2 : <http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/m/memling/2middle1/10bless.html>

3. Albrecht Dürer, Veronica, Suaire présenté par 2 anges, 1513, gravure, 10x14 cm

Descriptif de la Fig. 3 : <http://www.angelfocus.com/inart.htm>

4. Rembrandt van Rijn, Le bœuf écorché, 1655, huile sur bois, 69x94 cm

Bref commentaire sur la Fig. 4 : http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=25565

5. Michel-Ange Buonarroti, Saint Barthélemy, détail du Jugement Dernier, Chapelle Sixtine, Rome, fresque, 1535-1541

Analyse de la Fig. 5 : <http://imagesanalyses.univ-paris1.fr/autoportrait-insolite-m16.html> et <http://imagesanalyses.univ-paris1.fr/autoportrait-insolite-16.html>

6. Francis Bacon, Study of the Human Body, 1981-1982, huile et pastel sur toile, 198x147.5cm

Descriptif de la Fig. 6 : <http://www.francis-bacon.cx/figures/humanbody82.html>

CORPS POLITIQUES



Behrouz Mehri (AFP/Getty), *An Iranian couple walk past mural paintings depicting scenes from the torture of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, on a major highway in the Iranian capital, Tehran, 1er juin 2004* [l'inscription en farsi sur l'affiche de droite signifie "L'Irak aujourd'hui"]



Richard Drew, New York, 11 septembre 2001, 9h41 15s., image dite *The Falling Man*

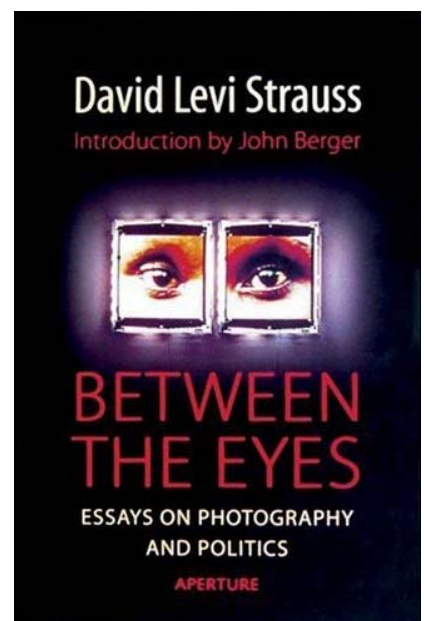
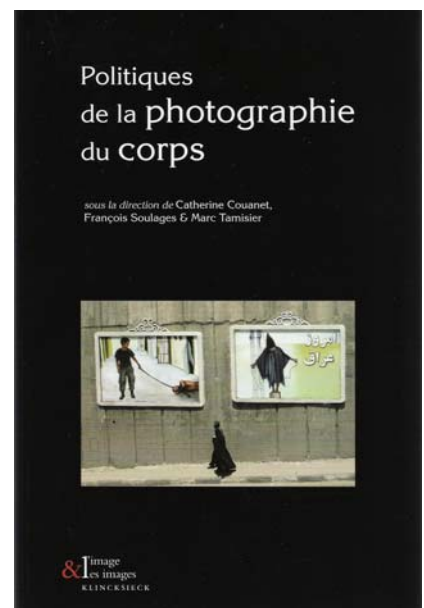
" Les photos d'Abou Ghraib en Irak (diffusion) ou l'absence de photos de corps du 11 septembre 2001 (censure) sont exemplaires de cet usage politique ambivalent de la photographie des corps. En explorant et en exploitant la photographie et ses dispositifs, les artistes et les politiques (contemporains) travaillent – mais de façon radicalement différente – ces problèmes et ces tensions : les premiers proposent des méditations et des questionnements essentiels sur les corps politiques et (car) photographiques ; les seconds déshumanisent les corps et les hommes. "

Politiques de la photographie du corps, ouvrage collectif, COUANET, Catherine, SOULAGES, François, TAMISIER, Marc, éd., Paris, Klincksieck, coll. L'image et les images, 2007, 4^e de couverture, extrait

CORPS POLITIQUES

Quelques références bibliographiques

- BAQUÉ, Dominique, *Pour un nouvel art politique. De l'art contemporain au documentaire*, Paris, Flammarion, 2004 / coll. Champs, Flammarion, 2006 [version poche]
- *Beautiful Suffering. Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, REINHARDT, Mark, EDWARDS, Holly, DUGANNE, Erina, eds., Chicago, University Of Chicago Press / Williams College Museum of Art, 2007
- *Éthique, esthétique, politique*, CAUJOLLE, Christian, dir. art., 28^{èmes} Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, Arles, Actes Sud, 1997
- LEVI STRAUSS, David, *Between the eyes. Essays on Photography and Politics*, New York, Aperture, 2004
- "Politique", dossier spécial, *La Recherche photographique*, n°19, automne 1995
- *Politiques de la photographie du corps*, COUANET, Catherine, SOULAGES, François, TAMISIER, Marc, eds., Paris, Klincksieck, coll. L'image et les images, 2007 (actes du colloque *Photographie et corps politiques*, INHA, Paris, 20 et 21 octobre 2006)



CORPS POLITIQUES

Photographie et Corps politiques**Colloque international, 20 et 21 octobre 2006, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art INHA, Paris**

Sous la direction de François Soulages, Professeur des Universités Paris 8 et INHA

Conception : Catherine Couanet, François Soulages & Marc Tamisier

Ce colloque est réalisé sous l'égide de AIAC (Art des images & art contemporain), l'Equipe de recherche EA 4010 de l'Université Paris 8, RETINA (Recherches Esthétiques & Théorétiques des Images Nouvelles & Anciennes) & OICT (Observatoire International du Corps Transformé).

Pourquoi et comment la photographie transforme-t-elle les corps photographiés et les corps photographiables, bref les corps de tous les êtres humains, en corps politiques, souvent malgré eux ? Et quels sont les effets de cette transformation sur les corps, sur la politique et sur la photographie ?

La photographie n'est pas qu'une aventure individuelle, privée et intime ; elle est aussi une pratique politique, publique et extime. C'est ce qui se joue dans les usages de la photographie (contemporaine) sans-art & de la photographie dans l'art (contemporain), dans leurs productions /créations, médiatisations/donations, communications/expositions, et consommations/réceptions.

La photographie est donc habitée par cette double tension : à la fois politique & individuelle, publique & privée, intime & extime, à la fois art contemporain & sans-art. C'est ce double « à la fois » qui caractérise la photographie, d'autant plus qu'il s'articule à d'autres « à la fois » photographiques : à la fois le référent & le matériau photographique, à la fois le « ça a été » & le « ça a été joué », à la fois l'événement passé & les formes, à la fois le réel & l'imaginaire, à la fois la trace & le tracé, à la fois l'irréversible & l'inachevable, etc... C'est eu égard à ces « à la fois » qu'avec la photographie les corps sont politiques, que les corps & leurs images peuvent être interrogés, que la photographie & la politique se dialectisent, que la philosophie politique & l'esthétique sont articulées.

La photographie sans-art & la photographie dans l'art produisent cette politisation & cette publication des corps et de leurs images. Et ce, depuis que la photographie existe ; mais, aujourd'hui, avec une autre force, avec d'autres moyens, avec d'autres dangers. Les photos d'Abou Ghraib en Irak en sont exemplaires, l'absence de photos de corps du 11 septembre 2001 aussi : publication, censure et politique de la photographie des corps.

Par ailleurs, la photographie des corps et de leur sexualité peut conduire à des esthétiques qui ne sont pas sans rappeler ce qui se reconnaît de politique dans les rapports des sujets sexués, entre eux et le pouvoir. En explorant et en exploitant la photographie et ses dispositifs, les artistes (contemporains) travaillent ces problèmes, ces tensions et ces « à la fois » et proposent des méditations et des questionnements essentiels sur les corps politiques et/car photographiques. Un des enjeux est donc la liberté des corps, de leurs images et de leurs représentations &, corrélativement, le contrôle, la surveillance et l'assujettissement du corps politique et social.

En effet, pourquoi et comment la photographie peut-elle être utilisée tantôt comme critique du pouvoir sur les corps politiques, tantôt comme outil de ce pouvoir, tantôt comme pratique interrogeant du lieu de l'art les corps politiques, les corps et les politiques ? Ainsi le problème « Qu'est-ce que la photographie ? » engendre les problèmes « A qui appartient un corps ? », « Quel pouvoir peut avoir une image ? », « Que faire de la politique ? » & « Comment intervenir en partant de l'art ? ».

Source : http://www.inha.fr/spip.php?article1209&var_recherche=Politiques%20de%20la%20photographie%20du%20corps

Le colloque a fait l'objet d'une publication :

Politiques de la photographie du corps, COUANET, Catherine, SOULAGES, François, TAMISIER, Marc, éd., Paris, Klincksieck, coll. L'image et les images, 2007

Programme et résumés du colloque *Photographie et Corps politiques*

Toutes les conférences ont été retransmises sur France Culture et sont disponibles (voir ci-dessous).

Incarnations, mémoires & images

Présidence: Christine Buci-Glucksmann (Université Paris 8)

À écouter : http://www.radiofrance.fr/chaines/france-culture2/nouveau_prog/creation/alacarte_fiche.php?src_id=12&diff_id=180000049

- François SOULAGES, "Le corps contemporain" :
Comment, après les non-photos de corps du 11 Septembre et les photos de corps d'Abou Ghraib, peut-on avoir un corps qui ne soit pas pris en image et/ou en réalité par les flux mondialisés et politiques ? L'art peut-il aider à travailler le problème ?
- Louise MERZEAU, "Photographies numériques : pour un espace public de la mémoire" :
Affranchie de l'instant, par le jeu des hybridations la trace numérique laisse affleurer une mémoire des images, faite d'emprunts, d'interférences et d'appropriations. À l'heure où le « droit à l'image » cherche à privatiser le regard, la photographie numérique contribue ainsi à l'interrogation et au maintien d'un corps politique mémoriel.
- Gérard WORMSER, "Émotion, rétention et focalisation, les trois temps de l'image" :
La présence obsédante des images politiques, ou leur absence, signe notre régime de signification, notamment marqué par l'image des massacres du XX^{ème} siècle. Partant des schèmes perceptifs et de la manière dont Sartre a étudié les émotions et l'imaginaire, nous découvrirons les régimes d'historicité sous-jacents à ces obsessions.

Femmes, hommes & intimités

Présidence: Pedro San Ginès (Université de Grenade)

À écouter : http://www.radiofrance.fr/chaines/france-culture2/nouveau_prog/creation/alacarte_fiche.php?src_id=12&diff_id=180000064

- Christine BUCI-GLUCKSMANN, "Les métamorphoses du féminin : Orlan, Cindy Sherman, Mariko Mori" :
A partir d'un concept proposé par le psychanalyste Joan Rivière en 1929, la mascarade, on étudiera les métamorphoses du féminin en art comme une politique du corps. On ira de « l'art charnel » au virtuel, et l'on interrogera la division des sexes, le rôle des transgressions et des métamorphoses, dans le « féminin » en art.
- Catherine COUANET, "Le corps intime de la femme : signifiant politique et objet d'exposition photographique en Occident" :
La femme à l'image de son corps intime et en tant que réseau de significations engage une question : comment les photographies de son sexe et leur exposition signifient-elles un certain état du sujet désirant avec ce que cela implique de rapport à l'autre et de conjoncture de l'Autre ? Auguste Belloc, Henri Maccheroni et Zoé Leonard nous accompagneront dans cette approche des corps.
- Rachida TRIKI, "L'image politique du corps : une stratégie de l'intime" :
Partant de l'idée générale du pouvoir de l'image dans la construction de l'imaginaire du politique, j'examinerai à partir de quelques exemples comment les corps photographiés travaillent l'imaginaire en convoquant les ressorts de l'intime.
- Christian GATTINONI, "Traductions et transferts du corps politique" :
Le corps politique, lié aux biotechnologies et aux sciences humaines, mémoire photographiée au service d'une appartenance sexuelle ou d'une communauté sociale, est aujourd'hui un corps médiatisé qui sait dénoncer son caractère iconique. Il ne peut exister qu'au sein d'un projet de création personnelle, dans des pratiques hors-genres.

Cosmopolitismes, démocraties & événements

Présidence: Rachida Triki (Université de Tunis)

À écouter : http://www.radiofrance.fr/chaines/france-culture2/nouveau_prog/creation/alacarte_fiche.php?src_id=12&diff_id=180000069

- Marc TAMISIER, "La photographie comme principe cosmopolitique" :
Les photographies de Willie Doherty s'inscrivent dans ce corps politique que l'Irlande habite, tendu par les désirs et les stigmates. Mais que devient leur sens au-delà de ces frontières ? Deviennent-elles nécessairement des symboles ou ne posent-elles pas, d'elles mêmes, les principes d'une cosmopolitique ?
- Bernard LAMIZET, "Sémiotique politique du corps dans l'événement" :
Le corps de l'acteur politique dans la photographie suscite l'identification symbolique. Il exprime la réalité de la présence de l'acteur, hic et nunc, et articule, ainsi, l'identité de l'acteur politique à l'événement. Il représente une conception de l'espace public. Enfin, la photographie du corps politique inscrit l'acteur dans la mémoire.
- Daniel BOUGNOUX, "La photographie, dispositif démocratique?" :
Seront traités : les nouveaux "partages du sensible" et l'égalité des sujets ; Arago versus Baudelaire : la querelle de la photo et la "querelle de l'information", une coupure médiologique majeure ; d'Arago à Aragon : usages réalistes et surréalistes de la photo ; politiques de l'image : photos posées, négociées, arrachées.

Génocides, totalitarismes & quotidiens

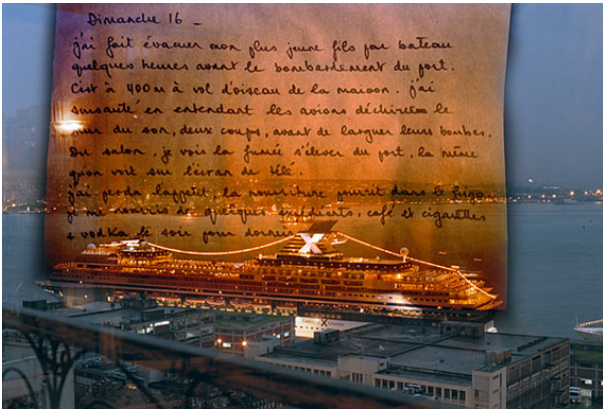
Présidence: Daniel Bounoux (Université de Grenoble)

À écouter : http://www.radiofrance.fr/chaines/france-culture2/nouveau_prog/creation/alacarte_fiche.php?src_id=12&diff_id=180000084

- Soko PHAY-VAKALIS, "Rwanda : les images suspendues d'Alfredo Jaar" :
Alfredo Jaar a réalisé plus de trois mille photographies des victimes du génocide des Tutsis, et n'en montre aucune. Il renonce aux clichés, à la surenchère médiatique. De quelles manières montre-t-il les lacunes de l'appareil photographique, tout en rendant possible le travail de mémoire ?
- Pedro SAN GINES, "La construction d'un mythe : autour de l'image photographiée de Mao" :
Mao, un homme simple se transforme en « immortel » ou en « sage ». En utilisant les codes traditionnels chinois, il construit un nouvel empire, ou détruit l'ancien. Mais les images photographiées cachent une réalité inconnue, le rideau tombe... Comment se forge une image et se forme un mythe héroïque ?
- Mark SEALY, "Race et représentation (Rotimi Fani-Kayode)" :
Les photographies de Rotimi Fani-Kayode révèlent une vision et une attitude que peu d'institutions ont été capables de comprendre. Un principe eurocentrique implicite veut en effet qu'un artiste noir représente toute une race. Revenait, alors, à Kayode le fardeau de montrer l'"autre", et cela après Mapplethorpe.
- Serge TISSERON, "Le grand écart" :
Alors que les médias proposent nombre d'images prises par des amateurs selon le point de vue du tortionnaire, alors que des créateurs idéalisent les victimes, le pouvoir politique instaure un droit selon lequel l'image serait un attribut du corps. Face à un tel grand écart, sur quelles valeurs fonder la mise en scène des corps ?

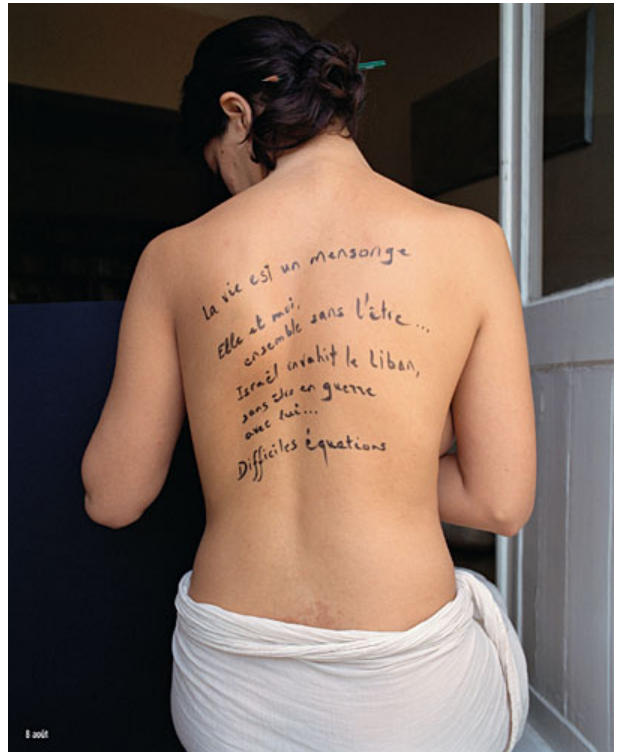
CORPS POLITIQUES

Quelques œuvres tirées de l'actualité (été 2007) : expositions, événement



Fouad Elkoury, Beyrouth, 16 juillet 2006,
tiré de *On war and love*, série de 33 images et textes,
basée sur un journal écrit durant les trente-trois jours de la
guerre au Liban en été 2006, www.fouadelkoury.com

[Fouad Elkoury est né à Paris en 1952 de parents libanais ;
il vit à Paris et Beyrouth ; en été 2007 l'artiste a été présenté
à la Biennale de Venise dans le nouveau pavillon du
Liban, commissaires : Fuad Kurani et Shirin Abadi]



Fouad Elkoury, Istanbul, 8 août 2006,
tiré de *On war and love*, série de 33 images et textes



Spencer Tunick, Glacier d'Aletsch, 18 août 2007



Isabelle Favre, Spencer Tunick (né à Middletown, NY, 1967 ;
vit à New York), Glacier d'Aletsch, 18 août 2007 ; environ six
cents hommes et femmes ont posé pour l'artiste ;
événement produit par Greenpeace pour sensibiliser le
public au réchauffement climatique...

CORPS POLITIQUES

Alfredo Jaar (Santiago, Chili, 1956 ; vit à New York)

Exposition "Alfredo Jaar. La politique des images"
au Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, du 1^{er} juin au 23 septembre 2007

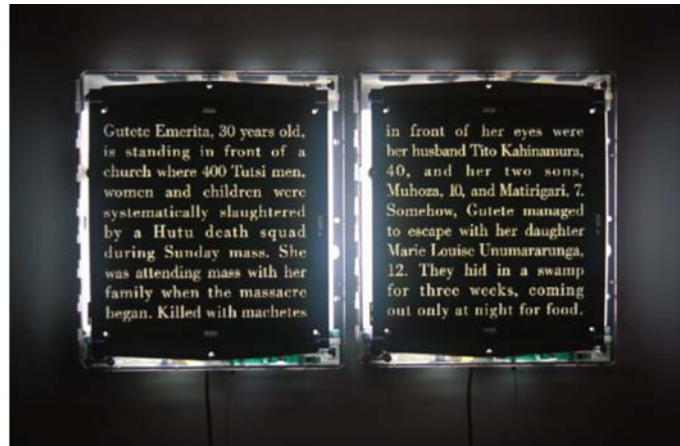


Alfredo Jaar, *One Million Points of Lights*, 2006, caisson lumineux, 35.5 x 45.7 x 12.7 cm

[La photographie a été prise à Luanda, capitale de l'Angola, l'objectif tourné en direction du Brésil. Quand l'Angola était une colonie portugaise, environ un million d'esclaves angolais ont été "exportés" au Brésil.

Les "corps politiques" sont apparemment absents de la représentation mais cette œuvre d'Alfredo Jaar est une métaphore en hommage au vécu des hommes qui furent traités comme des marchandises par une économie colonialiste]

Alfredo Jaar, *The Eyes of Gutete Emerita*, 1996



Alfredo Jaar, *The Eyes of Gutete Emerita*, 1996, part of *The Rwanda Project*, 1994-2000

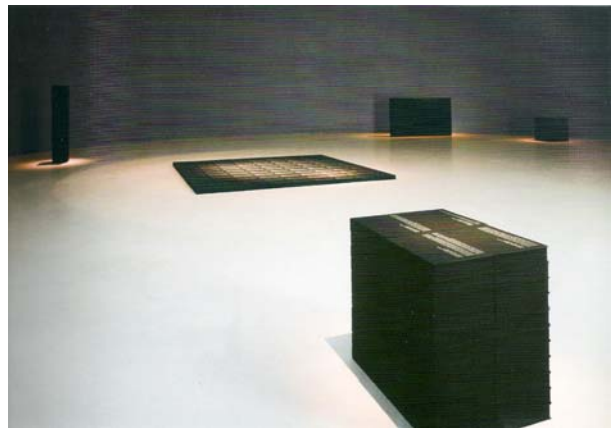
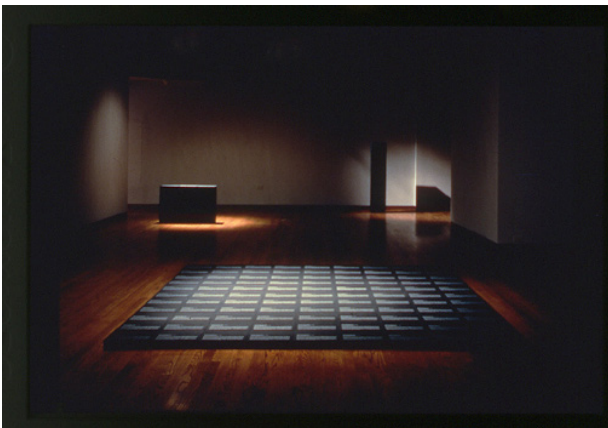
Two Quadvision lightboxes with 6 black-and-white text transparencies and 2 color transparencies, edition of 6

" War has been a constant presence from one generation to another and one era to another in all parts of the world, and artists have often been witnesses to these conflicts. The Hood Museum of Art's new acquisition *The Eyes of Gutete Emerita*, by Chilean-born artist Alfredo Jaar, serves as witness to one woman's suffering in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. When Jaar visited Rwanda in August after the genocide of April and May, he traveled to Kigali, where the violence was centered. On August 29 he went to the Ntarama Church, forty miles south of this city, where four hundred Tutsi men, women, and children had gathered to escape the killing and instead were brutally slaughtered on April 15. When Jaar and his interpreter were there, they met a woman named Gutete Emerita. She told them about seeing her husband and sons murdered during the massacre and escaping with her daughter. In creating *Eyes*, Jaar made the decision not to show the results of the carnage, the bodies that still lay rotting at the site; instead he describes it in text. Then he shows the eyes of the woman, whose expression he cannot forget. It is an attempt to fix and convey the horror of systematic violence by focusing on one survivor. He purposefully names the people in his work—they are not anonymous victims.

The Eyes of Gutete Emerita is the signature work of a series entitled *Rwandan Projects*. Alfredo Jaar's work leads us to question the efficacy of words over photographic images, as well as the way in which they interact to create meaning outside the boundaries of one medium. It is one of the most important works of art about war and violence that has been created in the last thirty years. It was selected for the cover of *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* by David Levi Strauss (Aperture, 2003) and was the culminating work for a recent exhibition at the Williams College Museum of Art entitled *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*. [...]

Katherine Hart, Associate Director and Barbara C. and Harvey P. Hood 1918 Curator of Academic Programming

Source : <http://hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/collections/recent/200617.html>



Alfredo Jaar, *Real Pictures*, 1995-2007, installation (boîtes photographiques en lin, textes sérigraphiés, photographies)

Peut-on représenter l'horreur d'un génocide ? *The Rwanda Project*, 1994-2000

" Ma logique était la suivante : si les médias et leurs images nous remplissent d'une illusion de présence, qui nous laisse ensuite avec un sentiment d'absence, pourquoi ne pas essayer le contraire ? C'est-à-dire offrir une absence qui puisse peut-être provoquer une présence. "

Alfredo Jaar, dépliant édité par le Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, 2007

Voir également le dossier spécial consacré à l'exposition "Alfredo Jaar. La politique des images" au Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, du 1^{er} juin au 23 septembre 2007.

CORPS POLITIQUES

Shirin Neshat (Qazvin, Iran, 1957 ; vit à New York) : *Women of Allah*, 1993-1997



Shirin Neshat, *Rebellious Silence*, 1994, tiré de la série *Women of Allah*, 1993-1997, 152x102cm

Traduction anglaise du texte en farsi :

"O, you martyr
hold my hands
I am your poet,
with an inflicted body,
I've come to be with you
and the promised day we shall rise again
O good // O my brother // O watchful one
as your bullets in the air
break my sleep,
as if by reflex, I pray for you,
guardian of the liberating Revolution
O lonely hero,
watching against the nightly enemy
let God safeguard you from calamity."

Poème de Tahereh Saffarzadeh, femme écrivain fondamentaliste



Shirin Neshat, *Seeking Martyrdom*, n°1, 1995, tiré de la série *Women of Allah*, 1993-1997, 152x102cm

Traduction anglaise du texte en farsi :

"Affair with God :
O' martyrs, you are above the skies
and I have remained on earth
Brothers, I am ashamed, faceless
You, guardians of the nights
Who has robbed me of my white horse ?
Who has robbed me of my dreams and hopes ?
One day, I'll find that white horse
I will ride and seek martyrdom
I will ride and seek God's house"

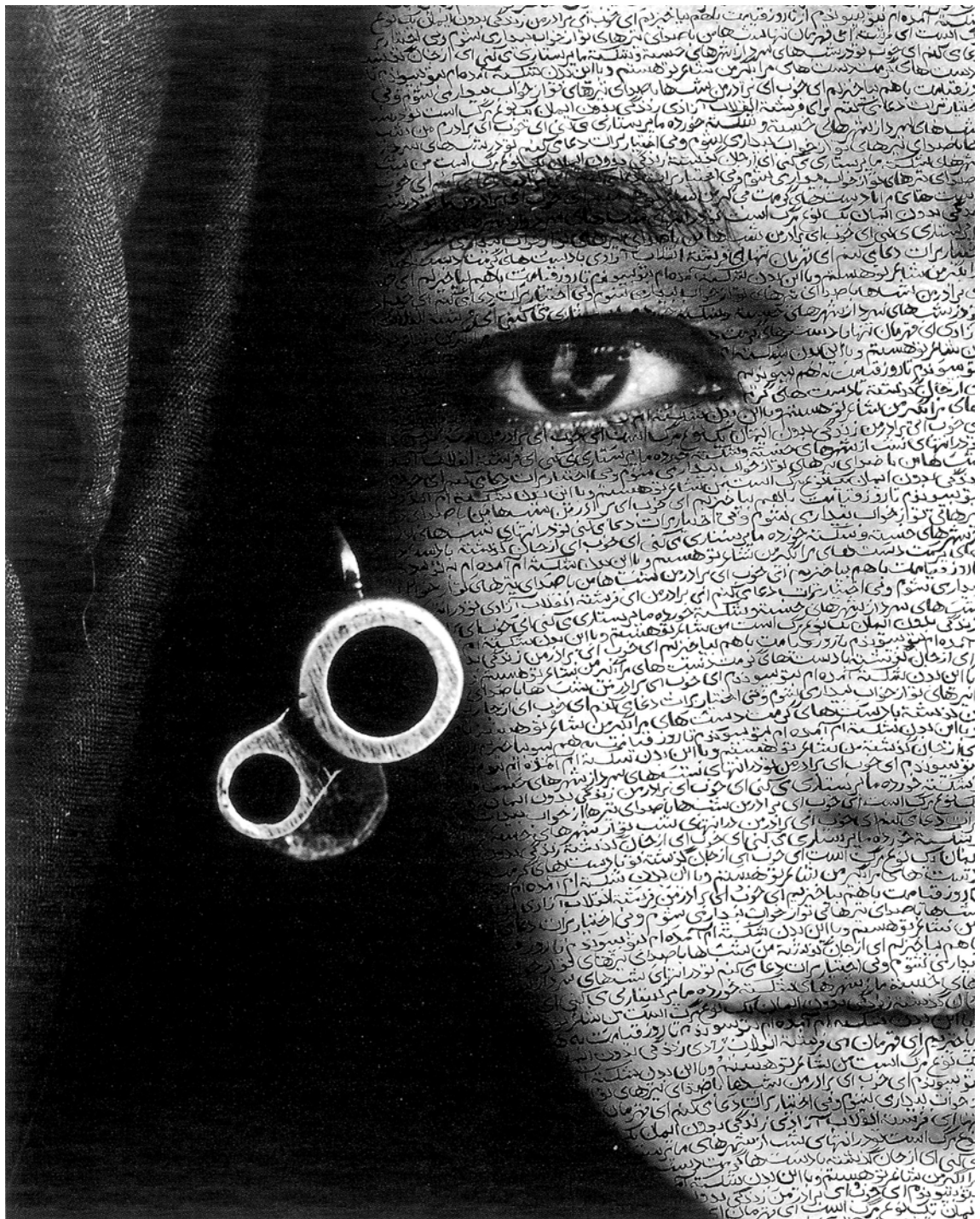
Chanson traduite par l'artiste à partir d'une cassette de propagande vendue en Iran pour inciter les jeunes au martyr

" Let me explain why I was making this work. I had just gotten back from Iran and I had been very interested in understanding the Islamic revolution and the subject of martyrdom, which is very closely defined as terrorism. I had done a lot of reading and research, especially about women who had been active in the revolution, and I found this an extremely interesting phenomenon. On the one hand, women were supposed to be repressed, and yet they were heavily armed just before and during the revolution.

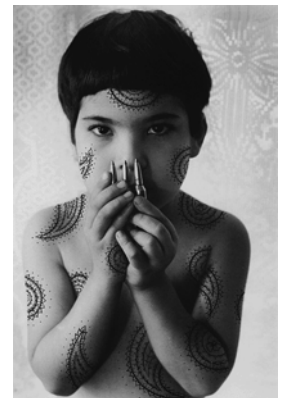
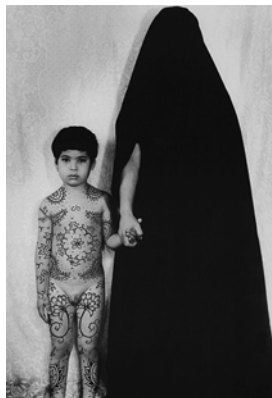
" I started to really focus on the study of women during and prior to the revolution. And it was really fascinating. The inscription of the text was poetry transcribed by a woman who had written about the revolution. This whole series was my obsession with the kind of rationality that would allow a woman to be violent, to commit crimes, to be so cruel. I found these competing forces completely interesting, in the way that the female body is so erotic and sensual and so desirable and yet so violent. The paradox was very interesting for me to comprehend. The work became an elaboration on woman as mother, as warrior, as desirable woman. "

Shirin Neshat, interview with Charles Salzberg, *Adirondack Life*, September/October 2007

Source : http://www.adirondacklife.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=117&Itemid=119



Shirin Neshat, *Speechless*, 1996, tiré de la série *Women of Allah*, 1993-1997



Shirin Neshat, photographies tirées de la série *Women of Allah*, 1993-97 [Shirin Neshat et son fils]

Shirin Neshat, série *Women of Allah*, 1993-1997

" Les armes reflètent la force des femmes sur lesquelles la beauté et la féminité avaient fait porter le masque de la faiblesse. Ici, la femme photographiée est presque toujours l'artiste" [...]

" Le mot « Islam » se traduit littéralement par « discipline », « secret ». Une façon de se masquer dans laquelle le monde invisible est désigné par des références externes. Les mains et les yeux sont les seules parties du corps féminin qui peuvent être montrées en public dans certains pays islamiques. Comme s'il s'agissait d'un masque, quelques vers farsis voilent le visage de l'artiste. Ainsi, dans les mains écrites, on pourrait lire l'interprétation fataliste d'un destin décidé, recueillie aussi dans les yeux de l'autoportrait de l'artiste, rehaussés d'écriture.

La rencontre de Neshat avec son passé n'est pas un cri de dénonciation. Du moins, ce n'est pas que cela. La beauté des images réalisées par Neshat évoque des sentiments hybrides et même contradictoires, comme la nostalgie et l'indignation.

Women of Allah est un portrait social à deux visages : celui des femmes iraniennes soumises et celui de la femme américaine qui l'a été et qui a cessé de l'être. La sensation de perte (ce qu'aucune des deux parties ne pourra avoir) colore les travaux de Neshat d'une mélancolie, pas du tout complaisante, qui renforce l'intensité des images de la série."

ZABALBEASCOA, Anatxu, "Le masque et le miroir", in *Réels, fictions, virtuels*, FONTCUBERTA, Joan, directeur artistique, catalogue des 27^e rencontres d'Arles, Arles, Actes Sud, 1996, p.27-28

Parcours de Shirin Neshat (Née en 1957 à Qazvin, Iran. Vit et travaille à New York)

Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont, Paris

L'œuvre de Shirin Neshat traite des dimensions sociale, politique et psychologique de l'expérience des femmes dans les sociétés islamiques actuelles. Bien que Shirin Neshat résiste activement contre les représentations stéréotypées de l'Islam, ses objectifs artistiques ne sont pas explicitement polémiques. Son travail reconnaît davantage les forces intellectuelles et religieuses, complexes, formant l'identité des femmes musulmanes à travers le monde.

Photographe et cinéaste, Shirin Neshat s'est notamment fait connaître grâce à ses magnifiques portraits de femmes recouverts de calligraphies Farsi (la série *Women of Allah* notamment). Elle est également auteur de plusieurs vidéos *Anchorage* (1996) projetées sur deux écrans opposés et face à face : *Shadow under the Web* (1997), *Turbulent* (1998), *Rapture* (1999) et *Soliloquy* (1999). [...]

Shirin NESHAT est née à Qazvin, en Iran en 1957 et vit aux Etats-Unis depuis 1974. [Elle fait des études artistiques à Berkeley, University of California, puis s'installe à New York en 1983. Elle y travaille alors pour Storefront Art and Architecture, organisation à but non lucratif comportant une galerie.]

Son œuvre, arrivée à maturité en tant qu'artiste visuel, fut inspirée de l'expérience de son retour dans sa terre natale en 1990, après douze ans d'absence. Elle fut particulièrement frappée par l'évolution dramatique du statut de la femme, apportée par la révolution islamique de 1979 et menée par l'Ayatollah Ruhollāh Khomeyni (1902-1989). Après un siècle de règles séculaires, les femmes modernes et citadines furent de nouveau contraintes à revêtir le voile en public. Pour Neshat, la transformation de l'ancienne Perse en République Islamique d'Iran fut un véritable bouleversement.

"Ce fut probablement une des expériences les plus choquantes que j'ai jamais vécue", rappelle-t-elle. "La différence entre ce dont je me souvenais de la culture iranienne et ce dont j'ai été témoin était énorme. Le changement était à la fois effrayant et émouvant. Je n'avais jamais été dans un pays autant fondé sur l'idéologie... Quand je suis retournée aux Etats-Unis, je suis devenue obsédée par cette expérience et j'ai commencé à me rendre en Iran régulièrement."

Dès lors, l'image de la femme voilée est au centre de l'œuvre de Neshat. Le port du voile ou "hijab" (littéralement "rideau") varie beaucoup dans le monde islamique, souvent déterminé par une combinaison de facteurs politiques et religieux. Dans l'œuvre de Neshat, les femmes portent le tchador, un carré de tissu - souvent noir - qui est l'usage en Iran et parmi les femmes Chiïtes du Liban. Drapé du dessus de la tête jusqu'aux chevilles, le tchador est tenu serré sous le menton. Pour beaucoup de non-musulmans, particulièrement en Occident, le voile a fini par symboliser un aspect de la répression des femmes.

En 1935, Rezā Chāh Pahlavi (1878-1944), désirant donner de son pays une image plus moderne, interdit aux femmes iraniennes de porter le tchador. Ce fut, à certains égards, une épuration violente émotionnellement pour un grand nombre de femmes qui ne connaissaient aucune autre forme de représentation publique. L'interdiction fut maintenue jusqu'en 1941. Même lorsque le

renforcement strict du décret du Shah prit fin, le dévoilement ne cessa d'être encouragé et les femmes voilées étaient souvent tournées en ridicule, considérées comme arriérées.

Pendant les années 1970, alors que la pression contre le régime décadent de Mohammad Rezā Chāh (1919-1980) montait, le tchador devint le symbole de protestation et de pouvoir révolutionnaire. La réelle insurrection vint de la révolution théocratique de Khomeyni en 1979, lorsque revêtir le hijab fut identifié aussi bien comme un acte politique que comme un acte religieux. Les ecclésiastiques fondamentalistes et les intellectuels influents dénoncèrent la robe de l'Occident comme un des pièges de l'impérialisme culturel et érigèrent le voile comme une alternative aux modes contemporaines d'une culture de marché, obsédée par la beauté. Comme la journaliste Geraldine Brooks l'a observé, le tchador sert le but commun d'une génération de femmes islamiques, tout comme l'uniforme en jean porté par la militante féministe Américaine Andrea Dworkin. L'appel fondamentaliste pour le retour du voile – et son repositionnement comme stratégie de libération féministe – a persuadé des centaines de milliers de femmes, spécialement les jeunes, que porter le voile est un acte politique révolutionnaire. Comme Fatima Mernissi l'a mis en évidence, le retour du voile a été sans aucun doute l'événement le plus frappant des dix dernières années pour les femmes musulmanes.

En 1993, Neshat commence une série de photographies appelées *Unveiling* [1993-1994]. Pour ces autoportraits, l'artiste – parfois seule et parfois avec d'autres femmes – porte le tchador et expose seulement les parties d'anatomie (yeux, mains, pieds) que les femmes sont autorisées à montrer au public selon la loi Islamique. Neshat écrit sur les surfaces des photos, recouvrant les parties exposées des corps de femmes avec des écritures Farsi. Certains textes sont des poèmes écrits par des féministes qui rejettent les conventions religieuses, comme Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967) ; [d'] autres textes sont tirés d'écrivains pro-islamistes tels que Tahreh Saffarzadeh (née en 1936).

Dans sa série, *Women of Allah* (1993-1997), Neshat s'est photographiée [ainsi que d'autres femmes] dans diverses positions brandissant un pistolet ou un fusil. Ces images de l'artiste armée et voilée pourraient être perçues comme des portraits de propagande révolutionnaires et fondamentalistes. En effet, beaucoup de critiques ont accusé Neshat de promouvoir une notion romantique de la gloire révolutionnaire – une version des années 90 du style "radical chic" des années 60. Ces images surprenantes pourraient aussi être comprises comme l'expression de la solidarité de Neshat envers les femmes iraniennes qui ont rejoint le mouvement grandissant de résistance armée contre le régime actuel. Au début de l'année 1999, le gouvernement iranien confirma cette position, dénonçant son travail comme anti-révolutionnaire et considérant l'artiste comme une ennemie de l'Etat. Comme toujours, Neshat refuse de prendre position dans l'un ou l'autre camp idéologique.

En élargissant le récit autobiographique du plus grand projet de Neshat, *Rapture* se révèle être une réflexion poignante sur la psychologie perturbée et sans racines des exilés. Iranienne expatriée vivant aux Etats-Unis, Neshat conserve cette distance critique qui lui a permis de trouver le pouvoir et la dimension poétique du voile. Alors qu'elle célèbre la force et la beauté des femmes islamiques, elle reste néanmoins profondément consciente des horreurs de la répression. En fin de compte, *Rapture* offre une dimension visuelle de la réalité de la diaspora même. Dans un sens, on peut mettre en relation son œuvre avec des inspirations plus anciennes. Des récits de fuites dans le désert et de libération – tel que Moïse menant les Juifs hors d'Egypte à travers le Sinai jusqu'à la Mer Rouge et au Canaan – existent à la fois dans les traditions judéo-chrétiennes et musulmanes. En termes actuels, le voyage des femmes dans un simple bateau lie le récit avec ceux des migrations politiques symptomatiques de l'histoire récente, notamment les tentatives précaires de fuites par la mer des réfugiés cambodgiens, cubains, haïtiens ou vietnamiens pour trouver la liberté dans d'autres pays.

Comme tant d'autres exilés politiques, les protagonistes nomades de Neshat semblent chercher le Salut. Néanmoins, leur destin est profondément incertain. Pour être en sécurité, la majorité des femmes sont laissées à l'écart sur la plage, certainement pour faire face aux conséquences de leurs actes. La majorité a été sacrifiée pour en sauver quelques unes. Par ailleurs, la raison comme la destination du voyage improbable de ces six femmes restent ambiguës. Revêtues de leurs tchadors et partant en mer sans aide ni provision, leur périple peut être perçu aussi bien comme un suicide que comme une fuite. En effet, martyres d'une idée de libération commune, ces femmes extasiées sont selon les mots de Monirou Ravani suffisamment braves pour se noyer. Finalement, peut-être que Shirin Neshat nous demande simplement de reconnaître et de respecter cette force.

An Interview with Shirin Neshat [extrait]

Susan Horsburgh, *Time Europe*, August 14, 2000, « No Place Like Home »

New York-based Neshat was born in 1957, and went to the U.S. in 1974 to study art. She was exiled five years later by the Islamic Revolution, unable to go back until 1990. She didn't recognize the Iran to which she returned. Neshat was so deeply affected by her homeland's radical transformation, she set out to explore Islam through her art. Neshat spoke with Time's Susan Horsburgh in London.

TIME: Why did you begin your *Women of Allah* series ?

Neshat: On a very personal level I had a lot of questions I needed to answer for myself ... The Revolution had transformed the country. My work was really coming to terms with the ideology of the Islamic regime and the Revolution ... I was making it for myself. I was more trying to raise questions as opposed to answering them. So these images have that kind of naiveté of an artist living abroad, returning and very sincerely wanting to understand.

TIME: How is the Iran of today different from the country of your childhood ?

Neshat: During the Shah's regime, we had a very open, free environment. There was a kind of dilution between West and East – the way we looked and the way we lived. When I went back everything seemed changed. There seemed to be very little color. Everyone was black or white. All the women wearing the black chadors. It was immediately shocking. Street names had changed from old Persian names to Arabic and Muslim names ... This whole shift of the Persian identity toward a more Islamic one created a kind of crisis. I think to this day there's a great sense of grief that goes with that.

TIME: Do you regret leaving ?

Neshat: Leaving has offered me incredible personal development, a sense of independence that I don't think I would have had. But there's also a great sense of isolation. And I've permanently lost a complete sense of center. I can never call any place home. I will forever be in a state of in-between.

One constantly has to negotiate back and forth between one culture and the other and often they're not just different, they're in complete conflict ... Now that I have gained a sense of individualism being in America it's really hard for me to give all of that up and be in places where that doesn't exist. But it's also very satisfying to be part of a collective where individual interest doesn't drive the whole thing ... The work is more and more [about] my desire for reconciliation with my past and my culture.

TIME: Why are people in the West so fascinated by Islam ?

Neshat: It's so different from what they are. When you look at a culture that is so different, you start questioning yourself ... The way in which Islamic ideology has been growing rapidly around the Middle East is [seen as] a threat ... It's not even religion. It's like the Soviet Union, communism, which was once a threat. I think that Islam is very often dismissed because that ideology doesn't fit into the kind of rationality that the western world has.

TIME: Are you trying to upset the stereotypes ?

Neshat: I'm an artist so I'm not an activist. I don't have an agenda. I'm creating work simply to entice a dialog and that's all. I do tend to show the stereotype head on and then break it down. There's the stereotype about the women – they're all victims and submissive – and they're not. Slowly I subvert that image by showing in the most subtle and candid way how strong these women are.

TIME: Why are the women holding guns in your photographs ?

Neshat: It's addressing the topic of the Revolution and the fact that we cannot separate ideas of religion and spirituality from politics and violence. It very much deals with that idea of martyrdom, which can be identified as terrorism. I'm trying to present this paradox where a typical martyr stands on the border of love of God and devotion and faith on one hand and crime and cruelty and violence on the other ... They're willing to commit a crime because they love God. That is such a strange ideology and that can only be understood from the Islamic perspective if you look at their history ... the obsession with death and a rejection of the material world. You live your whole life to promote Islam and when you die you get rewarded. So you're congratulated for your death, which is a very bizarre mentality. [...]

Source : http://www.eruditiononline.com/04.04/shirin_neshat_interview.htm

Pour une interview menée par A.C. Danto, axée sur les films de Neshat : <http://www.bombsite.com/issues/73/articles/2332>

Interview [extraits]

John LeKay: I see that your work addresses political, sociological, psychological and spiritual dimensions; particularly in relation to an Islamic woman's point of view and much more. Have you shown your work recently in Iran or other regions near that part of the world and is one of your intentions to investigate or subvert stereotypes?

Shirin Neshat: It's been rather problematic to show my work in Iran both in respect to the nature of my work because of its controversial themes, and lack of appropriate venues.

[...]

My themes always seem to develop as a personal inquiry toward certain issues that I am faced with as an individual; for example my resentment and questions toward political powers or events such as the Islamic revolution (1979) that has determined the course of my life and so many other Iranians'. Consequently this path naturally has pulled me toward a larger cultural investigation, which I happen to care deeply about. Therefore, to properly analyze my work, one must always consider both its personal and social context that always run in parallel. Of course in process I seem to frame and raise many questions, which naturally bring me to investigate, confront and at times deconstruct all kinds of stereotypes such as the notion of 'orientalism'.

In regard to your other point, my interest in the subject of women is partially due to the fact that as a woman I feel closer and more sympathetic toward their situation living under oppressive societies. But also, because I believe in Islamic societies such as in Iran, by studying the predicament of the women, one could learn about the overall ideological structure of the political system that rules the country.

[...]

I see everything in the form of duality – paradoxical – in the inevitable cycle of life/death, good/evil, beauty/violence. One side never exists without the suggestion of its opposite. For example in the "Women of Allah" photographic series, we are confronted with threatening images of women embracing the gun, yet there is something terribly submissive, erotic and sensual about the female bodies and gazes. [...]

Source : <http://www.heyokamagazine.com/HEYOKA.4.FOTOS.ShirinNeshat.htm>



Shirin Neshat, *AIDS*, 2004, campagne en faveur de la prévention et de la lutte contre le sida

" THE FAMILY OF MAN "

L'exposition *The Family of Man* (1955) aujourd'hui



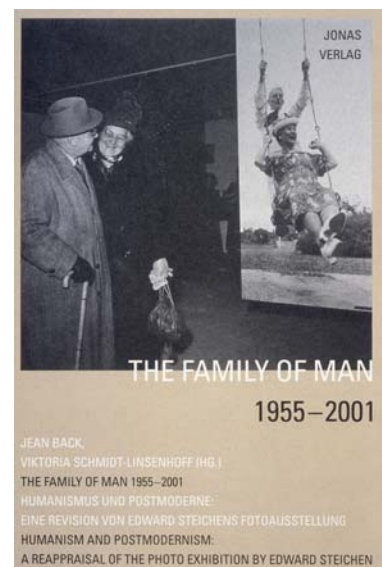
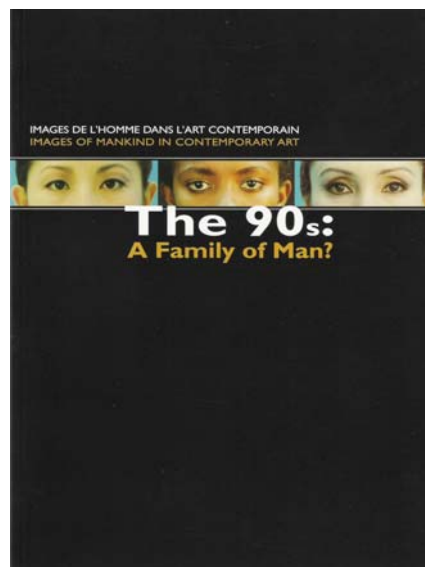
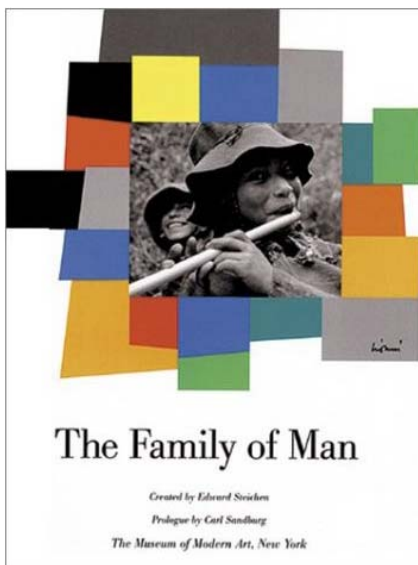
Barbara Pollack, *The Family of Men*, 1999, installation au Thread Waxing Space, New York

" 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. "

MARIEN, Mary Warner, *Photography. A Cultural History*, KING, Laurence, éd., New York, Harry N. Abrams, 2002 / 2006, p.444

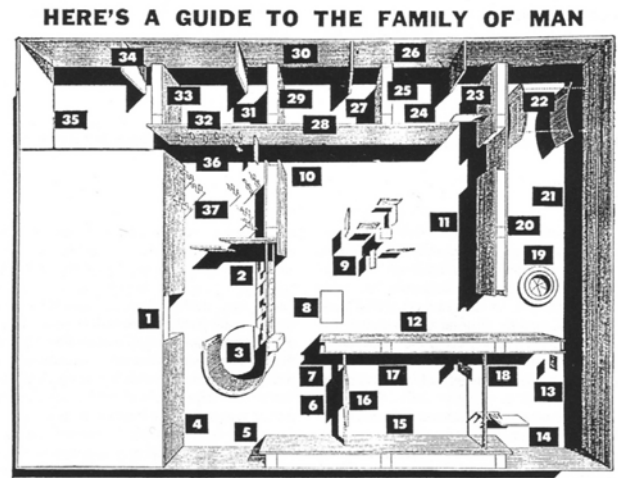
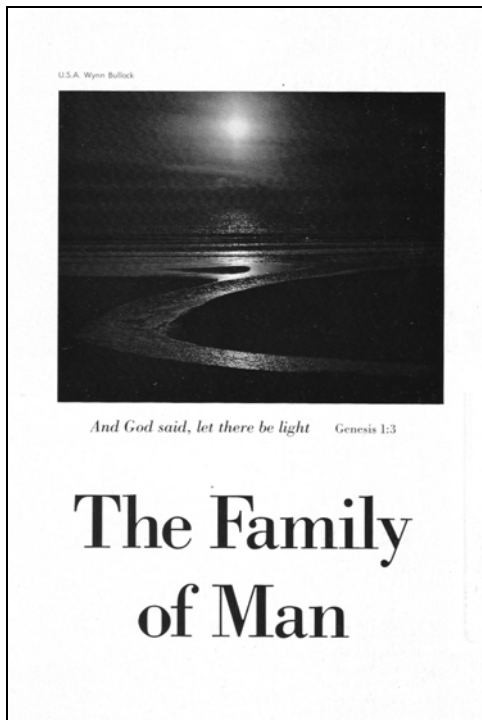
Quelques références bibliographiques (ordre chronologique)

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- BACK, Jean, SCHMIDT-LINSENHOFF, Viktoria, éd., *The Family of Man 1955-2001. Humanism and Postmodernism. A Reappraisal of the photo exhibition by Edward Steichen*, Luxembourg, Ministère de la Culture, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche / Marburg, Jonas Verlag, 2004 (actes du colloque de Trèves, *The Family of Man 1955-2000. Humanisme et postmodernité : une révision de la légendaire exposition photographique d'Edward Steichen*, 12 au 14 octobre 2000)



" THE FAMILY OF MAN "

L'exposition d'Edward Steichen *The Family of Man*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955



Steichen's photographic tribute to humanity is so huge and covers such a wide scope that it requires new approaches to organization and display. The architect's drawing above shows how some of the problems were solved. Groups of related pictures are indicated by number in approximately the order they are seen by a visitor walking through the exhibition: 1 entrance arch, 2 lovers, 3 childbirth, 4 mothers and children, 5 children playing, 6 disturbed children, 7 fathers and sons, 8 photograph displayed on the floor, 9 "family of man" central theme pictures, 10 agriculture, 11 labor, 12 household and office work, 13 eating, 14 folk-singing, 15 dancing, 16 music, 17 drinking, 18 playing, 19 ring-around-the-rosy stand, 20 learning, thinking, and teaching, 21 human relations, 22 death, 23 loneliness, 24 grief, pity, 25 dreamers, 26 religion, 27 hard times and famine, 28 man's inhumanity to man, 29 rebels, 30 youth, 31 justice, 32 public debate, 33 faces of war, 34 dead soldier, 35 illuminated transparency of H-bomb explosion, 36 UN, and 37 children.

1^{ère} page du catalogue ; à droite, thèmes de l'exposition et parcours muséographique (*Popular Photography*, mai 1955)



Entrée de l'exposition, thème 1 : "lovers" [amour, mariage]
Les images prises au MoMa en 1955 sont de Ezra Stoller qui a documenté l'exposition (voir aussi pages suivantes).

Visible tout à gauche de la vue d'ensemble, sur l'arcade d'entrée de l'exposition, l'image d'une foule aux USA et la photographie "clé" de l'exposition, ci-contre :

Eugene Harris, publiée dans *Popular Photography*

L'image est présentée plusieurs fois dans le catalogue, notamment dans la section consacrée au thème du mariage avec la citation suivante :

We shall be one person. Pueblo Indian

" THE FAMILY OF MAN "



Thème 9 : " "family of man" central theme pictures" [familles du monde entier] ; Thème 11 (mur à droite) : "labor"



Thème 19 : "ring-around-the-rosey stand" "[carrousel avec des images d'enfants faisant des rondes, dans le monde entier]
Thème 20 (mur gauche) : "learning, thinking, and teaching" ; Thème 21 (mur à droite) : "human relations"
Thème 22 (arrière-plan) : "death"

Voir aussi la visite virtuelle de l'exposition permanente de *The Family of Man* à Clervaux, Luxembourg, sur :
http://www.cna.public.lu/2_PHOTO/2_4_The_Family_of_Man/2_4_5_visite_virtuelle/index.html

" THE FAMILY OF MAN "



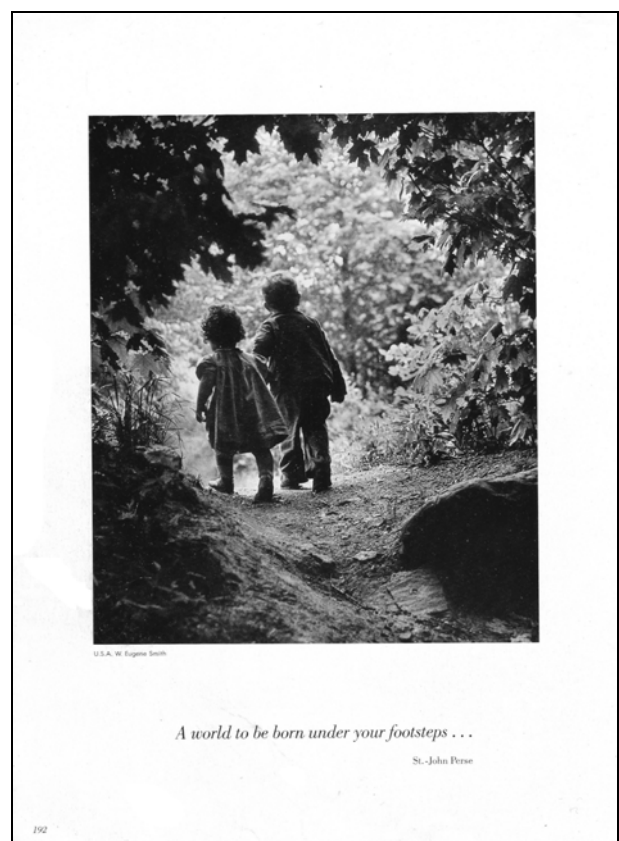
Thème 13 : "eating" [Edward Steichen a photographié sa mère avec un cake ; le blé est ici symbole de la Terre-mère]



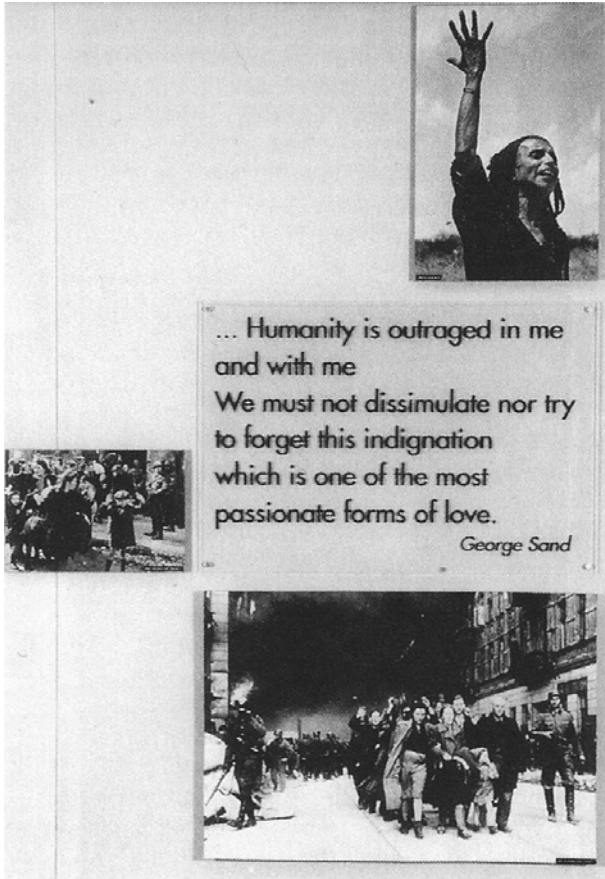
Thème 5 : "children playing", Gotthard Schuh, Java, 1940
[les enfants sont très présents dans l'exposition de Steichen, on les trouve surtout dans les thèmes 3 à 7, 19, 20 et 37]



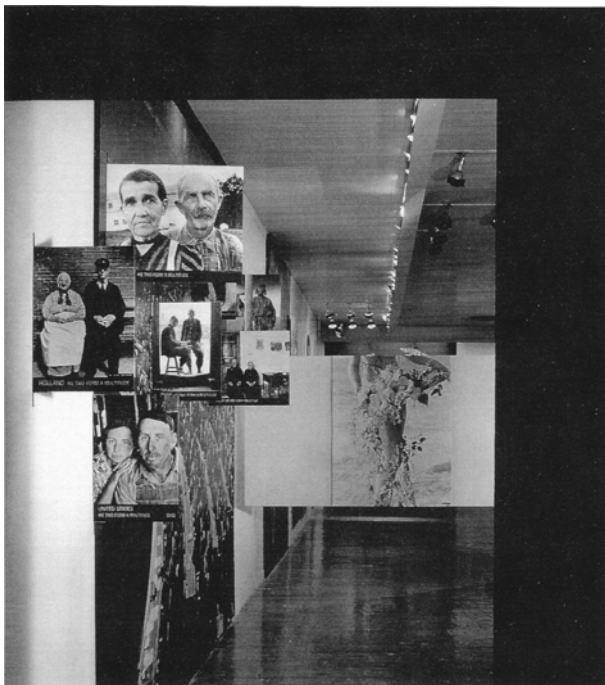
Thème 37 : "children" [fin de l'exposition et du catalogue, ci-dessus p.191 : dans l'ovale, Alice Liddell, vers 1862, par Lewis Carroll, UK, et ci-contre p.192, W. Eugene Smith, USA, *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, 1946]



" THE FAMILY OF MAN "

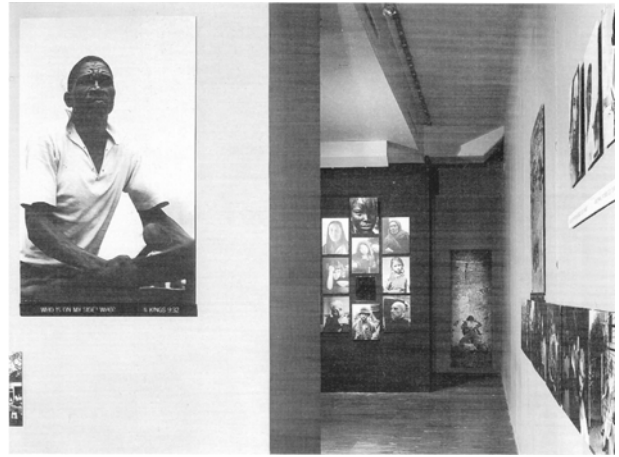


Thème 28 : A.Riwkin-Brick, Israël, 1951 ; 2 x Ghetto Varsovie

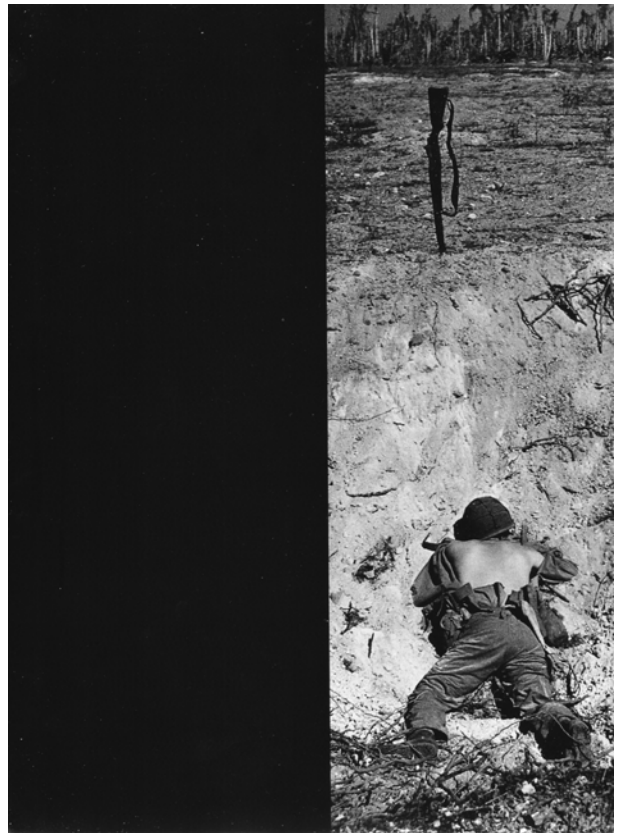


Thème 36

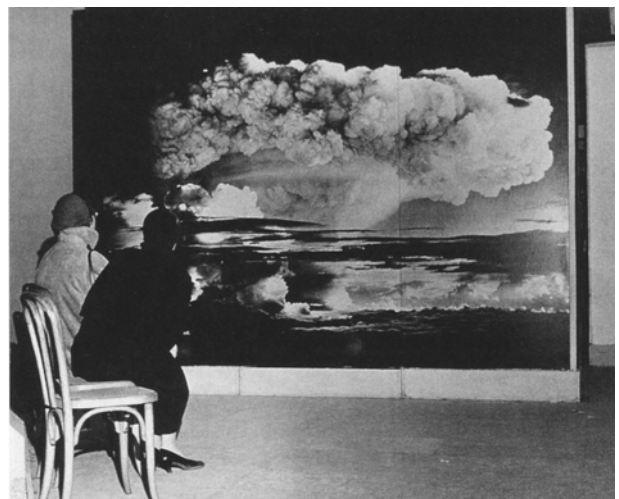
Thème 28 "man's inhumanity to man" [l'Holocauste]
 Thème 29 "rebels"; Thème 33 "faces of war"
 Thème 34 "dead soldier" photographie avec la citation :
Who is the slayer, who the victim ? Speak. Sophocles
 Thème 35 "illuminated transparency of H-bomb explosion"
 [unique image couleurs de toute l'exposition, ici Paris, 1956]
 Thème 36 "UN" [United Nations] et photographies de
 couples avec la phrase *We two form a multitude* [Ovide]



Thème 29 (gauche), 33 (second plan) et 34 (au fond)



Thème 34 : Raphael Platnick, *Eniwetok* [J, atoll du Pacifique]



Thème 35

" THE FAMILY OF MAN "

L'exposition photographique "*The Family of Man*"

Photographe américain d'origine luxembourgeoise, Edward J. Steichen [1879-1973] a commencé en 1951, en pleine guerre froide, à préparer son grand projet d'exposition expliquant l'homme à l'homme par le langage universel de la photographie. Son idée qui faisait appel à des photographes professionnels et amateurs, à des auteurs renommés ou inconnus du grand public, fut accueillie avec enthousiasme et, parmi les deux millions d'envois en provenance du monde entier, Steichen en sélectionna 10.000 dans une première étape, pour retenir finalement 503 photographies de 273 auteurs différents originaires de 68 pays. Elles composaient "*The Family of Man*" à travers 37 thèmes présentés par des accrochages impressionnants allant de l'amour à la foi en l'homme, en passant par la naissance, le travail, la famille, l'éducation, les enfants, la guerre et la paix. L'exposition connut un succès extraordinaire. Elle fut vue par plus de 9 millions de visiteurs au cours des années 50 et 60. En 1964, à la fin de son périple mondial, la version itinérante la plus complète existant encore à l'époque de l'exposition fut donnée par le gouvernement américain au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. Steichen désirait y voir "l'œuvre la plus importante de sa vie" installée de façon définitive. Dans ce projet, l'idée était née de réinstaller la collection au château de Clervaux. D'ailleurs, Steichen s'était exprimé lui-même en faveur de ce site en 1966. Ayant ouvert ses portes le 3 juin 1994, le nouveau musée du château de Clervaux, accueille l'exposition qui est maintenant installée de façon permanente. En 2004, "*The Family of Man*" a été inscrite au Registre Mémoire du Monde de l'UNESCO.

Le concept de l'exposition "*The Family of Man*"

"Je crois que l'exposition *The Family of Man* est un des projets les plus ambitieux et les plus audacieux jamais expérimenté en photographie.(...) *The Family of Man* a été créée dans un esprit passionné d'amour et dévoué de foi en l'homme"

Jerry Mason, "The Family of Man, The greatest photographic exhibition of all time - 503 pictures from 68 countries – created by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art", pp 4-5

L'élaboration de *The Family of Man* va nécessiter près de trois années avant qu'elle n'ouvre ses portes au public en 1955 au sein du MoMA. On attribue le titre donné à ce témoignage sur l'humanité à un discours d'Abraham Lincoln. L'idée de l'exposition trouve son fondement dans la jeunesse de Steichen, lorsque sa mère lui enseigne la tolérance et le respect envers les minorités ethniques. Cette pensée va suivre une évolution fortement influencée par la participation de Steichen aux deux Guerres Mondiales, à la Grande Dépression économique que va traverser l'Amérique, ainsi qu'à son expérience de la Guerre de Corée. Il s'agit d'expériences très négatives, marquées par la misère et la douleur. Elles vont engendrer chez Steichen le projet d'exprimer au travers de *The Family of Man* les singularités de la vie humaine et les analogies entre les divers groupes ethniques existants. Pour concrétiser ce projet, Steichen s'entoure de collaborateurs qui lui sont proches et dont les compétences sont unanimement reconnues. L'architecte Paul Rudolph élabore la structure de l'installation. Le photographe Wayne Miller est nommé premier assistant, le photographe Homer Page est responsable de l'agrandissement des épreuves. Carl Sanburg (beau-frère de Steichen) rédige le prologue et Dorothy Norman fournit les textes pour chacun des thèmes (amour, mariage, naissance, enfants, travail, famille, manger, boire, danser, relations humaines, mort, guerre etc) *The Family of Man* devait pour son créateur laisser une impression inoubliable auprès du public, non seulement par les images, mais également par l'architecture. Pour ce faire, Steichen renonça à l'accrochage linéaire traditionnel et présenta les photographies sous divers formats dans une installation tridimensionnelle.

L'itinérance des années 1950 et 1960 : le cas de Berlin, 1955

En 1955, l'exposition s'arrête pour une première étape européenne à la Hochschule für Bildende Künste à Berlin. Berlin vit, à cette époque, une situation particulière : nous sommes dix ans après la prise de la capitale du Reich par l'Armée Rouge et la capitulation de l'Allemagne nazie. La ville est divisée en quatre secteurs soumis à l'autorité des alliés. "*The Family of Man*" représente, en quelque sorte, la promesse des américains de respecter la démocratie et l'inviolabilité de la dignité humaine. Le concept de l'exposition de Steichen est accueilli avec gratitude à Berlin. Les Allemands peuvent traverser l'exposition sans rien craindre, les photographies ne les accusent pas, ne les confondent pas avec les crimes horribles perpétrés par l'Allemagne nazie. Une seule image, celle du ghetto de Varsovie, prise par un photographe anonyme. Cette photographie ne montre pas réellement ce qui s'est passé, elle ne fait que laisser entrevoir l'affreuse vérité.

D'après un texte de Gabriele et Helmut Nothhelfer, *The Family of Man. Témoignages et Documents*, Paris, Artevents, 1994

Source : http://www.cna.public.lu/2_PHOTO/2_4_The_Family_of_Man/index.html

" THE FAMILY OF MAN "

La réaction critique de Roland Barthes à la présentation de l'exposition *The Family of Man* à Paris

BARTHES, Roland, " La grande famille des hommes ", in *Mythologies*, Paris, Seuil, 1957, p.173-176

On a présenté à Paris une grande exposition de photographies, dont le but était de montrer l'universalité des gestes humains dans la vie quotidienne de tous les pays du monde : naissance, mort, travail, savoir, jeux imposent partout les mêmes conduites ; il y a une famille de l'Homme.

The Family of Man, tel a été du moins le titre originel de cette exposition, qui nous est venue des États-Unis. Les Français ont traduit : *La grande Famille des Hommes*. Ainsi, ce qui, au départ, pouvait passer pour une expression d'ordre zoologique, retenant simplement de la similitude des comportements, l'unité d'une espèce, est ici largement moralisé, sentimentalisé. Nous voici tout de suite renvoyés à ce mythe ambigu de la « communauté » humaine, dont l'alibi alimente toute une partie de notre humanisme.

Ce mythe fonctionne en deux temps : on affirme d'abord la différence des morphologies humaines, on surenchérit sur l'exotisme, on manifeste les infinies variations de l'espèce, la diversité des peaux, des crânes et des usages, on babelise à plaisir l'image du monde. Puis, de ce pluralisme, on tire magiquement une unité : l'homme naît, travaille, rit et meurt partout de la même façon ; et s'il subsiste encore dans ces actes quelque particularité ethnique, on laisse du moins entendre qu'il y a au fond de chacun d'eux une « nature » identique, que leur diversité n'est que formelle et ne dément pas l'existence d'une matrice commune. Ceci revient évidemment à postuler une essence humaine, et voilà Dieu réintroduit dans notre Exposition : la diversité des hommes affiche sa puissance, sa richesse ; l'unité de leurs gestes démontre sa volonté. C'est ce que nous a confié le prospectus de présentation, qui nous affirme, sous la plume de M. André Chamson, que « ce regard sur la condition humaine doit un peu ressembler au regard bienveillant de Dieu sur notre dérisoire et sublime fourmilière ».

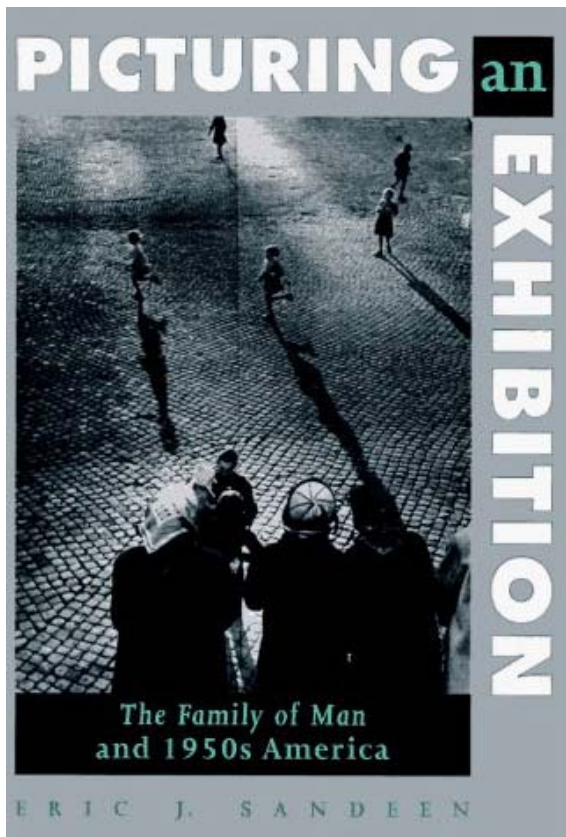
Le dessein spiritualiste est accentué par les citations qui accompagnent chaque chapitre de l'Exposition : ces citations sont souvent des proverbes « primitifs », des versets de l'Ancien Testament ; ils définissent tous une sagesse éternelle, un ordre d'affirmations évadé de l'Histoire : « La Terre est une mère qui ne périt jamais, Mange le pain et le sel et dis la vérité, etc. » ; c'est le règne des vérités gnomiques, la jonction des âges de l'humanité, au degré le plus neutre de leur identité, là où l'évidence du truisme n'a plus de valeur qu'au sein d'un langage purement « poétique ». Tout ici, contenu et photogénie des images, discours qui les justifie, vise à supprimer le poids déterminant de l'Histoire : nous sommes retenus à la surface d'une identité, empêchés par la sentimentalité même de pénétrer dans cette zone ultérieure des conduites humaines, là où l'aliénation historique introduit de ces « différences » que nous appellerons tout simplement ici des « injustices ».

Ce mythe de la « condition » humaine repose sur une très vieille mystification, qui consiste toujours à placer la Nature au fond de l'Histoire. Tout humanisme classique postule qu'en grattant un peu l'histoire des hommes, la relativité de leurs institutions ou la diversité superficielle de leur peau (mais pourquoi ne pas demander aux parents d'Emmet Till, le jeune nègre assassiné par des blancs, ce qu'ils pensent, eux, de *la grande famille des hommes* ?), on arrive très vite au tuf profond d'une nature humaine universelle. L'humanisme progressiste, au contraire, doit toujours penser à inverser les termes de cette très vieille imposture, à décaper sans cesse la nature, ses « lois » et ses « limites » pour y découvrir l'Histoire et poser enfin la Nature comme elle-même historique.

Des exemples ? Mais ceux-là même de notre Exposition. La naissance, la mort ? Oui, ce sont des faits de nature, des faits universels. Mais si on leur ôte l'Histoire, il n'y a plus rien à en dire, le commentaire en devient purement tautologique : l'échec de la photographie me paraît ici flagrant : *redire* la mort ou la naissance n'apprend, à la lettre, rien. Pour que ces faits naturels accèdent à un langage véritable, il faut les insérer dans un ordre du savoir, c'est-à-dire postuler qu'on peut les transformer, soumettre précisément leur naturalité à notre critique d'hommes. Car tout universels qu'ils soient, ils sont les signes d'une écriture historique. Sans doute, l'enfant naît *toujours*, mais dans le volume général du problème humain, que nous importe l'« essence » de ce geste au prix de ses modes d'être, qui, eux, sont parfaitement historique ? Que l'enfant naisse bien ou mal, qu'il coûte ou non de la souffrance à sa mère, qu'il soit frappé ou non de mortalité, qu'il accède à telle ou telle forme d'avenir, voilà ce dont nos Expositions devraient nous parler, et non d'une éternelle lyrique de la naissance. Et de même pour la mort : devons-nous vraiment chanter une fois de plus son essence, risquer ainsi d'oublier que nous pouvons encore tant contre elle ? C'est ce pouvoir encore tout jeune, trop jeune, que nous devons magnifier, et non l'identité stérile de la mort « naturelle ».

Et que dire du travail, que l'Exposition place au nombre des grands faits universels, l'alignant sur la naissance et la mort, comme s'il s'agissait tout évidemment du même ordre de fatalité ? Que le travail soit un fait ancestral ne l'empêche nullement de rester un fait parfaitement historique. D'abord, de toute évidence, dans ses modes, ses mobiles, ses fins et ses profits, au point qu'il ne sera jamais loyal de confondre donc une identité purement gestuelle l'ouvrier colonial et l'ouvrier occidental (demandons aussi aux travailleurs nord-africains de la Goutte d'Or ce qu'ils pensent de *la grande famille des hommes*). Et puis dans sa fatalité même : nous savons bien que le travail est « naturel » dans la mesure même où il est « profitable », et qu'en modifiant la fatalité du profit, nous modifierons peut-être un jour la fatalité du travail. C'est de ce travail, entièrement historifié, qu'il faudrait nous parler, et non d'une éternelle esthétique des gestes laborieux.

Aussi, je crains bien que la justification finale de tout cet adamisme ne soit de donner à l'immobilité du monde la caution d'une « sagesse » et d'une « lyrique » qui n'éternisent les gestes de l'homme que pour mieux les désamorcer.



In his richly textured *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America*, Eric Sandeen provides the first comprehensive examination of Steichen's masterwork. Sandeen challenges the views of such modern critics as Roland Barthes, who argue that "The Family of Man" is more artifice than artifact, that in its strivings for universality it shucks off what Barthes called "the determining weight of History" (p. 54).

Sandeen's painstaking research uncovers the historical circumstances attending both the creation and circulation of the exhibition. He begins by noting the essential irony that "'The Family of Man,' an exhibition advocating peace among humankind, was born of war" (p. 15). Sixty-two years old at the time of Pearl Harbor, Steichen persuaded the Navy to give him a commission and to recruit a team of photographers who soon had permission to roam the Pacific theater of operations. Like many of his fellow photographers, Steichen was drawn to combat but repelled by its consequences. He hoped that his realistic combat portraits "might make a contribution toward ending the specter of war" (p. 17). As war shaped the

photographer's vision, so it conditioned the home-front audience. With a patriotic frenzy, Americans devoured mass-circulation picture magazines such as *Life* and *Look*. The pictorial essay became more than a means of casual entertainment; carefully assembled pictures helped the home-front audience "visualize the perilous events of the day" and in the process "sharpened wartime fervor" (p. 19).

The rising demand for images assured that the camera would be an essential peacemaking tool as well. In the postwar decade, the new independent picture agency Magnum began to compile photographic series from around the globe and marketed these images to such popular periodicals as *Ladies' Home Journal*. Sandeen provides a convincing argument that the themes of international unity, brotherhood, and familial strength popularized by the "Family of Man" first found expression in such Magnum series as "People Are People the World Over," which appeared regularly in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1948 and 1949. Sandeen is quick to point out the political agendas at work in these seemingly objective visual essays as well as in the picture stories in *Life*. Photographers and photo editors catered to an insatiable popular appetite for visual proof of democracy's ability to contain the rising communist menace. A key indicator of the return of prosperity, this photographic outpouring also confirmed affluence as America's most powerful weapon in the culture wars of the new atomic age. "Picturing everyday life, both in the United States and abroad," Sandeen observes in one of his most perceptive passages, "became one more way in which America laid claim to world dominion" (p. 26).

Three years in the making, "The Family of Man" was constructed against this backdrop of postwar reconstruction, the onset of the Cold War, and the growing fear of nuclear holocaust. Sandeen provides a superb analysis of Steichen's creation, from the first flowering of its timeless theme through the exhaustive solicitation and selection of images to the innovative design of the final display.

CURTIS, James C., "Review of the Book *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* by Eric J. Sandeen", *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 31, No. 2/3, Summer - Autumn, 1996, p. 181-183 (citation p.181)

SOURCE : <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0084-0416%28199622%2F23%2931%3A2%2F3%3C181%3APAETFO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z&size=LARGE&origin=JSTOR-enlargePage>

" THE FAMILY OF MAN "

L'exposition *The Family of Man* (1955) aujourd'hui : de l'humanisme au postmodernisme

Les années 90 : La grande famille des hommes ?

Paul di Felice, Pierre Stiwer, commissaires de l'exposition, *The 90's : A Family of Man ? Images de l'homme dans l'art contemporain*, Luxembourg, Café-Crème, 1997, p.9-11

Pourquoi organiser une exposition avec des artistes-photographes résolument contemporains et s'interroger sur la *Grande Famille des Hommes* qui date de 1955 ? l'entreprise n'est pas originale nécessairement. En 1992, le critique et photographe américain Larry Fink publie dans *Photography, center quarterly* un ensemble de photographies sous le titre de *Nouvelles relations, La Family of Man revisitée*. L'approche actualise la vision de Steichen en y intégrant des pans entiers de la vie de la société que Steichen, à la fois dans un souci de cohérence et par conviction personnelle, avait laissés de côté. On peut y voir une jeune fille plutôt grosse s'essayer à des poses de ballerine dans une cuisine pauvrement fournie, une jeune fille à peine pubère faire l'amour avec un garçon pas plus âgé qu'elle, une parade de rue aux Etats-Unis, un garçon lavant son chien dans un tonneau, une petite fille essayant de grimper le long d'un arbre impressionnant, une strip-teaseuse s'exhibant devant des hommes, un soldat devant une rangée d'avions militaires... Et de commenter humblement : « Plutôt que de prétendre faire l'analyse socio-anthropologique des événements décrits, plutôt que de classer en catégories et de procéder démocratiquement à une sélection sociologiquement juste, j'ai choisi la voie de la moindre résistance mais aussi la plus gratifiante. J'ai simplement sélectionné des images de qualité étant convaincu que l'énergie visuelle qui en émane engendrerait un tableau social d'une force équivalente. » Et de conclure : « La disposition des images ne fournit pas de réponses, il n'y a même pas d'interrogations clairement formulées mais il y a des ouvertures, des indices... »

Une conception que l'on a voulu reprendre pour cette exposition puisqu'il était bien entendu hors de propos de refaire une *Family of Man*. L'épopée de l'humanité qu'avait construite Steichen n'est plus faisable aujourd'hui : ni en esprit, ni en pratique, tant la création photographique que nous avons voulu exposer s'éloigne de la conception de l'ancien directeur du département de la photographie du Musée d'art moderne de New York. Celui-ci s'est, en effet, servi de la photo à la manière des directeurs artistiques de magazine pour la mettre au service d'une idée, pour réussir, par le recadrage, l'agrandissement et une disposition particulière, à faire passer son message.

Plus près de nous encore, à Berlin en 1996, l'exposition *Family, nation, tribe, community [SHIFT]* avait fait explicitement référence à *The Family of Man* en développant un ensemble d'interrogations autour de la notion de famille et celle d'individu. Frank Wagner écrit, dans l'introduction à l'exposition, que l'approche du curateur ne pouvait évidemment pas être celle de Steichen qui avait exposé une vision incroyablement conciliante, propre et bien ordonnée du monde, lequel était, au contraire, complexe, opaque et contradictoire. Pour cette raison, l'exposition de Berlin s'était installée dans un champ de tensions opposées où il devait être fait état d'approches et d'attitudes divergentes et diversifiantes.

De fait, la majorité des critiques récentes s'accordent pour reléguer l'exposition de Steichen dans l'histoire, pour en faire un moment particulier de la vie de cet homme vieillissant au sommet de sa gloire. Ils y voient aussi l'expression d'une Amérique qui, après deux guerres victorieuses, venait de s'assurer la première place dans le monde, avec comme seule rivale l'Union soviétique. La *Grande Famille des Hommes*, à l'époque de la guerre froide, allait jouer un rôle que Steichen n'avait peut-être pas voulu sous cette forme. Mais l'utilisation de l'exposition par l'Agence américaine d'information pendant presque 10 ans a fait de cet arrangement photographique un moment significatif d'une sorte de guerre culturelle entre le bloc communiste et le monde « libre et démocratique » dont Steichen fournissait l'album de famille.

Le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg entretient avec Edward Steichen et la *Family of Man* des relations particulières. Non seulement Steichen est né luxembourgeois mais il a également légué au Luxembourg une des versions de la *Family of Man* dans les années soixante lors d'une de ses rares visites dans son pays natal. Cette version soigneusement restaurée peut être visitée au Château de Clervaux, dans le nord du pays, où elle est installée en permanence. *The Family of Man* est devenue ainsi un objet muséal, bien éloigné de ce qu'a été sa vocation première. Car ce qui importait à Steichen ce n'était pas l'œuvre prise en elle-même, encore moins sa qualité matérielle, mais bien ce que l'ensemble des photographies devait véhiculer : un message.

Assez curieusement, l'exposition est voisine d'un petit musée de la guerre où l'on peut voir documentée l'épopée tragique des Luxembourgeois lors de la dernière guerre mondiale quand von Rundstedt lança son offensive de reconquête en hiver 1944. L'admiration et la gratitude des Luxembourgeois pour les Américains trouvent leur origine dans la libération du joug allemand par les armées de Patton de sorte qu'Edward Steichen, capitaine de l'armée américaine – titre auquel il accordait quelque importance – tire mérite à la fois de ses origines luxembourgeoises et de son appartenance à une nation victorieuse.

Si la gloire toute personnelle d'Edward Steichen nous intéresse moins ici, c'est parce que nous voulons le considérer dans son rôle de commissaire d'expositions tel qu'il se révèle à travers *The Family of Man*. Même si quelques-unes de ses œuvres existent dans des collections luxembourgeoises, on les confond fréquemment avec les photographies de la *Grande Famille des Hommes* où la participation de Steichen-photographe reste cependant quasi symbolique.

Que le célèbre photographe américain ait justement laissé au Luxembourg trace de sa vision idéaliste voire utopiste, sous forme d'une exposition photographique, ne surprend plus alors qu'à moitié. L'idéologie de la réconciliation et de la grande fraternité des hommes continue à se manifester dans maintes entreprises à caractère culturel jusqu'à présent. Beaucoup de commandes émanent aujourd'hui d'instances nationales ou européennes qui formulent plus ou moins explicitement que l'expression artistique se donne pour mission de documenter des gestes humanitaires, de décrire des conflits dans un but de dénonciation. L'artiste plus ou moins inspiré, souvent de bonne foi – mais pas toujours –, se prête alors aux grands gestes politiques de réconciliation et d'entente qui accompagnent ces actes. La volonté de nombreuses communautés – à l'image des entreprises – de donner une vision positive d'elles-mêmes débouche sur un art qui reconsidère ce qui, à certaines époques, était une de ces missions essentielles : être porteur d'un contenu plus ou moins implicitement moral ou politique. Cette forme d'idéalisme social ou politique fait l'impasse sur les causes des divergences réelles, veut faire taire les voix discordantes, pratique avec plus ou moins bonne conscience l'autocensure ou la langue de bois.

Evoquer donc *The Family of Man* en rapport avec une exposition d'art contemporain c'est inévitablement s'interroger sur l'utilisation des œuvres à des fins politiques et sur les différentes manières de faire de leur contenu l'objet d'un enjeu moral.

Certains critiques contemporains de Steichen analysent *The Family of Man* comme une œuvre autonome dont il faut avant tout considérer la cohérence et l'unité artistique et font abstraction de son « message ». Une façon d'en faire un objet à thèse, littéraire, réservé aux intellectuels. Or, l'exposition de Steichen eut un grand succès populaire. Les raisons ont été analysées ailleurs. Pathétique, grandiose, parfois ouvertement sentimentale, conciliante, prudente dans ses considérations morales : l'exposition est – selon le critique américain Eric J. Sandeen – le reflet parfait du goût de l'Américain moyen des années cinquante. Mais, à l'approche de l'an 2000, elle nous concerne toujours au regard des débats de plus en plus vifs autour de l'art contemporain, aux Etats-Unis et en France particulièrement. On ne peut que rester méditatif devant l'impact d'une exposition photographique qui connut un succès populaire mondialement partagé et ne souleva des critiques que dans les milieux intellectuels alors que tant d'expositions récentes soulèvent les réactions les plus violentes.

Faire figurer alors, dans le titre d'une exposition, l'écho de la *Grande Famille des Hommes* et y accoler un point d'interrogation, c'est être aussi conscient de la fracture entre le goût du grand public et un art contemporain accusé d'être incompréhensible et provocateur. Une fracture que Steichen s'était justement proposé de surmonter avec une exposition dont un but avoué était de réconcilier le grand public avec l'art contemporain et plus particulièrement avec le Museum of Modern Art de New York fortement critiqué pour favoriser un art élitiste. Il s'agissait à l'époque de l'art abstrait.

Aujourd'hui, l'art court de nouveau le danger de se prêter aux intérêts qui s'expriment dans des milieux les plus divers, lobbies de toutes sortes, groupes majoritaires ou minoritaires qui voudraient imposer le silence aux voix critiques et monopoliser les discours publics au nom de leurs revendications à caractère politique ou moral. Ainsi, avec beaucoup d'ironie, Larry Fink écrit qu'il ne faudrait même plus parler de la *Grande Famille des Hommes* mais utiliser l'expression politiquement correcte de la « *Grande famille des êtres humains* ».

Il était, dès lors, tentant de voir si on pouvait faire une exposition à thème sans tomber dans la manipulation de l'image, dans une forme d'art de la séduction dans lequel excellait Steichen. N'avait-il pas été directeur artistique de *Vogue* et de *Vanity Fair*, magazines populaires à grand tirage encore que porteurs d'un goût de luxe ?

Le défi était de garder aux œuvres leur autonomie ou du moins de ne pas (trop) leur faire dire ce qu'elles ne voulaient pas dire. Une entreprise à risque puisque le simple fait d'annoncer un thème – le couple, l'environnement et le choix respectif des œuvres – allait évidemment orienter la lecture du public. Associer des œuvres dans un espace où elles se confrontent ou se complètent allait imposer une séquence narrative où l'espace discursif d'une œuvre se voyait modifié par un discours parallèle ou contraire.

Même si on peut voir dans le parcours de l'exposition une intention avouée de substituer au message de Steichen une sorte d'antithèse, cela n'a pas été notre but. Si les différents espaces annoncent bien un thème – la naissance ou la mort – il n'y a pas à vrai dire de séquence narrative encore moins l'unité de discours de Steichen. Chaque espace est un lieu d'interrogation, notre attitude face à Steichen un commentaire, une note de bas de page, une annotation, quelques lignes critiques plutôt qu'une thèse. Nous avons voulu laisser une large place à l'expression particulière de chaque artiste tout en privilégiant des expressions qui permettent – dans un premier temps – une lecture claire.

Nous avons aussi joué du préjugé favorable dont jouit l'œuvre photographique, aux yeux du public, d'être immédiatement lisible, pour construire un discours qui renonce à être hermétique. Une manière de s'approcher de l'intention de Steichen de créer une exposition qui ne soit pas réservée à un public d'experts. Il reste, bien sûr, que nous ne pouvons pas partager la vision englobante, universelle de l'artiste américain. Les images parfois provocantes parfois séduisantes de l'exposition *The 90s : A Family of Man ?* créent un parcours marqué par le souci de donner la parole à des artistes ayant chacun sa manière propre. Ces « voix » courent parallèlement à d'autres sans forcément se retrouver ; il n'y a pas ici œuvre symphonique. Ainsi, quelques œuvres évoquent le problème du racisme ou le sort des émigrés. Aucune ne s'accorde avec la vision pacifique et fraternelle de Steichen. La naissance n'est pas traitée sur le mode jubilatoire mais, selon Toscani, avec une grande agressivité visuelle ; selon Rineke Dijkstra, avec un sens de la réserve et de la simplicité.

Quelques thèmes figurant dans cette exposition sont absents de la *Grande Famille des Hommes* : l'homme « numérique » tel qu'il se retrouve dans des œuvres pourtant si différentes, de Nancy Burson ou Inez van Lamsweerde, préfigure une égalité qui n'est pas inscrite dans le partage des valeurs proprement humaines mais dans l'identité manipulée de l'ère digitale.

L'exposition de Steichen reste, en esprit, profondément marquée par les valeurs d'une communauté rurale à visage humain. La ville est à peine effleurée et la foule urbaine s'inscrit – comme l'industrialisation et la science – dans le thème prométhéen de l'activité humaine. Un monde bien éloigné des problèmes soulevés par la mondialisation des échanges, la société multiculturelle et les luttes et conflits qu'elle engendre pour l'individu et les communautés restreintes. Les phénomènes de rejet du cosmopolitisme et de l'autre dans sa différence, parallèlement aux critiques qui touchent l'art contemporain dans ses manifestations les plus individualistes et dans ce qui est ressenti comme une attaque du goût commun, jettent une lumière trouble sur une exposition qui a voulu célébrer la vision populaire de la réconciliation de toutes les communautés.

Parmi les images importantes de cette exposition, figurent quelques nus d'une dame déjà âgée dont le photographe – Jean Rault – fait le portrait avec une pudeur qui ne renonce pas à être érotique. Si ces images risquent, peut-être, d'émouvoir le regard plus que les nus dés sexués d'Inez van Lamsweerde, c'est que ces photos parlent aussi de la réconciliation avec la vie, avec l'âge et la mort. Mais sur un mode et un ton qui ne sont pas ceux d'Edward Steichen. A la grande vision cosmique de l'Univers et de l'Homme où Edward Steichen célèbre le destin de l'humanité sur le mode de l'Un, nous avons voulu faire entendre des cris, des murmures, parfois des silences d'un ensemble de créateurs dont chaque œuvre se manifestera dans sa différence et sa sincérité individuelle.

NAISSANCE DE LA FIGURE HUMAINE

Grossesse, maternité, bébé : quelles sont les positions artistiques critiques traitant de tels sujets ?



Vibeke Tandberg, *Undo*, n°2, 2003, 156x116cm



Vibeke Tandberg, *Undo*, n°6, 2003, 156x116cm



Vibeke Tandberg, *Undo*, série complète, n°1 à 7, 2003, 156x116cm

" Having a completely transformed and different body for me was extraordinary. I was totally fascinated by this shape... "
Vibeke Tandberg

Source : <http://vibeke-tandberg.inamarr.com/images.htm>

NAISSANCE DE LA FIGURE HUMAINE

Grossesse : intimité ou mascarade, le miroir ou le masque...



Larry Clark, tiré de *Tulsa*, 1963-1971, 20.6x31.1 cm



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled [Pregnant Woman]*, 2002-2004, 74x51 cm



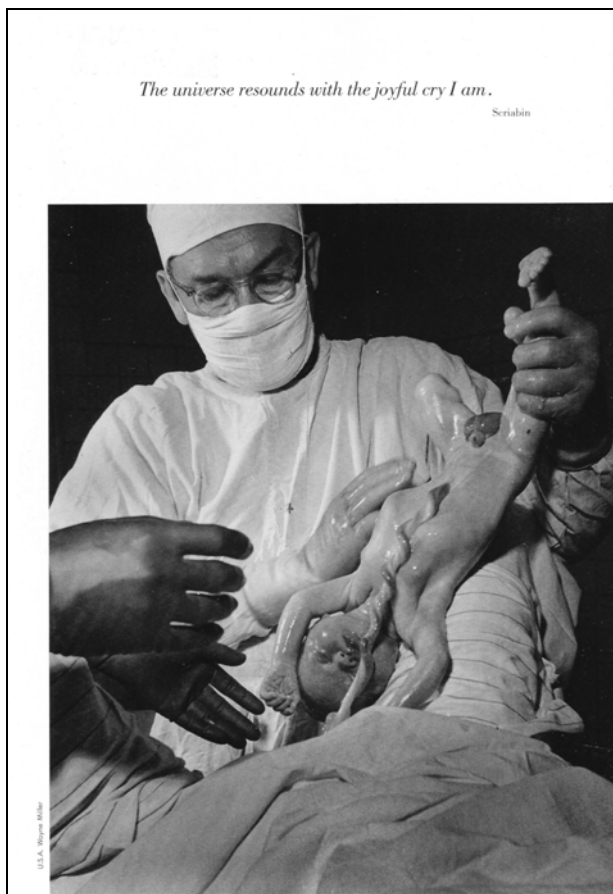
Corinne Day, *Tara at home Stoke Newington Squat*, 1998/2000, 40x60 cm



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled [Cosmo Cover Girl]*, 1990, c-print, 43.2x27.9 cm

NAISSANCE DE LA FIGURE HUMAINE

L'exposition *The Family of Man* mise en perspective dans l'exposition *The 90's : A Family of Man ? Images de l'homme dans l'art contemporain : de l'humanisme au postmodernisme*



Ci-contre : *The Family of Man*, thème 3 : "childbirth", image de Wayne Miller, USA, années 1950

Ci-dessus : Oliviero Toscani (Milan, I, 1942 ; vit en Toscane), conception, affiche Benetton, automne-hiver 1991-1992

Ci-dessous à gauche : *The Family of Man*, thème 3 : "childbirth", image de la photographe Nell Dorr, USA

Ci-dessous à droite : Catherine Opie (Sandusky, Ohio, USA, 1961 ; vit à Los Angeles), *Self-Portrait Nursing*, 2004, 81x102cm



NAISSANCE DE LA FIGURE HUMAINE

Rineke Dijkstra (Sittard, Pays-Bas, 1959 ; vit à Amsterdam)



Rineke Dijkstra, *Tia*, Amsterdam, 23 juin 1994, 52x62cm
[Tia trois semaines après son accouchement]



Rineke Dijkstra, *Tia*, Amsterdam, 14 nov. 1994, 52x62cm



Rineke Dijkstra, *Saskia* [1 semaine après l'accouchement], Harderwijk, Pays-Bas, 16 mars, 1994, 154x130cm



Rineke Dijkstra, *Julie* [1 heure après l'accouchement], La Haye, Pays-Bas, 29 février 1994, 154x130cm

" The raw immediacy of these images captures something of the contradictions inherent in this common and yet most singular of human experiences. The women appear at once vulnerable and invincible, traumatised and self-composed. Dijkstra draws a parallel between the two groups of photographs. Both bullfighters and mothers are pictured after an exhausting and potentially life-threatening experience, relating to society's deepest-held ideas of masculinity and femininity. "

Source : <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/cruelandtender/dijkstra.htm>

Rineke Dijkstra : documenter la fragilité des êtres dans les moments de transformation du corps

"Il y a dans mon travail un aspect documentaire qui consiste à décrire des situations individuelles comme des exemples révélateurs de tout un contexte. Il y a aussi un aspect psychologique qui s'intéresse à l'attitude d'un individu particulier dans une situation donnée. J'essaie de trouver un équilibre entre ce qui reflète un contexte général et ce qui relève de la sphère individuelle. Je crois que la photographie permet parfaitement de traiter ce double point de vue. Je prends, par exemple, des situations comme le service militaire, l'école, la plage, une discothèque, qui sont des expériences vécues par tout le monde. Chacune de ces situations m'impose des limites précises. Je les travaille comme des moments documentaires. Dans chaque moment documentaire, je m'intéresse à l'authenticité et à la singularité du sujet que je photographie, comment tel individu se différencie de tel autre. Ce sont toujours les petits détails, un regard, un geste, qui font la différence et nourrissent ma recherche de vérité."

Rineke Dijkstra, entretien avec Jean-Pierre Krief réalisé fin 2003 pour la série *Contacts*, extrait



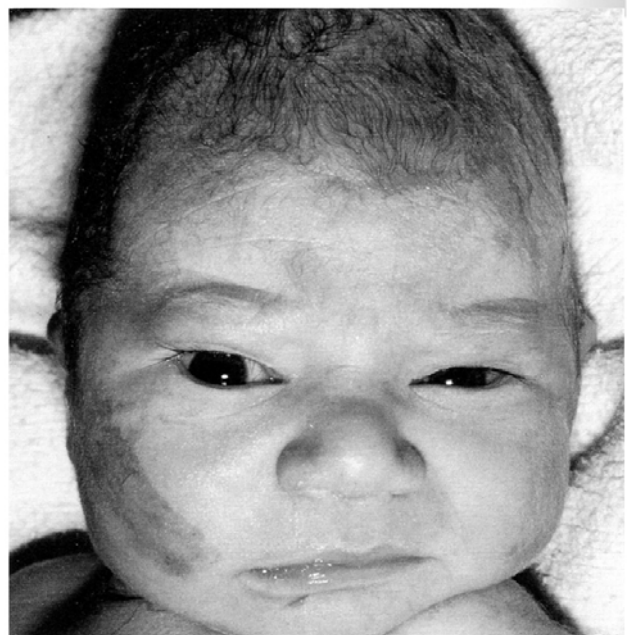
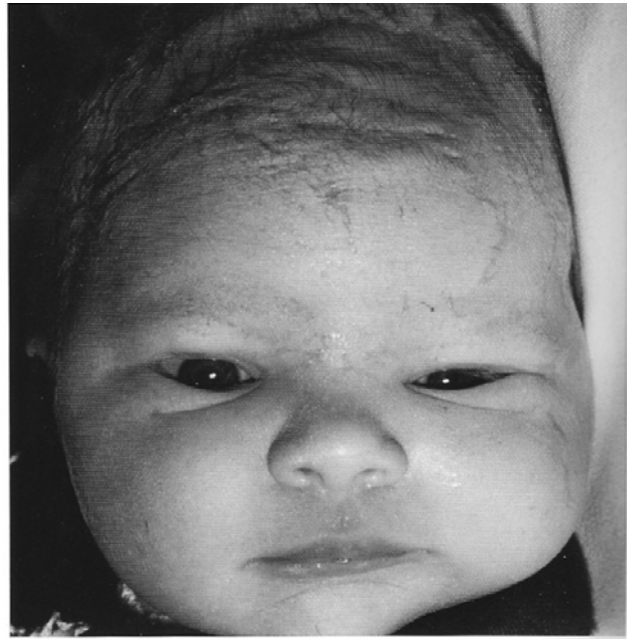
Rineke Dijkstra, *Tecla* [1 jour après l'accouchement], Amsterdam, Pays-Bas, 16 mai 1994, 154x130cm

Artiste néerlandaise née en 1959, Rineke Dijkstra est principalement connue pour ses séries de portraits photographiques, grands formats en couleur, dénués d'effets de mise en scène. [...]

À ses débuts, Rineke Dijkstra travaille comme photographe indépendante pour des magazines de presse, réalisant des portraits d'artistes, d'écrivains, d'hommes d'affaires. Un jour, en période estivale, une commande la mène sur une plage de la mer du Nord, en Hollande. Elle y fait la première image fondatrice d'une série de portraits d'adolescents qui la conduira par la suite sur des plages de Pologne, d'Ukraine, des États-Unis et d'Afrique. Une série qui va littéralement transcender le genre du portrait dont la pratique est pourtant courante et constante depuis l'avènement de la photographie. Ses modalités opératoires sont dès lors parfaitement au point : une prise de vue frontale, un sujet le plus souvent cadré en pieds, un décor minimaliste, à peine suggéré, une mise à profit de la lumière ambiante complétée par un recours au flash, une prise de vue sur négatif couleur faite au moyen d'une chambre photographique, enfin l'adoption systématique d'un principe de pose où le regard du sujet se confronte toujours à l'objectif du photographe. Par la suite, Rineke Dijkstra développe d'autres séries sur des sujets qui prolongent ses précédents travaux et qui semblent se répondre : *Disco Girls* ; enfants dans un jardin (*Tiergarten*) ; jeunes gens photographiés régulièrement de l'enfance à l'âge adulte ; mères venant d'accoucher, leur nourrisson dans les bras ; toreros à peine sortis de la corrida (*Bull-fighters*) ; légionnaires français ou jeunes appelés en Israël, des hommes, mais aussi des jeunes filles photographiés alternativement en vêtements civils et en tenue de soldat. L'artiste se met également à la vidéo et réalise des installations qui reprennent les principes de ses prises de vues photographiques. [...] Rineke Dijkstra montre ici avec grâce la vulnérabilité, les corps en transformation, la recherche d'identité d'adolescents filmés isolément. [...]

Rineke Dijkstra a donné naissance à une esthétique photographique particulière où la rigueur du point de vue et la maîtrise technique concourent à une seule exigence : atteindre et restituer la singularité du sujet photographié. C'est d'ailleurs tout le mystère de cette artiste : elle fait des portraits, comme beaucoup de photographes n'ont jamais cessé d'en faire, elle maîtrise les procédés techniques qui sont ceux d'une multitude de professionnels de l'image, pourtant quelque chose propulse son regard plus loin que les autres. Dans cette part d'étrangeté dont Baudelaire disait qu'elle est inséparable de la beauté, un espace indéfini, où flotte la mise à nu de l'essentiel : la fragilité de la présence humaine.

Philippe Bazin (Nantes, France, 1954 ; vit à Paris)



Philippe Bazin, *Nés*, 1998

" Les photographies de nouveau-nés sont emblématiques de mon travail, explique Philippe Bazin, dans leur relation à l'institution, au monde médical, à l'innocence, à la responsabilité, au refus des classifications, à l'animalité qui nous fonde, à la protestation, à la normalité, à l'altérité. "

" [...] Cette série est la seule dans l'œuvre de Philippe Bazin où soient exposées toutes les figures qui ont fait l'objet d'une prise de vue. Pendant une certaine période du mois de septembre 1998, à Maubeuge, l'émergence de 37 vies a été reconnue et captée : "ça a été". Le personnel d'un service de maternité s'en est fait complice et les parents ont donné leur accord. Mais, face au photographe, chacun de ces trente-sept visages, se manifestant dans sa singularité, s'inscrit dans une série qui échappe au repérage familial autant qu'au repérage social, et même au repérage sexuel. Ce qui fait résistance ici, c'est cette identité d'un vouloir-vivre impossible à canaliser, affirmé dans l'individualité mais présenté dans la multiplicité [...] "

Christiane Vollaire, in BAZIN, Philippe, *Nés*, Paris / Maubeuge, Idem + Arts / Méréal, 1999

Source : http://www.galerieannebarrault.com/philippe_bazin/nes.html

Philippe Bazin : l'énigme du visage ou l'identité (in)déterminée du bébé...

" On le voit, le visage est énigme plus que réponse. À peine croit-on le saisir que déjà il échappe, sauf peut-être dans l'ultime rigidité cadavérique. Or, cette énigme du visage, c'est ce que n'a cessé de traquer Philippe Bazin.

Nul hasard, ici, à ce que Bazin ait d'abord été médecin, avant de rompre brutalement avec son milieu d'origine, et ait consacré sa première investigation aux vieillards d'un centre de long séjour. C'est qu'en effet il reste quelque chose, comme une empreinte définitive, d'ontologiquement médical dans son travail photographique, même et surtout si celui-ci ne cesse de croiser les interrogations foucaldiennes sur les multiples façons qu'a l'institution – école, armée, prison, asile – de régir, surveiller et domestiquer le corps. Des portraits de vieillards à ceux des nouveau-nés encore enduits de *vernix* foetal, des aliénés aux adolescents de Calais, c'est à un même questionnement radical autour de la notion du visage que l'on est, abruptement, convié : à partir de quel moment, comment y a-t-il visage, et quelle relation puis-je entretenir avec le visage, surtout lorsque celui-ci est devenu pour moi pure Altérité, chairs flétries, rongées, mortes déjà, du vieillard exilé, reclus en retraite, destiné à sa prochaine putréfaction ; corps halluciné de l'aliéné – ou énoncé tel par le corps social ; corps inachevé de l'adolescent, maladroite promesse de lui-même ; ou, enfin, tête gluante, encore pétrie de sang et de glaire, du nouveau-né ?

Dans le cas de la récente série *Nés* (1998), obscène autant qu'obsédante, sidérante, le masque – par quoi se définit l'appartenance sexuelle et sociale d'un visage – fait encore défaut, ne s'est pas encore théâtralisé, inscrit sur chaque trait, chaque expression, comme si n'advenait là que la chair à nu, à vif, encore animale : le nouveau-né, à peine expulsé, point encore nettoyé, hurlant du saisissement d'être soudain là, soudain chu, est-il déjà visage ? Ne se situe-t-il pas, comme le vieillard ou l'aliéné, dans cet entre-deux obscur et infra-linguistique, où le corps n'a pas d'identité assignable, demeure en deçà – ou à côté, peut-être – de l'humain, de ses masques, de ses gangues et de ses mises en scène ?

Chair brute, puissante, étrangère autant que proche, aveugle encore – les yeux ici ne faisant pas regard – murée dans le cri, le hurlement sauvage par quoi la vie s'énonce, autant que la souffrance. "

BAQUÉ, Dominique, *La Photographie Plasticienne. L'Extrême Contemporain*, Paris, Regard, 2004. p.207-209

" Le cercle se resserre. La prise en charge de l'individu tend à être totale. De la naissance à la mort, la société a créé des structures qui encadrent chacun. Le centre de vieux grabataires est le dépotoir de l'hôpital qui lui envoie tous les faibles qui sont vieux et qui ont échoué. Ce sont en définitive des exclus. Peut-être cela explique-t-il les conditions dans lesquelles on les fait vivre. Je voudrais que chacun fasse l'effort d'imaginer ces personnes dans leur lit : ne parlant pas, ne bougeant pas, regardant plusieurs heures durant un mur vide situé à trois mètres de leurs yeux, un mur qui doit devenir obsédant. Il faudrait que chacun essaie cela : regarder un mur pendant des heures, sans bouger, sans parler. Et ça recommence chaque jour, chaque matin, chaque heure. Tous les jours, tous les mois, toute l'année. C'est un vide, un grand vide au bord du trou. "

BAZIN, Philippe, Thèse de médecine, Nantes, mars 1983, publié in *Impact Médecin*, déc. 1985 et *Clichés*, n°35, mai 1987

" Du nourrisson au vieillard, c'est-à-dire de l'eau dont nous venons à la pierre où nous allons ce qu'ils sont, virtuellement nous le sommes, parce que vivants entraînés par la permanente et sourde morsure de la disparition. On le voit bien, c'est l'unique effet nécessaire de ces photographies sur leur pourtour, il s'agit vraiment d'envisager, de pénétrer dans ces visages, face à face irréductible avec cet espace si ténu du déclin avant la fosse commune de l'oubli."

LAMARCHE-VADEL, Bernard, in BAZIN, Philippe, *Faces. 1985-1988*, Rennes, Ecole Nationale de la Santé Publique / Paris, La Différence, 1990

" Etonnant parcours que celui de Philippe BAZIN, médecin qui s'est mis à photographier ses patients dans ces mouiroirs qui sont la honte de notre société, afin de leur redonner un visage, une identité, un regard sur eux-mêmes. Ce sont des visages cadrés en gros plan sans aucune exploitation narrative ou voyeuriste. Des photos qui dérangent beaucoup, par l'intransigeance rigoureuse qu'elles manifestent, et qu'elles exigent en retour. "

DURAND, Régis, *art press*, février 1991

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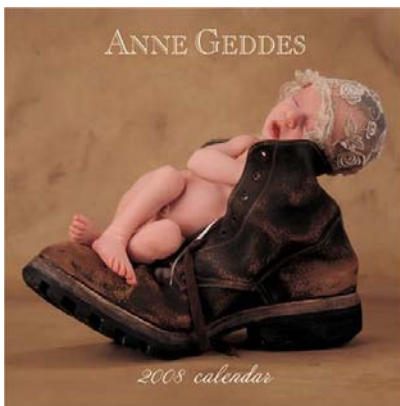
Bébé : de la photographie pseudo-amateur au studio de la/du photographe



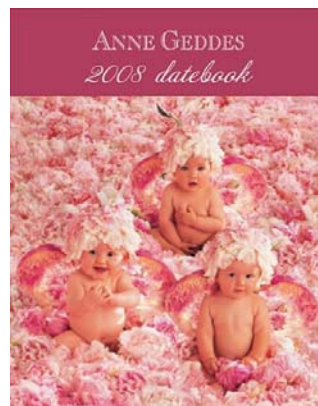
Maya Dickerhof, de la série *Erinnerung* [Souvenir], 2001, 40x50cm



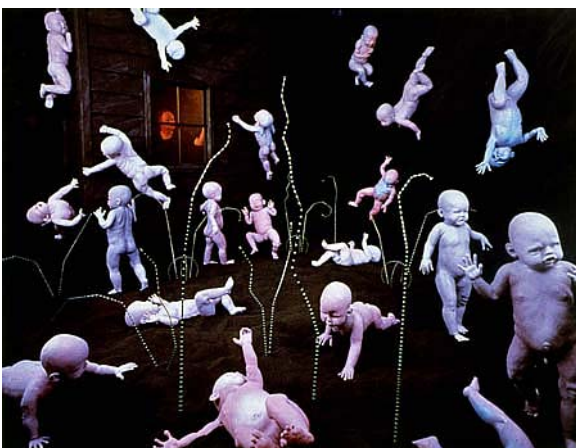
Maya Dickerhof, de la série *Erinnerung* [Souvenir], 2001, 40x50cm



Anne Geddes, *A Labour of Love*, calendrier 2008 et carnet de rendez-vous 2008, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2007



Studio Dumbletons.com, UK, non daté



Sandy Sloglund, *Maybe Babies*, 1983



Adam Fuss, *Innovation*, 1987, photogramme

NAISSANCE DE LA FIGURE HUMAINE

Bébés médiatiques : bébés "people" et bébés politiques



Alison Jackson, *Di, Dodi and Baby*, 1998



Couverture du magazine *Elle*, n°3148, 1^{er} mai 2006, sosies de Brad Pitt et Angelina Jolie, photo Alison Jackson, article de Lauren Bastide, "Les stars ont-elles encore une vie privée ?"



Légende de *Paris Match* : M. Le Tac, Le 18 septembre 1984, les Martin reçoivent les Sarkozy. Cécilia tient Judith, née le 22 août. Sur les genoux de sa mère, Marie-Dominique, Pierre Sarkozy, né le 24 août



Alison Jackson, *Brad et Angelina*, 2006

NAISSANCE DE LA FIGURE HUMAINE

"Elle" n'a plus besoin des *people*

Malvina Viers, vendredi 5 mai 2006

A l'instar des magazines *people*, la couverture du dernier numéro de *Elle* met en scène le couple de stars le plus paparazzité du moment: Brad Pitt et Angelina Jolie. L'actrice tient dans ses bras leur nouveau né, tant attendu et déjà surnommé "Brangelina". ...A cela près qu'il s'agit de sosies, photographiés par l'artiste britannique Alison Jackson « qui aime prendre le public au piège de sa curiosité pour les célébrités », écrit Lauren Bastide dans son article ("Les stars ont-elles encore une vie privée ?", *Elle*, n° 3148, 1er mai 2006).

L'artiste désire questionner la frontière ambiguë entre fantasme et réalité grâce à ses œuvres mettant en scène des sosies de « personnes intouchables », dans des situations privées, afin de créer du « vrai faux volé » : Monica Levinski allumant « un gros cigare à Bill Clinton » ou encore un « portrait de famille où Diana et Dodi Al Fayed posent en tenant dans leurs bras un bébé métis ». Avec de telles photographies, Alison Jackson s'attire les honneurs des critiques d'art britanniques, mais également les réactions acerbes des tabloids anglais.

Dans son article, Lauren Bastide suppose : « En voyant ces photos, vous avez certainement poussé un cri de surprise, avant de les regarder plus attentivement. » Mais le piège est efficace et, à grand renfort d'*editing*, la couverture surjoue l'ambiguïté et la confusion. Le titre de l'article: "Les stars ont-elles encore une vie privée ?", occupe une place très importante, en caractères orange vif. Plus petite, en jaune vif, la légende indique: « Le bébé de Brad et Angelina comme vous ne le verrez jamais ! ». Bien qu'en partie surlignée de jaune, ce n'est qu'en bas de page, et en caractères noirs de petite taille, qu'un commentaire dévoile la supercherie. Alison Jackson entend mettre en scène « non pas les stars, mais la fascination qu'elles exercent sur nous ». La journaliste précise que, vraies ou fausses, les photos de célébrités nous offrent « une part de rêve, ou plutôt l'illusion d'un rêve ». Rêve ou curiosité, l'illusion à sans doute permis, ici, de réaliser un réjouissant chiffre d'affaires...

Les clichés qui présenteront le bébé de Angelina Jolie et Brad Pitt sont estimés à 1 million de dollars. Lauren Bastide justifie la valeur de ces photos par la prolifération de titres qu'engendre la naissance d'un « bébé people ». En connaissance, elle imagine de façon pertinente les éventuels titres qui accompagneront les premiers jours « du divin enfant ». Par exemple : « Nous pourrions nous délecter (...) de la dévotion de Brad qui ira, à moto, acheter couches et petits pots au supermarché du coin. »

Le piège d'Alison Jackson et du magazine *Elle* a-t-il fonctionné ? Le nombre de ventes le révélera sans doute. La presse *people* se porte bien et vend, chaque semaine, 2,5 millions d'exemplaires, rappelle Lauren Bastide qui parle d'« un business qui ne connaît plus de limites ». A quand les magazines *people* sans *people* ?

Source : <http://www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2006/05/05/167-elle>

Voir dossier complet en anglais sur : <http://nymag.com/news/features/16652/>

Quand les mots font défaut

André Gunthert, samedi 29 septembre 2007

Apparue dans le sillage du décès de Jacques Martin, une photographie fait actuellement l'objet de nombreuses reprises sur le web [...] sa publication dans le n°3044 de *Paris Match* du 19 septembre 2007, où elle est très précisément décrite: "Le 18 septembre 1984, les Martin reçoivent les Sarkozy. Cécilia tient Judith, née le 22 août. Sur les genoux de sa mère, Marie-Dominique, Pierre Sarkozy, né le 24 août".

Attribuée dans les colonnes du magazine à un(e) certain(e) "M. Le Tac", celle-ci ressemble à une image d'amateur plus qu'à une photographie d'agence. [...] Les raisons du succès de cette image sont manifestes. A la façon d'un jeu des sept familles, sa composition parfaitement symétrique fait ressortir avec malice le jeu des affinités électives qui a interverti l'agencement des personnages au sein des couples. Selon les règles désormais classiques de l'image parasite, sa viralité indique la perception d'un biais dans le traitement de l'information, que la diffusion en ligne tente de réparer. [...] Dans *Paris-Match*, le passage de l'article correspondant est un chef d'œuvre de diplomatie : " Sous le bonheur apparent couve un drame. Depuis leur mariage, les Martin et les Sarkozy sont devenus de grands amis. Mais, petit à petit, c'est un autre sentiment qui naît entre Nicolas et Cécilia. En 1989, celle-ci n'y tient plus. Elle quitte Jacques." La circulation de la photographie de Neuilly atteste que tout le monde n'a pas forcément trouvé son compte dans cette version Bisounours. [...]

Source : <http://www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2007/09/29/504-quand-les-mots-font-defaut>

"KIDS"

L'enfance de l'art / L'art contemporain et l'enfance :
intimité, ambiguïtés, tabous, censure et répression...



Robert Mapplethorpe, *Rosie*, 1997

The name of Robert Mapplethorpe has become synonymous with censorship of photography. In 1987, eight of his images were the subject of a lawsuit against Dennis Barry and the Cincinnati Museum of Art for exhibiting the retrospective *The Perfect Moment*, which purportedly contained obscene images. In 1989, a hundred members of the U.S. Congress criticized the National Endowment of the Arts for supporting his retrospective organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Also in 1989, *The Perfect Moment* exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D. C. was closed down. Ever since, his work has been at the center of the censorship conflict known as in the U.S. as the Cultural Wars. The Senate passed an amendment banning funding for the South Eastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia for five years, in reaction to their showing Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe respectively. The amendment was later discarded but the NEA budget was cut by \$45,000, the cost of funding the Serrano and Mapplethorpe retrospective.

Mapplethorpe's work has also been censored beyond U.S. borders. This photograph, *Rosie*, was among several censored from an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1996. What is more, according to the *New Statesman*, the Mapplethorpe estate denied the periodical permission to publish the image in their article on the censorship of the exhibition. This 1996 article, published alongside a blank space where the photo would have been placed, states that the subject of the photo, Rosie Bowden, was pleased with the photo and that she intended to hang a copy on the wall of her restaurant in Notting Hill, "It is a very, very sweet picture, taken on a hot day spent around naked", she told the *Independent on Sunday*. "The only unnatural thing about that photo was that I was wearing a dress".

Dena Ellen Cowan, in "Censored / Censurados", *Exit*, n°8, novembre 2002 - janvier 2003, p.132

"KIDS"

Quel est le contrôle des adultes – y compris le/la photographe – sur le corps des enfants ?

Cette section prend pour point de départ le documentaire "KIDS" diffusé le 7 juillet 1998 sur Arte (enfance et adolescence) ainsi que l'ouvrage qui traite notamment de ce sujet : TOWNSEND, Chris, *Vile Bodies. Photography and the Crisis of Looking*, Munich, Prestel, 1998.



Frances Dumbleton (UK), Untitled Child Portrait, 1997

" KIDS "

TOWSEND, Chris, *Vile Bodies. Photography and the Crisis of Looking*, Munich, Prestel, 1998, p.13-20 (cf. images après le texte)

1. (How to have) a perfect childhood

[...] Childhood is an imaginary place colonised exclusively by adults. Children – aware of their different status, but not knowing what that status is – do not live there. They are always somewhere else – gone through the wardrobe or into the woods, into imaginary spaces that we, as adults, cannot enter. To compensate for the child's absence, adults substitute representations : photographs, films, stories. Childhood becomes a screen for our own projections – both present: what and who we imagine "our" child is, what they are doing, thinking, now, and past : what and who we believe we were and cannot properly remember. Media exist that "fix" those projections : still photographs, the flickering, stained and damaged reels from sixties' ciné-cameras, the hyper-real and still false footage of the [fin p.13] nineties' camcorder. We need the image, and we need the fix, the fiction of fact, as a guarantee for our stories.

Perhaps more than half of the photographic film exposed in domestic and commercial use has purported to record images of childhood. Most of those images – whether the fast-fading, uncomposed snapshot taken by mother or father, or the slick, over-lit, idealisation of advertising and highstreet professional photographer, or even, at the margins, the "aesthetic", "artistic" study of the posed infant or adolescent – grossly misrepresent the experience of being a child. Together the parent and child look at photographs : the adult always takes the picture, the child is always the subject. The adult will always say "that's you !" And the child, dumb refusenik, will nod a disingenuous agreement, all the time wondering who the impostor in the pictures is. Perhaps we do not construct our children in our own image, we construct our children in our images of them.

Bewildered, confused by the welter of adults and studio light, still getting the hang of objects in space, a baby is posed in a faux Victorian ewer, beside a pitcher of matching floral pattern. The result is a portrait photograph of a smiling infant, a happy child. Every home should have one ; most probably do. The image is typical of the work of the professional studio photographer, commissioned by doting parents. It is a representation as representative of reality as much as the utensils in which the baby is posed are genuine antiques. The meaning of the photograph is a naïveté as faux as its setting. But this meaning is not the naïveté of the child – that is only what we see expressed in the subject's toothless smile.

The task of the portrait photographer is summed up by **Frances Dumbleton**, a Cambridge-based specialist in photographing children. There is limited scope for initiative or creativity by the photographer – the specification for the image is determined by the parent. 'They want a smile', Dumbleton says. 'They want the child looking at them with big, open, grinning eyes... They want the baby to be saying to them, out of the picture, "I love you ". But who speaks here ? Who says "I love you " ? [illustration page précédente]

The child responds not to the parent, but the photographer. The smile is not one of visual recognition. The baby does not return the parent's adoring gaze but responds to the sounds made by the photographer poised over the camera. "I love you !" is the meaning inserted by the parent, retrospectively, after the image is printed. The photograph becomes a visual guarantee of what the parent already knows, or hopes they know. The child's smile can only be made to mean what the adult wants it to mean by the parent positioning him or herself in the place of the camera and imagining that the child's happy response is to their presence. The image does not contain this meaning of itself, it is only produced through a narrative. Parents must imagine that the child loves them because it smiles. But the image does not initiate this sentiment, it authenticates what already exists. The naïveté of the image resides in the imaginary structure of innocent affection that the adult mistakes for biological dependency.

And the meaning of the image will always lie with the adults who commissioned it. As Frances Dumbleton says of her clients, 'In the future, when they look back, they want to remember a happy childhood. And so the pictures, going on through, three smiles in the first year, and then continuing on smiling, satisfies the need later on to realise that the child has been happy.' But such a meaning might be wholly imaginary – three smiles a year does not equate to a happy childhood. As an instrument of modernity, the camera has helped to invent the modern family, and a particular view of childhood. We pathologise the absence of the familial image, yet the happiest childhood might be one of which no photographs exist – would the child ever notice ? (Though the corresponding

parental experience might be less content.) Before the invention of the camera childhood went largely unrecorded, except in staid commissioned portraits. Were those children who preceded the age of mechanical reproduction of the image less happy with their lives? Was their adulthood troubled by the absence of memory?

The image of the happy smiling child, posed for the camera without ever knowing what it means to pose, does not exist for the child at any time; it lives and dies with the parents. The styles of portrait photography change slowly. I can look at equivalent images to Frances [fin p.14] Dumbleton's from my own childhood – though not from my own experience, because I am so divorced from them – and recognise the desires and fantasies of my parents expressed in the banal tropes and conventional poses passed on from genre painting. I am represented in the forms of my parent's culture, in forms that they acquired from a succession of generations, and a multiplicity of ideas about what a child should look like. My separation from these images does not stem from an unhappy childhood. Put simply, these pictures only purport to be me, they do not express my thoughts, my feelings then – assuming that I could remember what they were. A portrait is not a biography – at least, not an accurate one. I have no experience of these pictures being made, no memory which they can foster or recall. They mean nothing to me, except through an inversion: that they mattered to my parents.

2. "That's me!"

About the images of **Wendy Ewald** and her child collaborators there is often a haziness, a roughness of the image that corresponds to the experience of childhood. Ewald is one of those rare artists who, photographing the child, asks her subject to make a visual exploration of their own imagination. These images are "self-portraits" which the photographer facilitates. But Wendy Ewald does not write herself out of the content of these pictures. Through her inspiration, her encouragement of the child to think about the representation of fears, dreams, fantasies, the work happens. These studies are the products of a rare, and improbable, collaboration between adult and child.

Ewald and her collaborators produce work that is radically different from the expected image of the pre-adult world. There are no "pretty-babies" here. And when the pose is sexualised in mimesis of the adult world, as in Denise Dixon's bikini-clad posturings, the incompletely knowing nature of the parody is clear [illustrations page 52 de ce dossier]. The image suggests that this femininity is a performance that Denise Dixon will grow into, even as she ridicules it, because it is a norm of female identity that precedes her. Perhaps we do not, as Denise Dixon does not, choose the identities and roles that we imagine. Perhaps they are the only ones that we can fantasise.

What is surprising about the work of Wendy Ewald and her children is the penumbra of violence and the grotesque which envelops it. Ewald's kids, in different cultures and countries, imagine themselves and others run over by cars, killed by knives, crushed by logs, abducted by monsters, or subjected to protracted punishment. They fantasise impossible adult acts – unaware of the constraints that will entangle them – or believe in the miraculous. The ways in which children imagine both the world and themselves are potentially more various and more disturbing (to us as adults) than the adult constructions of childhood can allow. As Ewald says, 'Children want to please adults, and I'm sure they know that adults want to have this rosy picture of them. Maybe, when they're doing it for each other, or when they're behind the camera, that changes.'

Given the autonomy which Ewald's students have in making their pictures, and the cultural difference between those students, the all-pervasive atmosphere of malevolence and mishap is perhaps surprising. Is this a dark side to childhood that adults, released from those dreams, forget and never see again? Beyond subject matter, there is also a surprising stylistic continuity to these images. There is a peculiarly "Southern Gothic" temper to much of Ewald's published work that reflects not only on its geographic location – she established her early career in workshops with children of coal-mining communities in the Appalachian mountains – but also makes aesthetic links with the suppressed violence, concealed identities and brooding melancholy of photographers such as **Ralph Eugene Meatyard** [voir p. 56]. It is interesting that both the much older Meatyard and Ewald had the influential figure of Minor White as a teacher at different points in their careers. Though Ewald has commented that 'It doesn't interest me to put a frame around someone's world', perhaps as an adult, no matter how strongly the temptation is resisted, it is impossible not to edit and select certain images, certain fantasies, to produce a particular view of the world. And the narratives that we create, consciously or unconsciously, as adult or as child, are themselves permeated with the influences of others.

There is a sense of childhood as feral innocence about Ewald's work. It is a theme she shares with **Sally Mann**. For Mann the child – in her most noted images it is always *her* children – is a synecdoche for untamed nature. Mann's children grew up where she herself grew up, in [fin p.15] the foothills of the Appalachians in South-Western Virginia. As Mann has commented in one of her books, " ... the land was still wild when I grew up, a feral child running naked with the boxers. The sound of the axe, the tractor, Daddy's Indian call brought us back, panting and scratched from crawling through the tunnels we had made in the mounded honeysuckle. I was an Indian, a cliff-dweller, a green spirit..."² Sally Mann's children indulged in the same fantasies and – to the extent that childhood is always potentially lethal, and because adventure is necessary to growth – embraced the same dangers. Mann was always conscious that she and her children, increasingly complicit in the production of their images, were producing a particular " ... story of what it is to grow up."³ Inevitably, and increasingly as the images of it are viewed retrospectively, that story assumes different meanings.

The American academic Emily Apter has suggested that Mann's photographs constitute a form of "maternal fetishism" – that is, they always already substitute for the children that Mann knows she, as a mother, will lose to the inevitable process of maturity.⁴ By following a psychological reading of these images we might also impute an apotropaic function to them. Mann knows the dangers of the feral fantasy; she has grown up in the wilderness. By representing the scars and marks of accident, both minor and serious, which the child survives, the image protects against the intrusion of real trauma. *Jessie's Cut*, 1985 and *Damaged Child*, 1984 [voir p.57] are markers of history, documents of small (or maybe not-so-small) domestic dramas. But they can also be imagined as elements in a narrative of protection. If the child can be seen to have survived this wounding the photograph becomes a guarantor of its safety.

The marks on the child's body are of great significance in Mann's work. If the child is nature, both innocent and raw, then the mark becomes the cut in the landscape, the sign of progress, of cultivation. To be scarred, by accident, is a contingent element of childhood – we all broke something, cut ourselves. Maturing is, in part, learning about the ways in which you can be damaged by the world. Maturing is also about learning your situation in that world, in both its spatial and social ontologies. Mann repeatedly embeds her children in the community where they are growing up, and where she grew up. Her pair of images *The Two Virginias* #1, 1988 and #2, 1989 [voir p.58] place Mann's daughter with the black servant who cared for her as a child. Ninety-three years lie between them, and a gulf of racial and class experience, but the images emphasise continuity and a sense of paternal obligation peculiar to the structures of rural culture.

In this project – reflected in other images such as *Tobacco Spit*, 1987 and *He is Very Sick*, 1986 [voir p.57] – Mann shares a similar concern to **Emmet Gowin** [voir p.56], the photographer whom, for me, aesthetically and ethically she most resembles. Both photographers are working in small rural communities over long periods of time – they deal with the intimate domestic lives of their neighbours and families. For Mann the child may represent nature, but the wilderness can also be seen to stand for the world outside of man's control. The content of these photographs suggests that whilst the feral fantasy can mark and harm you, the community will always be there to nurture, sustain and restore. "As it was for me, so it will be for you", Mann seems to be telling her children. The question that arises must be whether these reiterations of experience, these perpetuations of relationship within and for the community are recorded for their subjects or as a guarantee of stability for the photographer.

Mann's photographs project naturality – inevitable and immutable conditions of nature, of childhood, of social structure. But they are a narrative, a "story of what it is like to grow up", not documents of indisputable fact. Mann's images are at once spontaneous moments and carefully constructed tableaux. The photograph implies immediacy, as does the context. (Mann's work, no matter how sophisticated, no matter how technically "crafted", remains embedded in the tradition of the family album.) But the technology that Mann employs, a large Victorian plate camera [8x10 inch], requires prolonged exposure times and fixed postures to produce the image. It is not an instrument of spontaneity, carried in the pocket. The presence of the camera at the scene photographed implies a duration as much as the picture itself. The "natural" flow of childhood is interrupted to fix a particular performance, perhaps instigated by the adult, perhaps one in which the child is complicit. [fin p.16]

Wendy Ewald commented that children, in attempting to please adults, performed in certain ways. Is childhood perhaps a set of performances, like staged tableaux, made for adults, in which the body is the focus of attention and expression? And in those stumbling, hesitant, performances, did we, and do our children, learn to act out roles for the rest of our lives? The concept of identity as unconsciously practised performance: of gender especially, but also of class, race and sexuality, is fast becoming a critical truism.⁵ Childhood is cited as the stage on which the reiterations of certain behavioural practices, whose pre-established determinate limits we accept as natural, just as we accept "nature" when Sally Mann claims to show it to us. We endlessly repeat lines and enact gestures from particular scripts with varying degrees of discomfort and enthusiasm until we grow into or out of those roles. And from roles proceed narratives about ourselves and the world around us. James Kincaid comments "... a child's memory is developed not simply from data but from learning a canonical narrative; we know that what we are and have been comes from narrative forms that take on so much authority they start looking like nature. We suspect that events themselves are complicit with the narrative authority that forms and licenses them"⁶

Mann's images show us a group of children in the process of "learning". The "canonical narrative" which the children enact is partly the experience of a childhood that already awaits them: Sally Mann's own adventures in these woods and rivers, with, if not the same people, then the same community. The children swim and run with the knowledge that their mother did the same. Mann has been accused, unfairly, of vicariously reliving her childhood through the images of her children. I doubt that the children needed encouragement; they would have done what seemed to them, and to their parents, "natural". And here nature precedes from culture – it is what you can imagine yourself doing spontaneously, believing that what you are doing is fresh, original and unique.

So Sally Mann's children re-enact scenes that have already been played out in some form, scenes that already represent an adult memory of childhood experience. These "spontaneous" performances not only preceded them as event and memory but preceded them in culture, as representation in other family photos, as a structural model for the behaviour of children in a particular environment. Perhaps part of the adverse reaction that has greeted Mann's images stems from the misrecognition of rural culture by the urban. The modes of behaviour, the allowances are different. In both city and country the possibilities and expectations for action by the children are simultaneously prescribed and proscribed, but what you do and how you do it may be different. As a child the forms of behaviour you follow may feel "natural" and autonomous, but they will be an inevitable consequence of the culture in which you live.

3. Sorted...

"It seems probable that if we were never bewildered there would never be a story to tell about us"⁷

Against a blue-grey sky, blushed with what might be either dusk or dawn, a couple of teenagers kiss. But "kiss" is too gentle, too adult, a word. They "snog": for there is an aggression, a myopia, inconsequential passion to their actions, which **Jouko Lehtola's** photograph captures perfectly [voir illustrations p.61]. The girl – her short and spiky electric blue hair, crudely dyed, picked up by chipped enamel on broken nails, by the plastic strap of a cheap watch – forces her face against the boy's, presses her fingers into his hair. The weight, the impetus of the photograph come from her. But are the signs of gender distinction so obvious in this image? Are this pair girl and boy? Are they a pair? The girl is marked by force and desire, she takes from the passive "boy", his blonde hair and yellow T-shirt the antithesis of her midnight blue. "She" may be signed as female by nail varnish, jewellery and a line of plucked and pendled eye-brow, but the roles of passivity and aggression which are so readily taken as signs of gender identity for women and men in the adult world are switched around. At first glance these two teens are binary opposites: he plays bright day against her night, but their condition is as liminal and indeterminate as the sky behind them. Neither is marked by the material differences of sexuality. The boy's skin is as smooth as the girl's: made-up with the social distinctions of gender identity that she uses, he too could pass as female. Far from representing a pair of different, and permanently differentiated, identities, Lehtola's image illustrates a collision of inchoate sexualities. [fin p.17]

The adult may try to construct childhood as an "age of innocence", but in real time, rather than the adult imagination, adolescence is an age of spots listlessness, of massive and ephemeral excitements and tedious eternities. It is an age when ideas of sexual identity and self are evanescent and fragmentary. You try out make-up in public for the first time, experiment with the

social marks of femininity and masculinity, and with the marks of rebellion – body-piercing, cheap hair dyes, and semi-forbidden, semi-legitimated pleasures – smoking, drugs, alcohol, masturbation and, if you're really lucky, sexual activity with a partner. Perhaps you ape the symbols of adult romance. The gift of a single rose signifies an eternal affection, a love pledged forever that will be burned out in a week or month as the partners slip unconsciously into new selves and each becomes unrecognisable to the other.

As teenagers we imagine that these transformations, this (mis)behaviour goes unnoticed. Perhaps it does. When the experiments go tragically wrong, as they sometimes inevitably do, the first reaction of distraught parents is to proclaim " ... we never knew... ". The virtue of Jouko Lehtola's work is that it represents the yawning stretch between infancy and adulthood without glamorising or romanticising. In a way Lehtola's images fill the spaces in the family photo album, conveying a very different truth from the aimlessly grinning Polaroid lies required by parents and relations. These are the pictures parents never take because they come from an area where adults never go.

In these places it is the body that becomes the site of change, the medium of rebellion and experiment. And the body is the site of anxiety both for the teenager, in a present tense, and adults, if they see representations or consequences. Neither party is quite sure what is happening, or what the changes mean. Lehtola photographs at summer festivals in the Finnish countryside. The impulse, for the teenagers, is much the same as that behind the British rave scene – to get as far away from adults as possible, and off your face for as long as possible – though the fuel in these photographs is alcohol rather than Ecstasy, Speed or Ketamine. And these festivals, almost as a condensation of adolescent experience, begin to mark and scar the body. Lehtola's subjects are damaged : their necks are covered in love-bites, or their faces are bruised and cut, from fighting or, more often, from falling over drunk. The bewildered infant has become the dazed and confused teenager, on the edge of entering the world and yet hardly more prepared for it.

The teenaged body generates sexual meanings. The crisis of looking at such bodies arises from the plurality of interpretations and assumptions. The meanings which the body produces – both in its actuality and its representation – are different things to different people of different ages. For Lehtola's subjects, exploring desire and pleasure far from parental authority, such meanings matter intensely. Sexuality is an integral part of identity – and the decisions taken, roles played out and experiments performed in these years will do much to determine what that identity is. The liminal moment teenager/adult will not determine what one's sexuality is, but it may shape sexual practice for life. There are a limited number of ideal roles on offer, and popular culture as consumed by teenagers makes explicit claims about what they are and the demeaning and denigrated nature of possible alternatives.

Collier Schorr's subjects seem to dwell in an ideal suburban teen world. Everything is apparently " normal ", but Schorr's work with her young German friends and relations uses the apparent nature of normality to subvert the meaning of an ordinary life. There is always more to these images than meets the eye. Schorr asks her audience to read the banality of the photograph and then ask what it is excluding, and why. Her project, as the critic Jan Avgikos has noted, is " ... based on a strategy of defamiliarization predicated on instrumentalizing means of " seeing differently " which, here, is tantamount to " seeing difference ". " ⁸ That difference is sexual.

Like Lehtola's festival-goers, Schorr's kids seem to dwell in an adult-free world. But unlike Lehtola's documentary work, Schorr's images are carefully posed constructs. And to pose, as Craig Owens pointed out in a lucid examination of the relationship between looked at and onlooker, implies a complicity between photographer and subject.⁹ The apparent banality, the " documentary " quality, of Schorr's images conceals both the photographer's intent and the involvement of her young collaborators in that project. What is being explored here is [fin p.18] not the " simple " search for teenage identity, but the relationship between these teens as they discover their sexual selves and both Schorr's adult gaze and her own sexuality.

Like the work of male photographers with female teenagers – such as David Hamilton – Schorr's images eroticise the bodies of her subjects [voir illustrations p.65]. Hamilton positions his adolescent girls as passive objects of masculine desire in a project that exploits sexuality through a spurious aestheticism. As a lesbian, Schorr is concerned with socially marginalised female to female desire. There is an awkward paradox for a woman artist here, aware of the problems implicit in rendering the female, and especially the female adolescent, as erotic object. Why, and how, such poses are produced by adults is the subject of **Amy Adler's** series *What Happened to Amy ?* [voir p.51].

Adler used photographs, taken of her as a young teen, as a basis for pastel drawings, which she subsequently rephotographed. The juvenile Adler poses awkwardly in stereotyped postures, obviously directed by the photographer, with playground props, such as a swing. The images are permeated by a sense of discomfort, an unwillingness to be positioned in ways with which she nonetheless complies. The repeated transference of the image between photograph and drawing suggests a deliberate play between the conditions of the different media as objects of knowledge, a movement between the apparent fact of the photograph and the fictive status of the drawing. Such a play might correspond to an uncertainty of memory. A level of narrative oscillates between what the "original" photographs contain as fact, and what they don't say, because outside the frame; between fact as recorded in photographs and the artist's drawn interpretation of it; between that narrative of recollection and its re-fixing as evidence.

The dilemma of the sexual pose partially explains Collier Schorr's interest in using teenaged boys as subjects. Schorr comments that "... women know how to be watched, know how to be looked at. And I realised that I probably use boys because they don't, and that's more exciting for me." Already, by their mid-teens, girls have acquired a sense that they will become objects of male looks, always be captured by the desiring gaze, and pose in complicity with that cultural norm. But unlike the relationship of mastery implicit in the male photographer – female model dyad, Schorr's subjects explore their nascent sexuality through a wider "familial" association with her. Schorr's principal subject is her niece, Karin, and a community of other teens – male and female – revolves around their relationship. Posing, as Craig Owens suggests, is a mimetic performance. Somewhere there is an other that is being imitated, well or badly. That "other" is, however embodied, an embodiment of existing cultural practices. Here Schorr, as a body in which the girls' identifications may reside, provides an alternative model for their performance of sexuality.

In this context of coming to terms with sexuality, a picture such as *Girlfriends Bathing, Durlangen*, 1995 [voir illustrations p.65] moves beyond a status as documentation of innocent teenage pursuits to record both longing and languor. An atmosphere of reverie and ennui pervades *Brown Bathrobe*, 1995, its subject, without the understanding of "difference" pointed to by Avgikos, otherwise just another bored teen. Elsewhere, the photographer and subjects work together knowingly to produce models of androgyny that challenge conventional feminine roles and appearances. Often Schorr uses military uniforms to incorporate "masculine" appearance in female subjects. The subject who poses for *Self-Portrait as Bait*, 1994, is not Collier Schorr. This is not a portrait of a corporeal self, the subject is a teenaged boy wearing make-up. But the picture is a study of a psychological self, reflected in the ambivalently gendered body that Schorr *might* want to be. As a self-portrait it is posed ironically, for it is a material body that its true subject can only inhabit through identification. Nor is this a body in which either of its ostensible subjects might always feel comfortable. Schorr points to an instability and incoherence between the psychological states of identification and desire and both our own bodies and the bodies of others. And in her concern with gender as a masquerade, made malleable through uniforms and make-up, Schorr suggests that there is a richness of sexual, and of personal, identity otherwise denied by the conventional roles that teenagers begin to perform, and which are culturally reiterated as "normal" behaviour.

Normal behaviour and the possibilities that open up in life are central to the work of **Sarah Jones** and to the three teenagers it features. Jones photographs her subjects in domestic surroundings which suggest that these girls are privileged : the rooms are characterised by [fin p.19] antique and expensive furniture. But Jones uses these environments to reinforce her subjects' awkwardness and tension. Their bodies do not seem to properly fit the space. The world will not accommodate them, they do not (yet) know how to conform to it. Uneasily, the girls haunt the houses and the houses haunt them [voir p.71].

Jones uses this unease, partly engendered by the camera's presence, to show how her subjects learn to pose, how they become aware of the gaze of others, and how they both engage with and recoil from that look. The nascence of self, its continuing mutability, is signified by the frequency with which the girls exchange clothes amongst themselves, as though they were trying on masks. They are enclosed by reflections in mirrors and highly polished furniture, but the self-images they see are never quite themselves. But their awkwardness is a larger symptom of these teenagers' experience. They are daughters of these houses, not sons, and no matter how privileged their backgrounds, Jones suggests, they will always be uncomfortable until they learn to perform their "proper" (subsidiary) role and don the right identity. These elegant and dominating rooms are metaphor for a larger structure, a masculine society in which the role of the woman is to be looked

at. The girls do not belong in what is seemingly their own space because they can never quite be the proprietors of it. They are expected to grow up to become wives, mothers, maybe household-managers, in houses such as these, but they are not imagined as owners. But Jones also suggests, by pointing to the girls' modernity, that they may not so easily conform to social stereotypes. Rather than be wrecked by social space, these girls may, as adults, transform it.

Childhood, and leaving it, is about the move from imaginary to social spaces, and learning how to perform "appropriately" in the latter. What is appropriate is largely determined by others, and unconsciously we concur. Both the exploration of possibilities beyond and the conformance to these norms is expressed through the body. And images of the body in space tell us, and tell others, about its status in respect of those norms. We dress badly ; we dye our hair ; we pierce our skins with, and for, experience ; we consort sexually with others – of the wrong and right sort. Eventually we learn to read the script properly and "grow up". Growing up can be seen, to extend a previously sexually specific metaphor, as "coming out of the closet". We declare ourselves, or are declared, adult because of our social performance.

The photograph is – or rather, should be – the document that verifies this declaration and the progress towards it. But no matter how "realistic" its content, the image continually slides towards fiction. Because it can only work retrospectively, can tell us what has been, the photograph acts as a reservoir of memory. It becomes an object that preserves what has been lost, whether that is innocence, nature, or naïveté. Such an object has the structure of a fetish : we use it to simultaneously deny and accept the disappearance of what we know to be gone. The photograph moves from being a document of what was fact to become an object of present consolation. But in that move the meaning of the picture changes even though its content remains constant. We can no longer be sure of what the image meant, even if we know what we, or our children, looked like at a given moment. Instead, like a work of fiction, the image demands interpretation, to know how we feel about it *now*. Unable to communicate for itself, the photograph requires its viewers to tell it what it might contain, and we are panicked by our multitude of answers.

Notes

1 1st Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 13, v. 11

2 Mann, S. *Immediate Family* (London, 1992) n.p.

3 Ibid.

4 Apter, E. 'Maternal Fetishism' Unpublished paper given at University of Sussex conference, June 1995.

5 The most significant critical figure in discussing the structuring of identity through performance is the American theorist Judith Butler ; see in particular her *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter : On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London, 1993)

6 Kincaid, J. 'Producing Erotic Children' in Fuss, D. (ed.) *Human, All Too Human* (London, 1996) pp. 217-18

7 James, H. Preface to *The Princess Casamassima* (Edn. 1909) p. 37

8 Avgikos, J. 'Collier Schorr' *ArtForum* XXXV, No. 9, May 1997, p. 110

9 Owens, C. 'Posing' in *Beyond Recognition : Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley, 1992) pp. 210-12

[fin p.20]



Amy Adler, *What Happened to Amy ?*, 1996, dessin sur photographie

Wendy Ewald (Detroit, Michigan, 1951 ; vit à Red Hook, NY) : vrais rêves



Reaching for the Red Star Sky –
Denise Dixon, Campbell's Branch,
Kentucky, 1977



*I dreamed I killed my best friend,
Ricky Dixon* – Allen Shepherd,
Campbell's Branch, Kentucky, 1978



*I dreamed that my sister and the pig
were dead on the ground* – Carlos
Villaneuva, Raquira, Colombia, 1983



I dreamed a pile of firewood fell on top of my friend Luis
– Sebastián Gómez Hernandez, Chamula, Mexico, 1991



Sebastian was punished for eight hours
– Dominga González, Chamula, Mexico, 1991



Where's My Head ? – Andrew Legge,
Durham, North Carolina, 1997



My brother hit by a car – Miriam Lee,
Durham, North Carolina, 1997

Ci-contre :
Regula Franz, Wendy Ewald with
Carver Elementary School students, 2003



Wendy Ewald : Children and Photography

For over twenty-five years, Wendy Ewald has been putting cameras into the hands of children. As an artist and teacher, she has developed a unique approach to combining photography, education, and young people. This approach came to her when she was working in a school in Letcher County, Kentucky. One day, trying to plan her photography class, she found herself staring out the window of her workspace and watching her neighbor's children play. The game they were playing provided a very vivid image. She wondered whether it might be possible to "ask [her] students to create photographs from their daydreams and fantasies and night dreams."

She went to her class and got them to start talking about their dreams and imaginings. Could they put them into words? How would they describe them? How would they act them out so that a picture could be taken? The students had plenty of ideas for composing pictures-some of those fantasies were scary, some were playful. To become photographers, the students only needed to be encouraged to trust their own ideas and to be shown how to look at them from the outside, with the eye of the camera. Ms. Ewald's experience in Kentucky was the beginning of a long journey that has taken her around the world to introduce children to photography and photography to children. She has traveled to Colombia, South Africa, Mexico, and the Netherlands, as well as working in many places within the United States.

Everywhere children are the same. Everywhere children are different. Although everyone has dreams and fantasies, what people dream and how they experience those images varies from place to place. Ms. Ewald recalls that in some areas, children had difficulty remembering their dreams. Many of these children had to work. There was little time to play. The dreams of other children were very different from those of kids in the United States. In places like South Africa, where until recently many children witnessed horrible acts of violence, fantasies of young people were often close to nightmares. Other students-like those in Chamula, Mexico-experienced dreams as just as important as the thoughts they had while awake. Ms. Ewald has also helped students in the Netherlands to express what it meant to live in their country. Being Dutch, like being an American, was related to their families, the places they lived, and their dreams.

To talk about one's fantasies and dreams and to take pictures of them leads at some point to the question "who am I?" That question is important for everyone, and people in different parts of the world answer it differently. Ms. Ewald has encouraged African-American and European-American students in Durham, North Carolina to ask that question in relation to what it means to be "black" or "white". Students were asked to write a self-portrait. Then they were asked to write another self-portrait imagining that they were members of the other race. African-American students imagined that they were "white". European-American students imagined that they were "black". After taking pictures of themselves, the students then wrote on and changed the photographs to reflect what they had written about their "black" and "white" selves. As Ms. Ewald says, "For the students the idea of transforming the photographs and their own physical features was exciting and challenging." The project provoked a lot of discussion about what it meant to be African-American and European-American in the United States.

Wendy Ewald has helped children all over the world picture themselves. Children's photographs of their own dreams and fantasies have helped us see a little more clearly who we imagine ourselves to be.

Source (non signé) : <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Ewald/kids&photo.html>

Teaching children to express themselves through photographic images.

Portrait of a Photographer : Wendy Ewald, *PBS*, March 7, 2002

An interview with photographer Wendy Ewald, who works with children to teach them the value of photography as a vehicle for emotional expression, and for gaining heightened awareness of the world.

JEFFREY BROWN: Photographs by children the world over, of their lives, of their families, of their sometimes-painful dreams. They're from a 30-year project in art and education by Wendy Ewald. The exhibition, called "Secret Games," was organized by the Addison Gallery of American Art in Massachusetts, and is now at Washington's Corcoran Gallery. A mix of her own photos and those of children she's taught, Ewald calls it "Collaborative Works With Children," an idea that began when she herself was just 18, starting out as a photographer.

WENDY EWALD, Photographer/Educator: I never liked the idea of having a camera in between me and the subject or me and the place that I was in. And so I would invite people to look through my camera, and I was... being a shy girl, it made me much more comfortable to share the camera.

JEFFREY BROWN: But if you're going to be a photographer, in a sense you have to intrude on people, don't you?

WENDY EWALD: You do. You can't avoid that. I guess I was interested in doing it to the least degree that I could and also letting their vision inform my vision and really to combine the two into something that was a little closer to how they saw the world.

Educating through art

JEFFREY BROWN: For seven years beginning in 1975, Ewald lived in Kentucky and worked with children, ages six to 14. She built a primitive darkroom, taught them the mechanics of photography, and set them loose.

LITTLE BOY: I took a picture of just about everything. Well, everything really. Dogs, cats, people.

JEFFREY BROWN: In a documentary, children talked about their photographs.

LITTLE GIRL: I got nine chickens. I eat the store's chickens, not my chickens. I don't like to eat my own chickens.

JEFFREY BROWN: Denise Dixon shot self-portraits in disguises and gave them titles. "I Am the Girl with the Snake Around her Neck;" "Self-Portrait Reaching for the Red Star Sky."

WENDY EWALD: Working with the children I was working with in Kentucky was like having accomplices in a secret game, that we were both looking at things very hard, and photographing things, which the adults didn't really understand was going on.

JEFFREY BROWN: To her admirers, Ewald presents a creative answer to a question always lurking in documentary work: How honest a vision can an outsider present of his or her subjects? Philip Brookman is curator of photography at the Corcoran.

PHILIP BROOKMAN, Corcoran Gallery of Art: Wendy Ewald created this process that allows children to show us how it is that they live, what their world is like. And that's something that I think empowers them in a very significant way. In a sense the brilliance of this project is that it allows us as outsiders a kind of inside view that we wouldn't get if we just came in as kind of tourists traveling through or journalists traveling through.

JEFFREY BROWN: And Ewald's work has gained recognition, including grants for new projects and a MacArthur "Genius" Award. She worked outside the U.S. beginning in the '80s, first in the Colombian Andes, later with Mayan children in Chiapas, Mexico.

Working with children

JEFFREY BROWN: So tell me about this photograph. "The Devil is Spying on the Girls" is the caption.

WENDY EWALD: It's actually my favorite picture probably of all that the children have taken, and that's by Sebastian Gomez Hernandez, who is about ten years old, and it's a picture of a dream that he had. And he actually made this mask on top here out of the back of a cracker box because he didn't have any cardboard or paper to make things with. And then he got his little brother to get up there in that tree and put that mask on.

JEFFREY BROWN: It's kind of funny, "the devil spying on the girls," and this is a little boy, right?

WENDY EWALD: Right, right.

JEFFREY BROWN: No doubt who spies on girls. Ewald's assignment to take a photo of a dream was easy for the Mexican children.

WENDY EWALD: In Mayan religion, dreams are as important and as real as waking reality. So I only had to mention the word fantasias and the next day they arrived with all these things, props they had made and began making these wonderful, playful, dramatic pictures.

JEFFREY BROWN: Many of the Mexican photos, however, are quite violent-- something Ewald found the world over.

WENDY EWALD: It's a stage of childhood, and I have a six-year-old son now, you know, who also loves to make violent images.

JEFFREY BROWN: In a village in India, a new experience, working with children who'd never held a camera. To show them how it works, she had them pose for her.

WENDY EWALD: When I started looking at the photographs, I realized the pictures really had a power to them because there is a gaze that's very intense in each one of the pictures, as if they're being looked at by a camera for the first time or they're looking back at the camera for the first time.

JEFFREY BROWN: The children wrote biographical sketches in words that are wrenching. "I dream about my brothers that died, so at night I cover myself with the blanket to keep away the dreams." "One boy from the village came to look at me for marriage. I cried when the girls told me he'd come. My life will be nothing after I marry." Soon, the children were taking their own photos, of the real and the dream world.

Snapshots of dreams and violence

JEFFREY BROWN: You ask children to photograph their dreams. Why dreams?

WENDY EWALD: I began thinking how amazingly children can get involved so deeply in their fantasy play, and I was wondering how I could access that visually. So I thought that they could get the sense that they can actually create an image, that photography is not just finding images, but that they could control and create one.

JEFFREY BROWN: In South Africa in 1992, Ewald says, dreaming and fantasy life took a back seat to harsh reality. The violence in the photos, though posed, was the stuff of everyday life. Ewald worked separately with groups of black and Afrikaner children. One assignment was to photograph things they did not like in their community. Nine-year-old Afrikaner Nicholine Keyler took this out-of-focus photo.

WENDY EWALD: This man worked in a factory in the community around the corner, and Nicholine has asked him to pose for her. And he's obviously very proud, standing up straight, holding his shopping bag to be photographed by this little white girl, never understanding what her intentions were.

JEFFREY BROWN: When Ewald asked the girl why the picture was out of focus, she said her mother told her that's the way black people turn out in photographs.

JEFFREY BROWN: Tell me about this one. I loved this image-- "Granny Having a Smoke."

WENDY EWALD: Yeah, this is by Kate Etuli, and she's in her corrugated iron house, and after a hard day, and I love the cigarette ash just about to...

JEFFREY BROWN: Just about to drop.

WENDY EWALD: About to fall. But it's just such a beautiful picture, beautifully composed, and the textures of her face and the shack are so well portrayed.

JEFFREY BROWN: Back in this country, Ewald has taken her methods directly into the classroom, working with teachers and children in the Durham, North Carolina, Public Schools.

A work in progress

WENDY EWALD: The only thing that should move is this finger right here. You have to make a decision about what you want in your picture to be the most important thing, and which you want to be in focus. You want to be the most important thing?

JEFFREY BROWN: Her ongoing project is called "Literacy Through Photography," using the camera to help children learn to write. "The Best Part of Me," asked children to photograph and write on a favorite part of their own body. Fifth-grader Tim McKay begins a verse: "Chest, chest you're the best. I like to rest on you, oh yes." The "Alphabet Project" helped students for whom English is a second language and "Black Self/White Self" asked children to imagine themselves as members of a different race, in words and then in altered photographs.

WENDY EWALD: I am an artist and I need to see pictures that show me what the world is like. And the way to get those pictures is by constructing a situation in which... in which I teach, and the product of that teaching are the images.

JEFFREY BROWN: The exhibition moves on to Providence, and then Kansas City, later in the year.

Source : http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june02/ewald_3-7.html

Voir aussi une interview de l'artiste du 2 avril 1998 sur : <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Ewald/ewald-con0.html>

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925, Normal, Illinois ; 1972)



R. E. Meatyard, sans titre, 1960, 15x15cm



R. E. Meatyard, sans titre, 1962, 17x17cm



R. E. Meatyard, *Romance Ambrose Bierce*, n°3, 1964, 17x17cm



R. E. Meatyard, *Chapter Pain*, n°4, vers 1965, 19x19cm

Emmet Gowin (Danville, Virginia, 1941 ; vit en Pennsylvanie)



Emmet Gowin, *Dwayne*, Danville, Virginia, 1969



Emmet Gowin, *Barry & Dwayne*, Danville, Virginia, 1970

Sally Mann (Lexington, Virginia, 1951 ; vit à Lexington), *Immediate Family*, 1990



Sally Mann, *Damaged Child*, 1984 [Jessie]



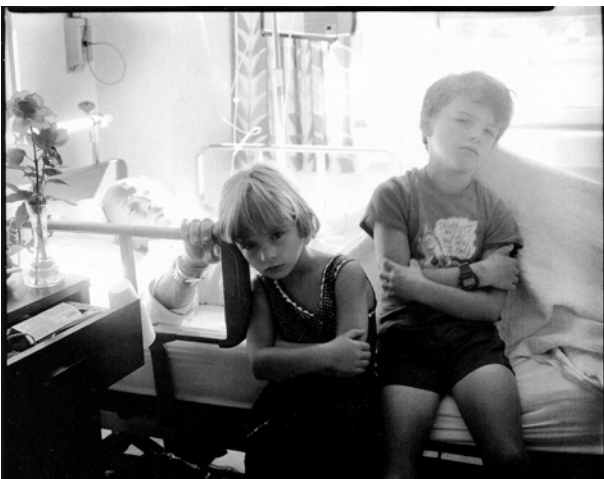
Sally Mann, *Jessie Bites*, 1985



Sally Mann, *Jessie's cut*, 1985



Sally Mann, *Popsicle Drops*, 1985 [Emmet]



Sally Mann, *He is Very Sick*, 1986 [Jessie et Emmet]



Sally Mann, *Tobacco Spit*, 1987 [Virginia]

NB : ici les images varient de teinte car elles sont tirées de livres différents ; les tirages sont virés dans des teintes chaudes

Sally Mann, *Immediate Family*, 1990



Sally Mann, *Naptime*, 1989 [Virginia]



Sally Mann, *Emmet Jessie and Virginia*, 1989



Sally Mann, *The Two Virginias*, n°1, 1988



Sally Mann, *Fallen Child*, 1989 [Virginia]



Sally Mann, *The Two Virginias*, n°2, 1989



Sally Mann, *Dirty Jessie*, 1985

Sally Mann, *Immediate Family*, 1990



Sally Mann, *Jessie at 5*, 1987



Sally Mann, *Hayhook*, 1989



Sally Mann, *The Terrible Picture*, 1989 [Virginia]



Sally Mann, *Candy Cigarette*, 1989 [Jessie]



Sally Mann, *Rodney Plogger at 6:01*, 1989 [Virginia]



Sally Mann, *Winter Squash*, 1988 [Virginia]

Sally Mann, *Immediate Family*, 1990

"I do consider myself a Southern photographer. I believe [my] work has that ineffable Southern quality, whatever it is. At the very least there's a kind of a humidity to the photographs that is Southern. And the way they look, their physical presence, has a Southern feel to it. Oh, the obsession with place, with family, with both the personal and the social past; the susceptibility to myth; the love of this light, which is all our own; and the readiness to experiment with dosages of romance that would be fatal to most late-20th-century artists. In that sense, Southern artists are like certain of our mountain religious folk, who, in their devotions, subject themselves to snake bites that would kill or disable anyone else. What snake venom is to them, romanticism is to the Southern artist: a terrible risk, and a ticket to transcendence."



Mike Johnston,
Sally Mann, non daté

Sally Mann, in "Southern Obsessions, Southern Exposure", *The Chronicle of High Education*, 21.05.1999

Source : <http://chronicle.com/subscribe/login?url=/weekly/v45/i37/37b07201.htm>

Sally Mann at Houk Friedman - New York, New York

Anastasia Aukeman, *Art in America*, February, 1993

We know that time cannot be held, but Sally Mann's intimate photographs of her son and two daughters in the achingly familiar poses of childhood make us wish that we could suspend it for a moment. The 26 photos in this show, titled "Immediate Family," were selected from a larger and ongoing body of work of the same title. In this series Mann makes the private lives of her growing children the focus of her camera's intense gaze.

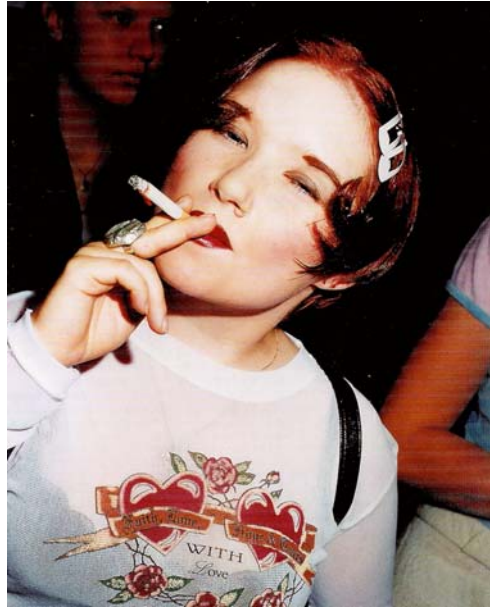
These photographs are more sumptuous and enticing than those in *At Twelve*, the book that presented Mann's images of adolescent girls. In part this is because she has developed a technical style that is more adept. Since 1984, the year she began the "Immediate Family" project, Mann has been working with an 8-by-10-inch view camera that is 100 years old. The resulting images are uncropped, with rich dark tones and brilliant highlights that often seem to emanate from the very skin of her children. For some shots she attaches the lens of a 4-by-5-inch view camera, which causes the 8-by-10-inch photograph to disappear into soft-focus around the edges and gives the work a sentimental, turn-of-the-century aura. Mann labors extensively over all her photos, first making mental sketches of each shot, then writing notes, then discarding many preliminary shots; finally she spends a great deal of time on the prints, burning and dodging in the darkroom to achieve the right effect. Very little goes on in her work that is unpremeditated.

Mann's staged vignettes frequently call to mind the allegorical narratives of Julia Margaret Cameron. *Fallen Child* (1989) is a soft-focus, theatrical photograph of Mann's second daughter, Virginia, lying naked in the grass with her eyes closed and her curls fanned out around her head. She looks like an angel dropped rudely from heaven, and we are reminded of the petulant sprite-child of Cameron's *Venus Chiding Cupid*. *Kiss Goodnight* (1988) depicts the two sisters as innocent lovers locked in a kiss and is clearly derived from Cameron's *The Double Star*. Both women create very sensual, often overtly sexual images of children.

While Mann's images of her daughters speak volumes about her bond with them, her treatment of her son, Emmett, is often self-conscious. Perhaps Mann feels more attuned to a young girl's childhood or, more simply, perhaps Emmett has less patience with posing than his sisters. Her few depictions of men, meanwhile, contain a deliberately menacing subtext, and she often confronts the darker aspects of childhood in a way some viewers find disturbing. Rodney Plogger at 6:01 (1989), for example, shows Virginia from her chin down, naked, held between a man's stocky legs. In a perfect world this would be a casual, affectionate pose, but our increasing awareness of child abuse braces us for the worst - a predatory man "touching" an innocent child. In this and other photographs, such as *Damaged Child* (1984), *Emmett's Bloody Nose* (1985) or *The Terrible Picture* (1989) Mann elicits every parent's fear of sexual or physical abuse for his or her child, but with the same frustrating ambiguity one encounters in everyday life. Is the boy's nose bloody because he fell off his bike, or because he was struck? Mann offers no easy answers. What she gives us instead is much better: an honest coming to grips with the complexities of childhood, all the while celebrating a world in constant flux.

Source au 07 10 15 : http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_n2_v81/ai_13395615

Jouko Lehtola (Helsinki, Finlande, 1963 ; vit à Helsinki), *Young Heroes*, 1995-1997 : l'adolescence



Toutes les images de cette page : Jouko Lehtola, sans titre, série *Young Heroes*, 1997

Jouko Lehtola, *Young Heroes*, 1995-1997

Nouvelles mythologies au « pays des héros » / Jouko Lehtola's Finlandia

Natalia Grigorieva

Jouko Lehtola est un photographe finlandais de 41 ans. Le succès en 1996 de la série « Young Heroes », images de ses jeunes compatriotes, l'a hissé au rang de représentant de la nouvelle photographie nordique. Son livre, publié aux éditions POC, réinvente des mythes et des légendes où s'ébattent de jeunes anti-héros dans un climat de violence et de désespoir.

Il était une fois, le Kalevala. Poème de plus de vingt mille vers, composé à partir de chants populaires finlandais, il est un monument de la littérature nationale. Signifiant " pays des héros ", le Kalevala relate les aventures de personnages fabuleux, animés de nobles passions, qui se seraient déroulées sur les terres finlandaises à l'aube des civilisations. Aujourd'hui, l'anniversaire de la première publication de cette épopée homérique où il est question de gloire, de magie et de prospérité, ne manque pas d'être célébré par les héritiers de Wäinämöinen, le barde, Ilmarinen, le forgeron ou Lemminkäinen, l'irrésistible séducteur. Mais les temps ont bien changé. La Finlande n'est plus ce qu'étaient les terres des ancêtres fantastiques. Elle est minée par les bouleversements qu'elle a connus dans les années 90 : l'implosion de l'Union Soviétique en 1991, l'adhésion à l'Union Européenne en 1995 ou encore un exode rural sans précédent. Dans ces conditions, la Finlande cumule les palmarès peu glorieux. Le pouvoir d'achat de ses habitants fut le plus bas de la Communauté jusqu'au récent élargissement. Les statistiques criminelles, proportionnellement au nombre d'habitants, sont les plus élevées d'Europe.

Mythologie urbaine

C'est dans ce climat d'incertitude, d'insécurité et de misère croissantes que naissent les protagonistes de Jouko Lehtola. Vivant et travaillant à Helsinki, le photographe s'embourbe dans le quotidien de sa ville natale, dans la nouvelle mythologie urbaine, en entraînant le spectateur avec lui. Il part à la rencontre de dieux et de déesses au teint cadavérique, pris dans le feu de son flash comme des lièvres dans les phares d'une voiture. Les visages sont hagards : visiblement, ils ne comprennent pas comment et pourquoi ils se sont retrouvés parmi les mortels mal lotis. Ils tentent de s'oublier, perdent leur éclat initial, leurs yeux, embrumés par les vapeurs d'alcool, ne sont plus que des fenêtres sur leur vacuité intérieure.

Couteaux et coupe-papier

Tous les ingrédients d'une nouvelle religion sont là : les lieux de culte, les rites et les objets sacrés. La vie terrestre des dieux déchu est axée autour d'endroits bien définis. Les discothèques glauques, les festivals d'été, ainsi que les bois et les cellules de la prison de détention préventive de Pasila. On y expie ses fautes en projetant ses tourments intérieurs sur les murs. Il n'y reste que des photographies érotiques et des gribouillages, des hiéroglyphes dont seuls les auteurs connaissent le sens. Les tons gris et bleu sale dominant l'univers accentuent le vide de l'existence, la saleté et l'ennui des anti-héros se moquant bien de leurs glorieux ancêtres qui font la fierté nationale. Ils ont leurs propres armes qui n'ont plus rien de magique, leurs propres démêlés qui n'ont plus aucun rapport avec l'honneur. Ils affectionnent les couteaux de cuisine ou les coupe-papier qu'ils n'hésitent pas à employer lors des disputes et des règlements de comptes familiaux.

Echec programmé

Et puis, les jeunes héros ont des cultes étranges durant lesquels ils se barbouillent la figure, se saoulent à la vodka et partent s'ébrouer dans les bois. Certains s'abandonnent dans de brutaux corps à corps, d'autres meurent d'une overdose. Parfois, leur véritable nature transparaît malgré le maquillage baveux et l'on croit reconnaître un lutin, une couronne de fleurs dans les cheveux, une princesse avec diadème et lèvres rouge vermeille ou encore un esprit de la forêt, nonchalamment appuyé contre un arbre. De leur bref passage sur terre, il restera des reliques : des carrosseries cabossées. Les dramatiques aventures relatées par Jouko Lehtola se déroulent pourtant à l'ombre d'un décor paradisiaque : jolies maisons modèles aspirant à accueillir des familles modèles, des paysages à la beauté immuable. Mais les dieux et les déesses modernes ne voient plus les couchers de soleil, les ciels orageux et les îles de l'archipel. Ils avancent, insouciant, vers l'échec programmé de leur vie.

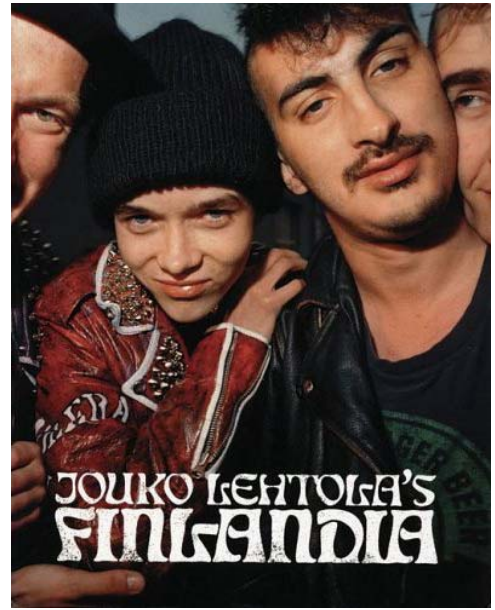
Source : <http://www.2004.photographie.com/?prdid=116779>

Voir aussi : <http://www.anhava.com/?http://www.anhava.com/exhibitions/lehtola/index.html>

Jouko Lehtola, *Young Heroes*, 1995-1997



Jouko Lehtola, sans titre, *Young Heroes*, 1995



Jouko Lehtola, *Finlandia*, livre, éd. POC, 2004

Une ville infernale

Mika Hannula, in LEHTOLA, Jouko, *Finlandia*, POC Piece of Cake éd., 2004, extraits

Helsinki est une ville curieuse, à la fois immense et minuscule. Capitale de l'État-nation, elle est son centre. Mais, dans une perspective plus large, ce centre est situé à la lisière du monde. De cette périphérie relative, elle observe le monde.

Helsinki a connu des changements radicaux durant ces deux dernières décennies : disparition du pouvoir en Union soviétique, adhésion de la Finlande au nouveau système politico-économique de l'Union Européenne, et à l'euro. Outre ces modifications, Helsinki a été témoin d'une des plus grandes migrations internes de l'histoire du pays. Faute de services et de débouchés dans leurs régions, des populations entières se sont déplacées des provinces vers les villes du Sud dans les années 90.

En y regardant de plus près, ceci met immédiatement en relation le monde de Jouko Lehtola. Il vit et travaille à Helsinki. Il respire son air, s'identifie à la capitale et survit grâce à elle. Dans son œuvre culminent les grands changements cruciaux que cette cité et le pays tout entier a éprouvés. Pour Lehtola, Helsinki est beaucoup plus qu'une simple ville. C'est l'emblème de tout le pays qui ne représente pas seulement le dialogue entre la capitale et la province (que, d'ailleurs, beaucoup de Finlandais regrettent toujours), mais aussi le lien vital qui rattache le passé, le présent et le futur. Depuis près de vingt ans, Lehtola a défini Helsinki en tant que milieu urbain s'éloignant progressivement de l'illusion de la sécurité, accordé par l'uniformité, pour aller vers la pluralité d'une société civile. Les forces du changement captées dans les photos de Lehtola sont à la fois attirantes et repoussantes ; elles représentent l'incertitude et la surprise comme composantes essentielles de sa pensée.

Dans les photographies de Lehtola, les thèmes ne sont guère surprenants. Un large éventail de phénomènes liés à l'environnement et à la vie urbaine en constituent le fil conducteur : la musique, les clubs, les bars, plusieurs cultures éphémères ou tribus spécifiques... Tout a pourtant commencé au beau milieu de la forêt, en été, durant les festivals de rock. Des portraits très crus d'adolescents assoiffés de cultures urbaines, et ceci adossé à la colonne vertébrale de la culture finlandaise : des paysages lacustres communs, des bouleaux et des bouteilles de Vodka Koskenkorva vidées derrière les pistes de danse en plein air.

A Helsinki, Lehtola collectionne les signes d'une époque en mutation. L'essentiel, cependant, c'est que le photographe ne se contente pas simplement de photographier, d'être un observateur distant et étranger. Il est au cœur de l'action, pour la bonne raison que cela lui semble intuitivement juste. Il est lié affectivement à ces événements. Pour Lehtola, prendre des photos n'est pas une activité neutre ou objective. Il trace sa voie tout en participant aux ébats et aux débats ; il s'engage, enrage parfois, mais garde toujours le contact avec son entourage. Il fait corps avec ce qu'il photographie, les conflits, les chocs et, de la même manière, ces sujets banals, parfois acides, font partie de lui-même.

Il est clair que Lehtola n'est pas un paparazzo hautain ou superficiel. Dans ses photos, on trouve peu de clinquant, mais du sang et de la sueur, et même des larmes. Ses sujets sont exacerbés avec l'usage d'un flash direct, une stratégie indéniablement efficace. [...]

Tous ces thèmes forment un ensemble dont la capitale finlandaise serait le cadre commun, reflet de tout le pays. Bien que tous les événements de la ville ne soient pas nécessairement des tumultes frénétiques, les photos révèlent des détails qui passent souvent inaperçus. L'essentiel, c'est que Lehtola ne moralise pas, il ne propose pas de réponses toutes prêtes. Accuser l'œuvre de Lehtola de n'être qu'une version édulcorée de voyeurisme social serait restrictif et lui ôterait sa valeur intrinsèque. Cela signifierait que nous reniions la réalité rugueuse qui nous entoure, car cette réalité-là nous interpelle.

Helsinki est un endroit étrange et curieux. [...]

Mais pour en avoir une image plus précise, il nous faut un point de comparaison, ce que le système de référence offert par l'Union Européenne exige. Les résultats sont impressionnants. En Finlande, et plus particulièrement à Helsinki, le pouvoir d'achat des habitants demeura le plus faible de la Communauté jusqu'à son récent élargissement. En même temps, le taux d'imposition reste parmi les plus élevés du continent, aussi bien pour les salariés que pour leurs employeurs. Parallèlement, les statistiques criminelles portent la Finlande (proportionnellement à sa population) au premier rang européen. Cela paraît d'autant plus triste que l'on constate que 80 % des meurtres ont été commis par des personnes sans emploi vivant en marge de la société.

Mais Helsinki est aussi un lieu en plein bouleversement, en reconstruction. La ville se trouve au centre d'enjeux fondamentaux quant à l'identité du pays : comment financer l'Etat-providence ? Comment construire un lien entre les citoyens et la société ? Comment maintenir l'atmosphère de confiance et le sentiment d'appartenance à la société ? En dernier ressort, il s'agit de savoir comment évaluer les risques existants et comment vivre avec l'incertitude, la peur et l'indifférence croissantes. Il se peut que la bataille soit déjà perdue. Ce qui est cependant sûr, c'est qu'il se passe quelque chose, et il n'y aura pas de retour en arrière possible. Il reste aux Finlandais à trouver eux-mêmes les solutions pour répondre à ces défis afin de survivre aux nouvelles exigences contemporaines.

Sous un autre angle, Helsinki est au commencement d'un nouveau millénaire, un endroit où quelque chose est en voie de disparition. Et comme dans une logique naturelle, lorsque quelque chose disparaît, une autre vient remplir le vide qu'elle a laissé. Douloureux. Quel genre de ville deviendra Helsinki ? Dans les remous entre le présent et le futur, les photos de Jouko Lehtola s'affirment encore davantage. Il propose trois séries de photos qui décrivent finement et avec exactitude le processus de la disparition et de l'apparition : trois séries de situations et de contextes où quelque chose a eu lieu. Ce qui les rend particulières, c'est que ces espaces sont des " non-lieux " où, selon toute probabilité, rien ne devrait se passer. Ce sont des détails au regard d'une grande ville, apparemment ennuyeux et sans intérêt : des points de vue microscopiques sur des sujets sans limites ni restrictions.

Prenons deux séries et deux façons de déterminer le monde où nous vivons : la première représente des endroits à Helsinki où des personnes sont mortes d'une overdose. La deuxième montre des paysages de l'archipel photographié près du centre-ville... Du néant, toute la gamme du néant, depuis l'espoir jusqu'au désespoir ! Deux versions de la réalité sont offertes, toutes les deux omniprésentes et bien contemporaines. Ces réalités sont invisibles pour les Finlandais, elles sont encore rarement reconnues et acceptées.

La structure rugueuse de notre quotidien est à nouveau l'objet d'une investigation photographique. Dans cette interaction, l'objet surpasse l'ordinaire, on pourrait le décrire comme une «hyper-normalité». Nous pouvons visiter la «terre promise» des supermarchés de l'habitat. Nous voyons des maisons modèles où l'on mène une vie modèle. Des maisons confortables, propres et agréables avec des familles heureuses, insouciantes : une réalité idéale, sans trace. De ce rêve reste une collection de décors bleu et blanc.

Au croisement de ces perspectives, nous regardons un joli pays aux facettes effrayantes. Si nous avons le courage de nous arrêter devant les photos de Lehtola, elles ne nous laissent plus aucune porte de sortie. Il faut que nous nous concentrons, il faut que nous laissions une chance à ces histoires. Il faut réserver assez de temps et d'énergie pour trouver le rythme de ces photos, l'alternance du mouvement continu d'apparition et de disparition. Il faut pouvoir donner et recevoir pour regarder et être exposé.

Nous voyons une île flottant dans le brouillard, ou les toilettes vides d'une gare éclairées par un néon bleu trop brillant, ou encore la «jolie maison de rêve» dans laquelle un accident risque d'arriver. Dans ces images figées, il s'est déjà passé, il se passe maintenant, et il va se passer encore quelque chose que nous ne pouvons pas voir, mais qui est déjà là. Cette ville, nommée Helsinki, constitue un espace vital horriblement adorable et malpropre : une ville infernale.

Collier Schorr (New York City, USA, 1963 ; vit à Brooklyn, NY) : la confusion des genres (adolescence)



Collier Schorr, *Too Sentimental Education*, 1994



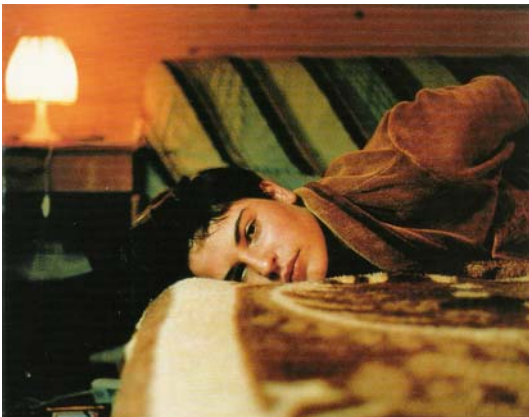
Collier Schorr, *SelfPortrait as Bait*, 1994



Collier Schorr, *Girlfriends Bathing*, Durlangen, 1995



Collier Schorr, *In the Garden (torso)*, 1996



Collier Schorr, *Brown Bathrobe*, 1995



Collier Schorr, *The Pupil*, 1996



Collier Schorr, *Contralto Hidden Behind the Sinuous Folds of a Silk Curtain*, 1996

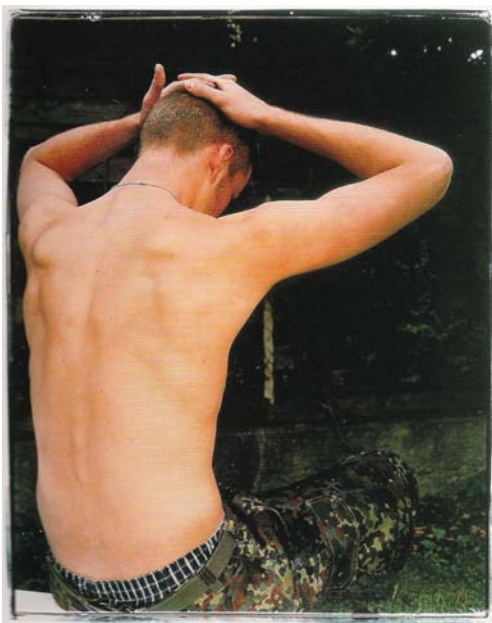
Collier Schorr : la confusion des genres (adolescence)



Collier Schorr, *Forest Bed Blanket (Black Velvet)*, 2001



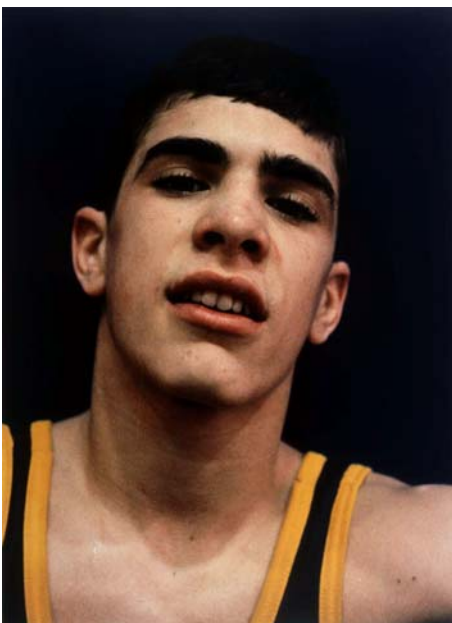
Art21, Collier Schorr, non daté, www.kellysalerno.com



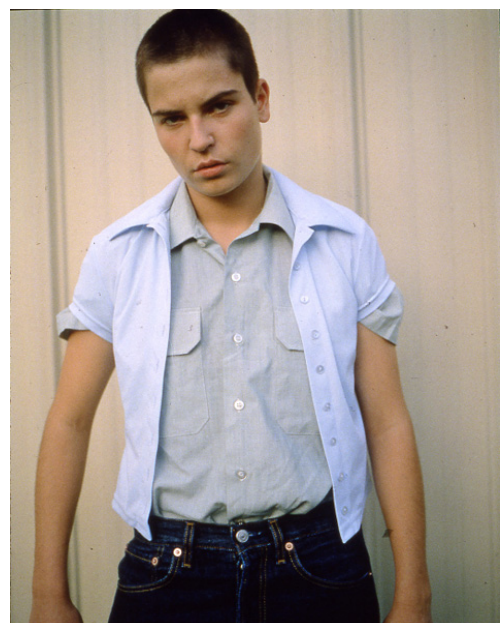
Collier Schorr, *Steffen Caught*, 2003



Collier Schorr, *Dominik First Tour Backnang*, 2000



Collier Schorr, *Blow-Up*, 1999



Collier Schorr, *Two Shirts*, 1998

Like a man - photographs of Collier Schorr

Bruce Hainley, *ArtForum*, November, 1998

Her subject would appear to be masculinity. Many of the photographs show adolescents at their moment of ripening, the moment at which teenage boys begin to be called men: in military uniform, waiting at base camp, during downtime; at leisure, sunbathing in a field or by a pool; in repose, acclimating to the objects around them, which, like the uniforms and name tags the boys may wear, the often spare venues and bare landscapes they occupy, loan them their only identity or assurance as to what they might be; staring into space or the camera's lens' even bent over or spread-eagle, a fantasy (someone else's, theirs, hers). Collier Schorr's subject would appear to have something to do with masculinity, and it does, except that it involves many other things at the same time: in some of the photos the boys are girls, the uniforms purchased, the location scouted, the premise faked. While having all the appearances of portraiture, her project is really self-portraiture manque, almost always using stand-ins, stunt doubles from a coming-of-age movie as yet unfinished, in whose stills the self is absent, or at least never seen, but everywhere possible.

Schorr began her pursuit of such becoming boys with a series called "Horst im Garten" (Horst in the garden), 1995-96, a suite of compact photos that record Horst's negotiations of his situation in the subtlest, pained gradations of smoky blacks, grays, and whites, with an occasional larger pic transfused by solar dazzle: he pauses in a tree, its only fruit, or stands shirtless and alone on a hillside, as if to wait out whatever is not being, cannot be, decided by his body, by someone or himself about his body, which may be, like a photograph, only a consequence of light and shadow. Certain titles of individual photos announced literary inspirations (James Purdy, Denton Welch) or a passionate attention to fashion (jeans, skin, makeup). The pause of boy in nature, the bodily indecision (who am I? what am I?), verdant lighting, an ominous if perhaps unverifiable question of German atmosphere, the instability of the image as portrait or memory remain the foundation from which all her work will build.

Much of the pleasure of Schorr's enterprise accrues from her reflection on the most penetrating American investigations of masculinity which preceded it: Norman Rockwell's haunting of school yards and main streets to discover what allows boys and men to become typical; Andy Warhol's reconfiguration of the male nude as "landscape," a surface - void, silent, and inscrutable (qualities not unconnected to those by which control and power are forged); Larry Clark's pursuit of wayward boys to figure out and claim an adolescence denied him - a pursuit in which he complicates (or confuses) the erotics of a desire to be with a desire to bare; and Bruce Weber's questing to project - or advertise - his beefy idee fixe with such thoroughness that he refashions masculine display, the ways in which men look at each other (and themselves), the manner in which they relate to and care for their bodies. Schorr employs and deploys stereotype, unyielding surface, desire, and display not to realize some new meaning, but to allow whatever masculinity is to be seen.

Reexamining the conundrums of Cindy Sherman's work (a staging of the masquerade called the self, feminine but in the end anonymous, with Sherman, or some bit of her, always present and representable, actual, her own body propping up various veils and disguises), Schorr probes something as complex but somehow more perverse - perverse, perhaps, because at first glance, well, so seemingly straight or straightforward, so distant from the darkness and gore of the self's haunted house. In Schorr's work there is only the masquerade of another's body, the surface of another's skin, the stripped-down uncanny of everyday appearance. It would be easier to think that this is not what the self is - an other - and that, strangely, this difference is not what makes anyone like anyone else. The work succeeds and disconcerts because it is what it would appear to be - an obsessive study of masculinity - and by being that is something else entirely, which is the problem of photography, since what "really is" actually means is a question it keeps circulating.

As a teenager in the late '70s looking for examples of how to be a smart, with-it girl on the go, Schorr discovered that the most exciting, stylized, shimmering girls were faggots. She immersed herself in faggot culture. To a teen back then, most dykes probably seemed dowdy (it would have been difficult to access the staunch lesbian chic of Romaine Brooks's circle in the pages of glossies), few would have seemed to resonate savvy, chic, intellectual flair, and sexual power: those who did, Susan Sontag and Fran Lebowitz, did so because theirs was a faggot aesthetic - it was faggot savvy, faggot chic, and faggot smarts they purveyed - and not for nothing were their most famous essays, "Notes on Camp" and "Notes on Trick," dedicated, respectively, to Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas. The conceptual strangeness of Schorr's work - its inheritance from Lebowitz's faggotry? - lies in the fact that it posits masculinity as a kind of lesbianism, and not the inverse, meaning only that desire and bodies retain a mystery that no one has theorized away, their dynamics still being gauged.

The erotics of perceptual misprision rather than identity or sexuality or gender impels Schorr's project. She suggests that although such matters may be only a consequence of perception and representation, in other words, illusory, they are often felt to the bone's marrow. A photograph uses everything the real offers, but will verify nothing. Soldier (Winchester .270, Model 70 w/Weaver K-3 Tilden Mount), 1998, which could be someone's keepsake of a stalwart young soldier off to boot camp, his hair buzzed, leaving home, is also enlisted as the first shot of a military-inspired pore spread she completed for Honcho. The graceful, curving lines of a boy, poolside, align easily with the staples of blue narratives but actually are taken from one of Schorr's most purely documentary projects. Some of her young soldiers serve their country; others serve only Schorr's desire to realize her fantasies about the complex relations between boy and girl, German and Jew, participant and observer - and perhaps to ponder what facts any photograph can submit. Such slippages, such contextual elusions, elisions, haunt the word "like," which may be what Schorr investigates most insistently: What is actually meant or seen when something is said to look "like" something else? One looks like the other - the girl like the boy, the first photograph like the second, the porn shot like the keepsake or the fine art nude, the real like the faked. It is not only a question of why one looks like the other but how one comes to be like the other. Compare Soldier and Two Shirts, 1998. Perhaps it is only the light that twins them, lending them any semblance of the masculine, if that is what they resemble; light not biology; light or specific items, the shirts, all kinds of uniforms, put on, taken off; light or aspects, a frozen gesture, a dumb expression.

Schorr's photographs allow an endless amount of staring - at men, or, more precisely, at what appears to be, what becomes, male; at the landscapes, details, rooms, scars, clothing, religious beliefs, actions, poses, activities, international occupations, games, maneuvers, and rituals that situate the disruption or illusion of masculinity, which would appear to be her subject but to which she is subject. Through a steadfast attention to whatever masculinity is, to wherever it appears, it is as if Schorr allowed masculinity to punctuate sight, seeing, and like any punctuation be applied to a variety of other syntactical arrangements with the result that everything partaking of such arrangement would then retard, "like" a sentence in which equal weight is given to the words and the punctuation and the space in between them: the boy bends over comma allowing the pink and green striped blanket to sweeten the position comma the offering comma to illuminate its innocence comma as his severe haircut attempts to convince anyone otherwise period the question is comma can you see him and just what is it you see if you do question mark.

Photography's way of representing represses and retards her various bodies - the girl body, the boy body, the faggot body, the dyke body, the dream body, the militant body, the smart body - but it is, of course, the only thing that allows them to be seen at all.

Bruce Hainley is a contributing editor of *ArtForum*.

Source au 07 10 15 : http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_3_37/ai_53286432

Collier Schorr. Personal Best

Interview by Craig Garrett, *Flash Art*, n°237, Jan/Feb 2004

From a distance it's safe to think of Collier Schorr's athletes and soldiers as abstracted icons of masculinity. Up close, however, their bodies are marked by as many ambiguities as Schorr's work itself. By catching these young men in unscripted moments -- not their victories but their moments of rest, their practices, and sometimes their defeats -- Schorr emphasizes the performative nature of their enterprise. Her feminist critique exhibits a different nuance than, say, Cindy Sherman's film stills did two decades ago, but it revels in the same ambiguity, indicting viewers in its desirous gaze at the same time it lines up a series of gender stereotypes to dismantle. That her source material is not an oppressed group but the potent heirs of privilege only testifies to her virtuosity as an artist. That each image radiates a personal, at times tender, respect for its subject only testifies to her skill as a photographer.

January signals the opening of two solo exhibitions for Schorr, one at New York's 303 Gallery, the other at Modern Art in London. Her most recent suite of photographs marks a return to the subject of American high school wrestling after a detour to Germany, where Schorr spends most of her summers. Her photos of German boys playing soldier (and of real soldiers looking like boys playing soldier) were her attempt to come to terms with German history, as a Jew and an American, via a quality she found largely absent from German photography. As always Schorr manages an interrogation of her own place in society by focusing intently, if not obsessively, on subject matter alien to her own experience -- in this case, an all-male wrestling team in New Jersey and its visual parallels to medieval depictions of martyrdom.

Craig Garrett: Earlier you asked me whether I thought your photos looked "too gay." Having always focused on the feminist angle of your work -- and, specifically, how decoding masculine poses might be relevant for a lesbian -- I confess I'd never really perceived them that way. Your images are extremely popular with gay men, though -- not just collectors but critics and curators as well. And you seem conflicted about this side of their popularity. I don't remember your exact wording, but you said that a lot of male critics had taken your work to speak for their own desire. Most of them surely appreciate its ambiguity, knowing full well that you are not a gay man yourself. But what do you think this phenomenon says about what kinds of dialogues are (and are not) encouraged in the art world today?

Collier Schorr: Objectification has usually been a male mainstay. Homosociality is, without a doubt, present in any project that involves itself in a male dominated arena, such as sports or the military. However, it may be that some gay male critics have become too comfortable in the idea that male sexuality, or men being caught in the gaze, is the property of male homosexuality. That type of "ownership" allows that women don't look at men and that when men appear a certain way it is a performance for other men. It's just another way that women's desire is undermined. This does give me pause, not in image making as much in the editing process afterwards. The struggle is how to represent men in a more fully defined way -- i.e., tenderness, vulnerability, physicality -- without falling into the trap of an assumed gay male gaze. In a way you have to search for varieties of ugliness, to almost de-aesthetify the image, to try and divest it of iconic perfections, all the while making pictures where the camera seems to fall in love.

CG: What do you think these boys thought about being looked at in this way?

CS: You know, when you're being photographed and you're busy doing something, you don't think about what you look like. And you don't think about what the person with the camera is thinking. You're just doing what you're doing. And that's why it's a great place for me to photograph. I'm sort of inside someone's very physical, very violent, very vulnerable world, and they don't really notice I'm there. And there's very little distraction. There's no other people coming in, there's no traffic, there's no noise. There's only that world. So in many ways it's very much like a monastery.

CG: A lot of artists choose to depict what they know. But it seems you've spent your career looking into things that are foreign to you, very outside of your own experience.

CS: I think part of that is photography. Photography really gives you the option to travel. I'm less interested in taking pictures of myself and where I'm from and more interested in taking pictures of the places I knew existed but never went in. It is very similar to being in Germany and taking pictures of Nazis and seeing depictions of Christ and figuring out a way to represent not his physicality but the fanaticism that he grew in others, this abandon, this idea of someone giving himself over. In southern Germany, where I go each summer, it's really Catholic. There's a lot of farmland, and everywhere you drive are crucifixes with little sculptures of Jesus on them. You can't not see Jesus there. The form became familiar to me in a different way because I was outside of a church and outside of art history. It's such a strange thing to see outside because it seems so naked. And it seems so much closer to what it must have really looked like.

CG: How long ago did you begin photographing wrestlers?

CS: I guess I started maybe four years ago. And then I took a year break. I think I needed to take the break to then go back and have it be something other than wrestling.

CG: Both of my older brothers were wrestlers in high school, and one thing that always fascinated me was the way they had to control their weight so that they could wrestle in lower weight divisions. At 15 years old they were more obsessive about food than any of the girls I knew. There was a sense that they were trying to control their bodies in every way.

CS: Yes, it's very intense, and especially on the level where your team is the number one team in the country, which is the case at the school where I photograph. I saw their last match and then went back a week later to photograph a small practice, and they had all grown. Within a week they grew what they should have grown in a whole year. In a sense it is total self-torture. Withholding, fasting, suffering -- all those things associated with saints, priests, monks and sometimes knights. Certainly my work is Romantic, but I think it's Romantic in a restrained, Romanesque way. In the work there's very little ornamentation. It's not really baroque. It's more middle ages. I was interested in Cistercian monasteries and the way they deal with the figure in art, and I wanted to

make these pictures as spare as possible. That's why they're lit in a way to black out the background.

CG: You used a flash mounted on the camera?

CS: Yeah. Technically this gym a really difficult place to take pictures because it's so dark and there's so many bodies in the room. It really feels like a coliseum filled with gladiators. You're in physical danger when you're moving around them because they're not really watching you. They're in this zone where they don't even know you're there. So in order to shoot in there you have to be quick and move around. It's not about setting up or anything like that. It's simply about learning to balance the space so that your body is in one place and their body is in another place, and you have the right amount of distance to take a picture.

CG: Do you think they would have reacted differently if you were a man taking these pictures?

CS: Completely. I think that they had a freedom to be sexy. They had a freedom to be open. And I think that if I was a man it would be different because I don't think they would be as comfortable being vulnerable and also exhibiting themselves.

CG: How do you think your own sexuality shaped that?

CS: I guess the only way I can answer is that they aren't pictures taken by a gay man. I'm not interested in taking the pictures of winning, necessarily. I'm interested in taking the pictures of struggling towards something. So I don't share the same goal as the men in the photos. I'm looking to capture something they don't know I'm looking for -- even though they're acting it out, even though I think they're aware of the similarities between their lifestyle in that room and a history of violence, of sweating and fighting for something.

CG: What I find fascinating about both the wrestler project and the soldier project is that you've managed to say so much about the constructedness of gender while focusing on a very hetero-normative adolescent experience. These photos speak to the performative nature of masculinity -- and, by extension, femininity -- without relying on subversively-gendered subjects such as, say, transsexuals. What makes your work powerful is that its subjects are so, for lack of a better word, "normal," and their flawed specificity, which inevitably deviates from the "normal" of Marlboro ads and men's wear catalogs, therefore makes them much more subversive models to demonstrate the rehearsals of masculinity.

CS: You know, people say, "How come you don't take pictures of girls?" And I say, "Well I do, I just use boys to do them." I think that for me these guys are just a kind of a raw physical material to use, and the brilliant thing about the project was that I didn't have to direct anything. It is an ongoing documentary project from which, in the editing process, I may pull out separate and self-contained series. The heightened sense of physicality experienced by the men I photograph transforms them. Viewers either see that or they don't. I am merely taking frames out of their performances, and the performance is as much masculinity or war as it is dance or spiritual ritual. They actually transform themselves. I think the biggest challenge is not whether or not it offends someone's Christian sensibility but whether or not people can remove their initial reaction to it, that they can take away the idea that they're about adolescence or sexuality, because really they're only about sexuality inasmuch as a crucifixion is sexual. And it is of course. But it's not first and foremost sexual.

CG: So how do you avoid producing kitsch celebrations of masculinity?

CS: They aren't kitsch because I care too much about the men in them to make these photos so one-dimensional. You know, I don't know another way to make stuff except to get so emotionally involved. Not to the point of wanting to intrude on someone's privacy or world, but to a feeling of affection. I'm so attached to the figures. I don't know how they're going to feel about the pictures, but...

CG: Do you think any of them are going to come and see the show?

CS: Hopefully! They'll all be there in their little ties and blazers and khaki pants. Probably. I'll ask when I go to the next practice.

Source au 07 10 15 : <http://www.papercoffin.com/writing/articles/schorr.html>

Voir aussi l'interview sur : <http://hcs.harvard.edu/hpj/schorrinterview.htm>

Images sur : http://www.303gallery.com/artist.php?artistid=CS&exh_id=33

Vidéos sur son travail récent : <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/schorr/index.html>

Sarah Jones (Londres, GB, 1959 ; vit à Londres) : l'adolescente, sage comme une image ?



Sarah Jones, *The Sitting Room*, (Francis Place), 2, 1997



Sarah Jones, *The Staircase*, (Francis Place), 1, 1997



Sarah Jones, *The Dining Room*, (Francis Place), 1, 1997



Sarah Jones, *The Spare Room*, (Francis Place), 5, 1999



Sarah Jones, *The Living Room*, 1, 2002, 152.5x152.5 cm



Sarah Jones, *The Living Room*, (Curtain), 1, 2003



Sarah Jones, *The Bedroom, 1, (Sarah)*, 2002



Sarah Jones, *The Park, 2, 2002*

La photographe anglaise Sarah Jones invente la nature morte... vivante.

Jade Lindgaard, *Les Inrockuptibles*, n°133, 7-13 janvier 1998, p.58

Pensive, elle pose une main sur la table du vestibule, les yeux dans le vague. Son amie se languit sur les marches de l'escalier : elles ont 14 ans et elles s'ennuient. Ce pourrait être la première scène d'un *sitcom* sur les affres de l'adolescence, mais Sarah Jones a préféré en tirer les ressorts de son "théâtre de photographie".

En plein cœur du Middlesex, un petit village anglais regorge de maisons tapissées de moquettes et de photos de famille. Des univers clos et solides, enracinés dans la tradition de leurs meubles et de leur décoration. Un havre de paix régi par des règles immuables, la soupière d'argent bien astiquée sur la table du salon et le portrait de l'ancêtre en bonne place au-dessus de la cheminée. Classiques symptômes du kitsch britannique. Sauf que dans ce décor, trois jeunes filles apprêtées prennent la pause. Ou plus exactement se figent, sans jamais esquisser le moindre mouvement. La tête dans les mains ou les bras plaqués le long du corps, elles attendent, peu importe quoi. "Les filles sont interchangeables. D'ailleurs, elles s'échangent tout en permanence : leurs chemises, leurs jupes. Elles sont statiques, comme les meubles des maisons. Elles sont des icônes. Elles sont sur scène, presque comme des prisonnières ", explique Sarah Jones, d'une voix timide de petite fille réfléchie.

Cheveux longs et cils maquillés, les filles passent d'une pièce à l'autre sans jamais se regarder, absentes de leurs propres portraits. Pour vider leur regard d'expression, la photographe leur a fait prendre la pause bien avant d'appuyer sur le déclencheur, veillant à éviter leurs chambres, cadres trop confortables à ces mises en scène rigides.

The Dining room, The Garden, The Sitting room : ces images sont des pièges. Sans aucune ambition documentaire ni sociologique, elles sont le reflet photographique des natures mortes et portraits peints depuis des siècles, de Vermeer à Vélasquez. "Un théâtre de l'adolescence et non un témoignage car il est impossible de faire le portrait d'un *teenager* ", continue Sarah Jones. Images d'un fantasme et réflexion sur l'illusion. Car les maisons offrent un refuge moins paisible qu'il n'y paraît. La moquette des escaliers est élimée, le tapis du salon secoué de vaguelettes et les intérieurs traversés de zones d'ombre. Ces petites touches d'abstraction perturbent le paysage immobilier du village et rappellent que la middle-class n'est plus ce qu'elle était. Autrefois preuve d'opulence, l'accumulation de porcelaine, de coussins fleuris et de services à thé est aujourd'hui une valeur refuge. Autant que l'attitude des adolescentes, le cadre bourgeois de ces maisons est trompeur. Mais Sarah Jones agit par petites touches, cultivant l'allusion et le non-dit. Discrète jusque dans la présentation de ses œuvres. Son accrochage privilégie le blanc, l'espace, le vide. Elle a délaissé les pans de mur du Consortium habituellement choisis par les artistes, donnant à son exposition une respiration sereine, inédite. Contraste entre les photos surchargées de meubles et le blanc clinique des salles qui rappelle un précédent travail de l'artiste (également montré au Consortium). Depuis deux ou trois ans, Sarah Jones photographie les divans d'un institut de formation en psychiatrie. Au fil des pièces, les murs se succèdent, identiques. Seules changent la profondeur du creux de l'oreiller, l'inclinaison du pli du drap. C'est dans cet infime détail que se concentre le regard de Sarah Jones, pour ce qu'il traduit de douleur et de joie, de tension et d'apaisement.

C'est avec la même application qu'elle s'attarde sur les moues des filles et l'écaille de la peinture au mur des maisons du village. Loin de raconter l'histoire des trois copines, ses photos évoquent des instants solitaires, offrant ainsi une multitude d'interprétations possibles : "C'est au spectateur de décider ce qu'il se passe. " Au vu des clichés, les parents – et propriétaires des maisons – se sont déclarés satisfaits et les filles se sont prises pour des stars. La vie est un songe.

Openings : Sarah Jones - photographer

Chris Townsend, *ArtForum*, March, 1998

Like willful charges who have somehow slipped the leash, Stephanie, Rohan, and Camilla enact their overwrought adolescent emotions. Made confidante, the viewer is nonetheless privy to no more than a fraction of their intimacies : there is always a residue, a narrative that both precedes and succeeds the image. Sarah Jones, to these English teenagers, is a witness before whom they pose, and for whom, because they remain callow, unaffected, they also do not pose. Between middle-class poise and juvenile posturing, the girls hesitate, unsure of their status, their rights within the privileged precincts they inherit – just as Jones' work hovers between narrative certainty and uncertainty.

These immaculate spaces are the rooms of large English houses, each home to one of the girls. Jones depicts the rooms as exemplary sites of bourgeois ritual, and makes it clear that most are rarely entered, save to dust. Their apparent perfection also emphasizes their unfamiliarity and uncanniness. Not quite aristocratic mansions, the houses are nonetheless places of power and wealth, which at once construct and represent stability and social status. This is where the upwardly mobile mercantilism that has so structured the British imagination in the last two decades bred.

By focusing on these sites, Jones memorializes the overpowering retrospection and the adulation of aristocratic conventions that are the transcendent signifiers of Middle England. In *Dining Room (Francis Place) (I)*, 1997, a portrait of an archetypal Victorian father glowers at the impudent intruders. He is bracketed by scenes of fox hunting, that lunatic sport of the English squirearchy. In such exhibitions of patriarchal tradition, both purchased and inherited, nostalgia for empire is never far away. We find it here in the fascination for Chinoiserie. In *Dining Room (Francis Place) (II)*, the girls' awed contemplation of a huge soup tureen suggests a close encounter of the highest order.

But it is they who are the aliens. Resplendent in their cheap-chic clothes, Jones' subjects adopt an uneasy repose. Seemingly conscious of their intrusion into spaces designed to exclude them, they appear haunted by the burden of history. These houses were intended for "men of property", not for women (except in the subordinate roles of wife and mother). You sense that such subsidiary positions will be insufficient for Camilla, Rohan, and Stephanie, the embodiment of a New England. (The rebellious placement of Camilla's ear stud, visible in *Dining Room (Francis Place) (II)*, suggests that nothing will ever be the same.)

In fact, it is difficult to ascertain who or what is haunting whom in these pictures. These girls reach back into the past as the past reaches forward to detain them. We seem to intrude upon an end-game between merit and birthright, which has dominated British culture for fifty years and recently been revived by New Labour's election triumph, and its uncanny replication of the language of the Left's modernizing aspirations of the '60s. Their intrusion into these spaces disrupts the infinite loop of class narrative in which power and responsibility emanate solely from family and gender. And, in fact, when Rohan, Camilla, and Stephanie are old enough to vote, theirs will be a country where fox hunting has been outlawed.

Camilla, Stephanie, and Rohan prolong their performances by exchanging clothes, confusing self and other, permutating identities as if they were simply disposable commodities. Divided by heavy, highly polished furniture, the rooms themselves return their poses, presenting them with what seem to be intolerable opportunities for reflection. *Dining Room (Mulberry Lodge) (III)* finds a solitary Camilla face-down on the reflective tabletop, literally mirrored in the surroundings she seems, at the time, intent on ignoring. If these rooms are not to destroy the girls, Jones seems to be saying, they will have to wreck them – by abandonment, neglect, or the simple expedient of calling in the decorators. Otherwise, the three may come to resemble the etiolated "Mother" portrait poised above the servinghatch in *Dining Room (Francis Place) (III)*.

In the twin motifs of the figure's reflection and its disappearance into empty space, repeated throughout her work, Jones points to a narrative beyond the frame. This denies her work the genre-portrait status to which it might otherwise be consigned. With these settings, she gestures backward, too, to a childhood "uncanny" where the room becomes a spooked forest, the furniture moves its own hostile-spirited volition, and there is always some perilous space beneath the table which is best left unexplored. This sense of a haunting residue is perhaps the defining characteristic of Jones's work. If the creased, stained psychoanalysts' couches in her previous series *Consulting Room*, 1995, suggest that the subjects had already fled the scenes of their confessions, in her current House studies, we sense that the teenagers, their narratives half-told, half-stifled, are on their way.

Sarah Jones : l'adolescente, sage comme une image ? quels univers intérieurs l'habitent ?



Sarah Jones, *The Dining Room, (Francis Place), 3*, 1997, 150x150 cm



Sarah Jones, *The Consulting Room, (Couch)*, 21, 1998, 150x150 cm



Sarah Jones, *Camilla*, 3, 1999, 150x150 cm

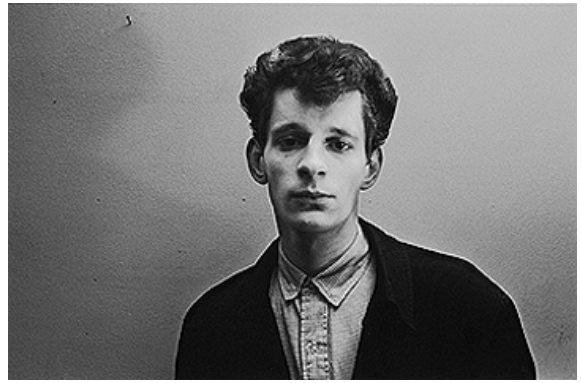


Sarah Jones, *The Pond, London, 2*, (Scarlet), 2002, 150x150 cm

Larry Clark (Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, 1943 ; vit à New York) : adolescence et transgression



Larry Clark, tiré de *Tulsa*, 1963-1971



Larry Clark, *Self Portrait*, 1962



Larry Clark, sans titre, 1968, tiré de *Tulsa*, 1963-1971



Larry Clark, *Jack and Lynn Johnson*, Oklahoma City, 1973, tiré de *Teenage Lust*, 1983



Larry Clark, tiré du film *Kids*, 1995



Larry Clark, sans titre, tiré de *Teenage Lust*, 1983

Larry Clark et les kids de Tulsa

Brigitte Ollier, *Libération*, jeudi 11 octobre 2007, <http://www.liberation.fr/culture/283889.FR.php>

« Des photos interdites, des photos qu'on n'était pas censé faire, d'une vie qui n'était pas censée avoir lieu. » Larry Clark résume ainsi *Tulsa*, du nom de sa ville natale dans l'Oklahoma, qui provoqua un électrochoc en Amérique, lors de sa parution en 1971 chez Lustrum Press, la maison d'édition de Ralph Gibson. C'était une façon de documenter la vie à vif, comme une plaie, une guerre des nerfs en intérieur, un petit Vietnam à domicile, un enfer paradisiaque. Trente-six ans plus tard, les photographies sont toujours aussi stupéfiantes. Beauté, grâce et morbidité. Nus, candides, amoureux, défoncés, violents, heureux, rêveurs, provocateurs, suicidaires, en un mot, ivres d'eux-mêmes, les kids de Tulsa ressuscitent la condition humaine d'une jeunesse qui joue chaque minute à la roulette russe, la seringue à portée de main, les parents totalement KO. Aux premières loges de ce shoot convivial, Larry Clark lui-même, révélateur de la face obscure d'une cité tranquille de l'Amérique, « un pays de mamans qui confectionnent des tartes aux pommes derrière des palissades blanches ». Depuis *Tulsa*, Larry Clark, 64 ans, est devenu cinéaste, poursuivant avec brio son autobiographie épidermique, et se rappelant le choc qu'il avait eu en découvrant *Shadows*, de Cassavetes.

Larry Clark : adolescence et transgression

" Je suis né à Tulsa, Oklahoma en 1943. j'ai commencé à me shooter aux amphétamines à 16 ans. je me suis shooté tous les jours, pendant trois ans, avec des copains, puis j'ai quitté la ville mais je suis revenu. Une fois que l'aiguille est rentrée, elle ne ressort plus. " Larry Clark, *Tulsa*, 1971

L'enfance de Larry Clark et surtout sa prime adolescence sont profondément marquées par une vie familiale difficile. Son premier contact avec la photographie est lié à l'activité professionnelle de sa mère, qui fait du porte-à-porte pour proposer de photographier les nouveaux-nés. Larry Clark, alors âgé de 14 ans, accompagne sa mère dans ses tournées et l'assiste.

En 1961, pour s'éloigner de sa famille, il s'inscrit à la Layton School of Art de Milwaukee (Wisconsin). Il découvre les photographies de W.Eugene Smith dans le magazine *Life* et s'intéresse à la possibilité de raconter des récits par le biais de la photographie.

En 1962, de retour dans sa ville natale, il photographie ses amis, de jeunes marginaux au parcours erratique. " Des photographies interdites, des photos qu'on n'était pas censé faire, d'une vie qui n'était pas censée avoir lieu ". Larry Clark fait état, sans aucune concession, de la dérive d'une certaine jeunesse américaine perdue entre drogue, sexe et violence. Recueillies dans un ouvrage intitulé *Tulsa*, publié par Ralph Gibson aux éditions Lustrum Press, ces photographies sont à la fois un journal intime et un document rare sur l'ennui et la misère de l'Amérique profonde.

Publié en 1971, *Tulsa* a fait scandale auprès de la scène artistique, mais reste un ouvrage de référence pour bon nombre de jeunes photographes contemporains.

Au milieu des années 70, Larry Clark obtient une bourse de la National Endowment for the Arts (Fondation nationale pour les arts) qui lui permet de se consacrer à son deuxième livre, *Teenage Lust*. Le propos y est encore sulfureux et provocateur : la sexualité des adolescents. Bien qu'il ait alors une trentaine d'années, Clark photographie toujours les jeunes qui l'entourent. Il est le témoin dénué de tout jugement moral et le protagoniste de son autobiographie en images.

Martin Scorsese et Gus Van Sant reconnaîtront l'influence de Larry Clark pour des films tels que *Taxi Driver* et *Drugstore Cowboy* et l'encourageront vers la réalisation de long-métrages de fiction. Son premier film *Kids* (1995) est présenté aux Festivals de Sundance et de Cannes en 1995. Larry Clark explore dans cette première œuvre cinématographique les dérives du monde adolescent à travers un groupe de jeunes de Manhattan qui sombre dans la drogue. Censuré aux États-Unis, le film y remporte néanmoins un succès à la fois critique et commercial.

Larry Clark poursuit son exploration du corps et de la psyché adolescents : *Another Day in Paradise* (1997), *Bully* (2001), *Ken Park* (2002), *Wassup Rockers* (2006), *Impaled* (in *Destricted*, compilation de 7 courts-métrages de différents réalisateurs, 2006)

Exposition à la Maison Européenne de la photographie, Paris, du 10.10.2007 au 6.01.08, http://www.mep-fr.org/expo_1.htm

***Teenage Lust*, 1983**

Clark's second book, *Teenage Lust* (1983), was subtitled " An Autobiography of Larry Clark ", though it is not autobiographical in any conventional sense. It includes early family snapshots and follows a rough biographical chronology, but Clark's primary intention seems to be to " turn back the years " and to relive moments of his own teen past through images of others. This installation shows the photographs and other materials that were used to make the original book. Roughly divided into three sections, *Teenage Lust* begins with Clark's family photographs and his move to New York City ; then contrasts his various run-ins with the law with his quest for a utopian hippie life in New Mexico ; and concludes with a powerful and touching series of portraits of young male hustlers in the Times Square area. More sprawling, experimental, and explicit than *Tulsa*, *Teenage Lust* has at its core the rawness, vulnerability, and uncertainty of adolescence, a key strain that runs throughout Clark's work.

Skaters

The " Skaters " series assembles color portraits of teenage skateboarders that Clark took in New York City during the 1990s. Some of these portraits were taken in Clark's studio, but most were made in Washington Square Park, where he met Harmony Korine, who would later write the screenplay for *Kids*, and the skaters who would become members of the cast of *Kids*. The freedom of skateboarders appealed to Clark; these were kids who could navigate the city on their own, without parents. This tension between youthful independence and parental neglect is a theme throughout Clark's later work. The series also represents a return to a more documentary style, and has a clear link to Clark's film work.

Source : http://museum.icp.org/museum/exhibitions/larry_clark/

Quel est le contrôle des adultes – y compris le / la photographe – sur le corps des enfants ?

Fanny Meier

Travail écrit dans le cadre du cours de Photographie contemporaine, ES2, Ecole supérieure de photographie, Vevey, 2007

L'émission " KIDS " nous présente cinq artistes photographes ayant tous un travail traitant de l'enfance ou de l'adolescence ; malgré le sujet commun, ces artistes ont une manière bien à eux de représenter cette période de vie, et chacun d'eux exerce un degré de contrôle différent sur ses modèles.

Tout d'abord, concernant la démarche de Frances Dumbleton, qui reste un travail de mandat plutôt qu'une démarche artistique. Le contrôle est tout d'abord généré par les parents de l'enfant photographié envers la photographe. En effet, les parents demandent que leur enfant ait heureux, et comme le dit Chris Townsend dans son texte (*Vile Bodies. Photography and the Crisis of looking*), que l'enfant sur l'image dise à ses parents, " je t'aime ". La photographe contrôle alors l'enfant physiquement, lui fait prendre des positions qu'il ne prendra pas au naturel ; le contrôle psychique vient ensuite, pour le sourire et l'expression de l'enfant. Ces images ne sont pas la représentation de l'enfant, de son identité propre, elles sont la représentation de l'idée ou du fantasme que les parents ont de leur enfant. Ce contrôle n'est pas seulement présent lors de la prise de vue, mais aussi dans la vie future de l'enfant ; une dimension psychique de ce contrôle sera toujours présente. Le souvenir de son enfance sera manipulé par cette image, tout d'abord parce qu'en réalité il n'aura pas eu de souvenir de cette période, étant trop jeune, et deuxièmement du fait que cette image mise en scène lui fera croire à une enfance heureuse, ce qui ne sera peut-être pas tout à fait la vérité. Ce schéma se retrouve beaucoup dans la photographie de famille, cette volonté de toujours vouloir refléter le bonheur, se mentir à soi-même, pour évincer les problèmes et la tristesse de nos souvenirs et pour garder l'illusion d'une existence heureuse.

D'autre part, Sally Mann, auteur d'un travail personnel qui pour longtemps a représenté ou mis en scène ses propres enfants. Ces images nous font entrer dans l'intime et la vie quotidienne des personnages : réalité ou fiction, la limite est très proche. Le contrôle que Sally Mann a sur ses enfants est complexe. Tout d'abord elle n'est pas seulement photographe mais aussi mère, et les enfants ne dissocient pas forcément ces deux " rôles ", ils peuvent aussi être troublés ; quel est mon rôle à moi ? enfant ou modèle ?

Ensuite, elle impose en quelque sorte à ses enfants d'être constamment photographié et que leur intimité devienne publique. Pour les enfants, ceci n'est peut-être qu'un jeu, ils aiment le faire, surtout que l'attention de leur mère est toujours portée sur eux ; mais l'ont-ils réellement choisi ? à cet âge, ils ne comprennent pas encore la signification de ce travail. Dans ce cas, on pourrait parler de contrôle psychologique de l'enfant. Cette dimension psychologique sera aussi forte lorsque Sally Mann arrêtera de photographier ses enfants ; dans la vidéo " KIDS " une de ses filles explique le sentiment d'abandon qu'elle a ressenti lorsque sa mère a moins porté son attention sur elle. En réalité Sally Mann ne s'est pas désintéressée de sa fille, elle a juste arrêté de la prendre en photo [pour réaliser des paysages] ; cela rejoint aussi le fait d'être mère et en même tant photographe. Elle n'était plus photographe, juste une mère. La réception du travail de Sally Mann, par le public, a pu avoir un contrôle psychologique sur ses enfants et elle-même. En effet, certaines personnes ont qualifié ce travail d'images " pédophiles " et politiquement incorrectes. Cette interprétation a engendré un sentiment de honte et d'incompréhension chez les enfants, et de culpabilité chez la mère/photographe. Il n'y a pas seulement le contrôle psychique dans les images de cette photographe, il y a aussi l'intervention qu'elle exerce sur le physique de ses enfants.

Dans ses images, il est parfois difficile de s'en apercevoir, et pour cause, on ne sait jamais si c'est de la mise en scène ou du pris sur le vif. Dans tous les cas il y en a un car, vu la présence de l'appareil photo, le modèle ne sera jamais totalement lui-même et inconsciemment, il jouera un rôle.

Ce qui est étonnant dans le travail de Sally Mann, c'est cette dimension autobiographique qu'elle met dans ses images, dont Chris Townsend parle aussi dans son texte (*Vile Bodies. Photography and the Crisis of looking*). Comme si elle faisait rejouer sa propre enfance à ses enfants par rapport aux souvenirs qu'elle en garde. Elle effectue alors une sorte de contrôle sur sa propre mémoire, car celle-ci n'est jamais exacte, et devient imaginaire.

Le travail de Wendy Ewald est différent des deux photographes précédentes. En premier lieu parce que ce n'est tout simplement pas elle la créatrice directe des images, ce sont les enfants à qui elle enseigne la photographie. Ces derniers s'inspirent du thème qu'Ewald leur donne, " représentation d'un rêve personnel " ; ceci est le premier contrôle psychique qu'elle effectue sur les enfants, la consigne restreint leur imagination. Ensuite malgré sa non-présence lors des prises de vues, les

enfants s'autocensurent pour à tout pris lui plaire ; leur physique et leur psychique sont à nouveau sous le contrôle d'Ewald et à l'intérieur de ce contrôle, il y a aussi celui de l'affectif, entre professeur et élève. Wendy Ewald n'est pas la seule à générer des contrôles, les enfants aussi le font. Ils mettent en scène leurs images avec des modèles et les contrôlent physiquement ; ensuite ils nous présentent leurs rêves, certains peuvent être réels, les autres de pures inventions de l'ordre du fantasme (monstre) ; à ce moment-là, ils contrôlent notre psychique à nous, le public, ainsi que leur propre imaginaire.

L'adolescence est le sujet de Jouko Lethola, il photographie des jeunes personnes lors de festivals. Dans son travail, le contrôle psychique est très fort ; tout d'abord il choisit des personnes qui sont déjà psychologiquement fragiles, qui sont en pleine période d'adolescence et à la recherche de leur identité. Ensuite il les photographie dans un contexte de fête où, sous l'effet de l'alcool ou de la drogue, ils ne sont pas eux-mêmes, sont vulnérables. Mais, aussi, il les met en confiance en les abordant comme s'ils étaient des amis. Ils se laissent plus facilement aborder, et photographier, ils jouent le jeu que Lethola leur propose. Il réussit à capter la mélancolie, la détresse de ces jeunes, sans que ceux-ci l'aient vraiment voulu.

Le contrôle physique est aussi présent dans son travail ; il guide ces jeunes pour les poses qu'il veut obtenir ou pour leur faire rejouer, parfois plusieurs fois, une scène qu'il a manquée ; de plus, il utilise un flash direct pour les photographier, cela les surprend peut-être et ne les met pas en valeur, ils ne sont alors pas représentés sous leurs meilleures formes.

En outre, le choix du titre pour cette série *Young heroes*, marque un contraste fort avec les images elles-mêmes. Des jeunes gens en pleine déchéance et en exhibition seraient plutôt des anti-héros. On peut se demander si cette ironie ne sert pas à brouiller les pistes pour le public ou si au contraire l'artiste considère réellement ces jeunes comme des héros. Voilà encore une forme de contrôle que l'on peut observer dans le travail de Jouko Lethola.

Dans une autre approche, Collier Schorr pose également son regard sur une facette de l'adolescence, la recherche de l'identité sexuelle d'une part et, d'autre part, le passage d'un garçon au statut d'homme.

Dans son premier travail, elle fait poser sa nièce ; ce travail illustre la vie de cette jeune femme qui est lesbienne, et qui se met dans la peau d'un homme. La mise en scène et la transformation de ce personnage (de femme en homme) est le premier contrôle physique que Schorr exerce sur son modèle. Premièrement, en réalité cette fille ne se "déguise" pas pour affirmer son identité sexuelle, c'est la photographie qui pousse la réalité plus loin. Deuxièmement, elle invente une histoire en partant de quelques faits réels, en plaçant et en mettant en scène son personnage dans un contexte et des situations imaginaires.

Son deuxième travail met en scène de jeunes hommes qui ne savent pas encore bien se situer en tant qu'hommes. À nouveau la photographie exerce un contrôle physique sur ses modèles, par le biais de la mise en scène. Dans ses deux travaux, il y a la notion de "confusion des genres", homme ou femme ? C'est avec cet aspect que le contrôle psychique intervient, sur le psychique du public plutôt que sur celui du modèle. Elle nous fait entrer dans un univers existant, mais avec lequel elle a créé sa propre fiction, elle réussit à nous tromper.

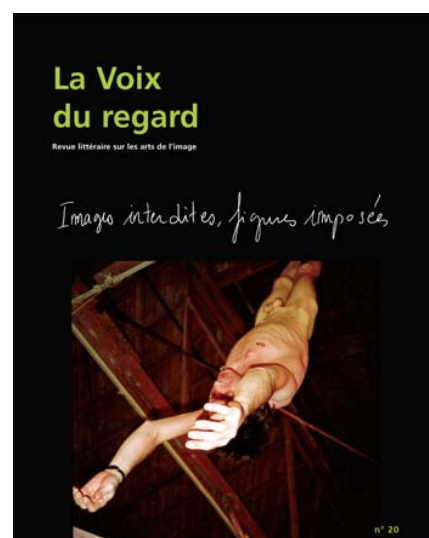
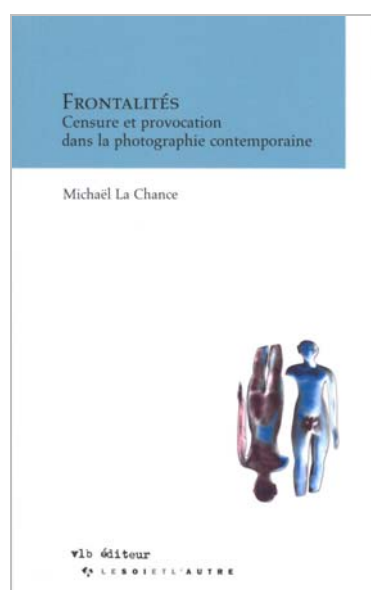
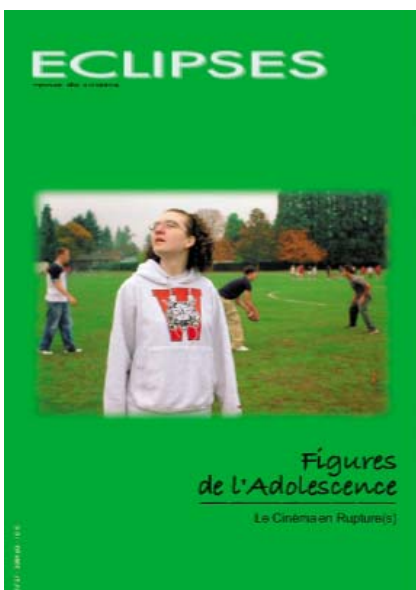
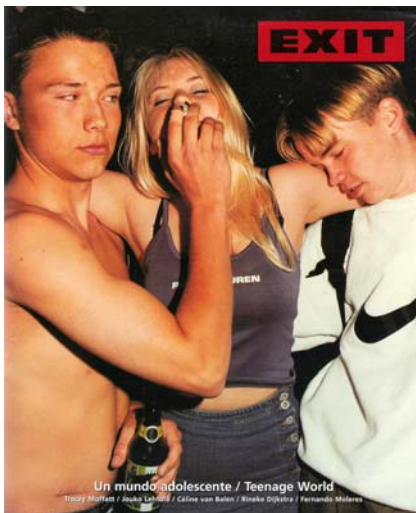
Le troisième contrôle qui est présent dans le travail global de Collier Schorr, est celui qu'elle exerce sur elle-même et à nouveau sur le public. En effet, dans ses portraits, on ressent très fortement sa présence, non pas en tant que photographe, mais en tant que personne, comme une projection d'elle-même sur les modèles et, comme le cite aussi Bruce Hainley dans son texte ("Like a man – photographs of Collier Schorr", *ArtForum*, November 1998), ses portraits ne sont pas de simples portraits, ils sont également des autoportraits [indirects]. Ce qui donne également une dimension autobiographique à son travail, la fiction n'est alors peut-être pas que fiction...

Pour conclure, on peut donc observer que le contrôle du photographe et de n'importe quel artiste sur son sujet, sur lui-même ou sur le public peut prendre différentes formes. Mais il est aussi constamment présent. En effet, du moment où il y a intervention, il y a contrôle ; pour un photographe, le fait même de photographier est un contrôle sur la réalité : il cadre, il choisit le moment où il prend la photo et il donne le sens qu'il désire à son image. Le contrôle n'est malheureusement pas toujours conscient, il peut aussi être inconscient, et parfois il mène à des faits peut désirable (par exemple, dans le cas de Sally Mann, la portée politique que son travail a pu avoir). Le sujet peut également, à sa manière, avoir un contrôle sur l'artiste sans que celui-ci ne s'en rende compte. La difficulté qui apparaît ensuite est de réussir à définir ces différents contrôles : sont-ils psychiques, physiques, réels ou imaginaires ?

Quelques références bibliographiques

Sur les thèmes de l'adolescence et de la famille, qui ne seront pas développés dans ce dossier, les deux numéros de la revue espagnole *Exit* peuvent servir de point de départ à des recherches personnelles (attention, sur le site du magazine n'est cité que le début des articles).

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CENSURE

Les cas de censure dans les représentations de la figure humaine, de la naissance à la mort...

Dans cette section, les cas de controverses liés à la représentation des enfants ne sont que des exemples, malheureusement fréquents, de censure qui touche également d'autres types de représentation du corps. L'image du sexe, de la sexualité, est certainement le sujet qui fait (encore) le plus souvent l'objet d'un "tabou" pour un certain public, bien que tout semble depuis longtemps permis dans le domaine de l'art contemporain... La situation est relativement paradoxale : plus rien ne choque dans le milieu de l'art alors que des questions de mœurs soulevées par le public provoquent des scandales relayés par les médias, ce qui a généralement l'effet inverse de produire une publicité propice au succès des images jugées dignes de censure... Il m'a paru intéressant de survoler les différents sujets ou thèmes liés au corps qui font l'objet de polémiques ou de (tentatives de) censure car les soubassements de telles réactions répressives ne sont pas seulement éthiques, moraux, mais aussi politiques. Il est important de souligner que dans les pays dits totalitaires, la censure se fait souvent de manière directe, violemment répressive, alors que dans les démocraties elle peut utiliser des moyens plus détournés (suppression de subventions, pressions sur le circuit de diffusion des œuvres, législation stricte, etc.). Au fil des exemples qui suivent, nous verrons que certaines expositions ont joué un rôle clé en suscitant de violentes réactions...



Sun Yuan, *Honey*, 1999, 90x126 cm, photographie montrant un détail de l'installation éphémère présentée à Pékin

" CENSORED / CENSURADOS "

Editorial : Don't look at that, don't touch this, don't say that

Rosa Olivares, " Censored/Censurados ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.20-21

One of the characteristics of contemporary art is that almost everything is permitted. In other words, subverting, scandalizing or altering the status quo is practically impossible. It is not that artists do not try, but nowadays nothing fazes us. Reality has far surpassed any bad dream, any figment of the imagination. The justification of murder, individual or collective, is a subject of television programs with mass audiences ; sex with children crosses all borders, without clear legal restrictions, by way of Internet ; there is a flourishing tourism business based on offering cheap sex in exotic countries to bourgeois intellectuals and middle class customers from that other world that does not seem quite so exotic, although its customs are truly bizarre ; high risk -to players and non-players- games and sports are becoming increasingly popular ; the slaughter of innocents is broadcast on live television... In short, I am talking about the midday news, not Sodom and Gomorrah. For an artist, it is difficult to compete with all this. Nevertheless, artists continue to choose controversial subjects and provocative ways of dealing with them. From sex to death, from surreal exaggeration to the most scatological reality, in photographs as well as paintings or site-specific performances. From the use of blood, semen or dung in their works to a more subtle provocation involving the treatment of complicated social themes such as racism, violence or pornography.

Meanwhile, that terrible reality seems to be inevitable, art is still seen as a provocation more dangerous than the very reality motivating it. Censorship, control by the state and other realms of power, thus emerges to make things clear and to tell us exactly what we are to say, what we are to see, what we are to applaud. Based on a somewhat exaggerated instinct of protection, censors eliminate everything that, in their view, is detrimental to public morality: from a Warhol, Haacke or Mapplethorpe exhibition to the confiscation of materials from a photographer's lab, the interrogation of his models... In recent decades, silently, because it does not seem appropriate to give this type of situation publicity, specific works have been forbidden, awards supporting creativity cancelled and the exhibitions of dozens of artists in our advanced Western world shut down. We are almost always unaware of what is happening in Asian and Arabian countries, although we can only imagine the worst. There are well known artists who have lost their jobs, been thrown in jail or out of their own countries because of their artwork. But all this madness has been perpetrated in the name of a common good, when it is merely one more method of repression and a tactic for power to protect itself from any criticism, the authentic stronghold of Puritan morality.

What can be the reasoning behind the fact that in the 21st century, in a society that has seen wars and massacres of all kinds, that regularly schedules pornography in its daily routine as if it were afternoon tea, that knows that injustice is one of its sustaining pillars, censorship, prohibition, confiscation and destruction of something apparently as harmless as the work of an artist continues to occur ? [fin p.20] Censorship does still exist, appearing sporadically in some places, as a chronic malady in others and an all pervasive shadow in almost every advanced society. For certainly, this is also true in the societies we deem advanced.

This is not a weapon used exclusively by tyrannies and dictatorships, as we have been told. Fascist states, the Nazis, all the authoritarian regimes have used it as far back as our memory of humanity can reach, but there is also censorship in democratic countries, in places where hours and hours are devoted to political speeches declaring exemplary leadership in freedom, while, at the same time, censoring the press, the media and, of course, creativity. This is no cause for shock ; censorship is as old as power and is justified, to a certain extent, by the very existence of that power. Censorship is simply denying someone's access to free expression and communication of ideas, images, criticism or different ways of seeing, of seeing and describing the world we live in. The Church has quite habitually censored images created by the best artists throughout the history of art, the sexual organs of the figures of the Sistine Chapel -and many other paintings and sculptures- were covered during certain periods following their creation ; not only the works of art considered 'degenerate' by Hitler, but also many others equally innocent have been prohibited and destroyed throughout history... and yet perhaps neither the genitals painted by Michelangelo nor Kirchner's expressionist figures or Mondrian's grids are innocent. Because art is not decoration, but rather a tool of knowledge ; that is the reason for the fear it arouses in spheres of power, and that is the reason why one artist is censored, while another, with very similar work, is never censored at all. Some artwork is loaded and other artwork uses only blank cartridges. Perhaps art is

definitively guilty and that is why it is censored and prohibited, and also, perhaps for this reason, it is imperative.

With the development of civilization, not only has computer technology become more advanced and new methods of traceless torture been made possible -such as enabling torture without death- but language has also been enhanced. Terms such as 'censorship' have gradually disappeared from the motives for prohibiting or hindering the creation and exhibition of artwork. Especially at present, when almost nobody dares, from political arenas, to censor anything for ideological reasons when they can do so for moral ones. First sexual prudishness, then good manners have become the means for putting the brakes on the trajectory of many artists, but economic aspects have been employed as well. Nowadays, it is worse for an artist to lack funding than to be censored for any reason. And if there is no money, what can we do ? There is hardly ever any money for anything that deviates from what is politically correct, in other words, for that art that does not wish to be beautiful alone.

From there to the last reason for censorship, there is but one small step: that of ignorance. This is when the censor believes he can dictate aesthetic taste, define and redefine the concept of art at whim and out of necessity. It is then when an exhibition is rejected, a project is annulled, a show is closed... because that stuff is not considered art. It is then when, for example, the Guggenheim Museum of New York cancels an exhibition by Hans Haacke, prepared over a period of several years, commissioned by the museum itself, because it decides that "that is not art". The criticism of speculation, abuse of power, social fraud... that is not art. Art is only a pretty sunset, a lyrical abstraction and some work by those wild youngsters who are determined to make us nauseous with animals hacked to pieces, bloody photos... which, interestingly, bring in high prices.

On the following pages, we shall see some examples and recall some stories about censored works and artists. But there are many more that cannot be discussed. Some because they have been so perfectly censored that they are unknown, others because the artists themselves refuse to admit they have been censored - "It 's just that my photos were not shown in my country for a long time" or "I've never really been censored ; the fact that my studio was searched, my work confiscated... that can't be considered censorship". Other artists practice survival tactics through self-censorship, begging us not to publish any of their work. In short, between the difficulties and the fear, after the preliminary censorship, the excessive caution, the lack of public funding for certain things, the weakness of the definition of art... there is hardly any room left for real censorship. There will soon come a time when censorship will be unnecessary, for we will cover our own mouths and cut off our own hands. Then, we will not need anyone to tell us what is good, what is correct or what art is. We may all be dead.

Translation : Dena Ellen Cowan

Source : <http://www.exitmedia.net/prueba/eng/articulo.php?id=50>

When forms become concepts

Rosa Olivares, " Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.124-141

" Miss Peal is really saying that anything imaginative, anything unfamiliar, or simply anything she does not like, is dangerous. "

Arts Magazine, March 1956

In the evolution of culture, some things have not changed at all since the origin of humanity. While we go to the moon and mars, and we discover the origin of life, we clone sheep and even children of the future, we still cannot cure a common cold. While the media has revolutionized the very way of waging war -one of the most habitual sports of man throughout history- and art is rediscovered in a thousand continually transforming facets, censorship, fear of freedom and the need to limit the imagination, are still as timely and contemporary as they were during the Middle Ages. In fact, we could state that the infamous historical Inquisition is still in force not only in the methods of torture and humiliation of individuals, but also in that absurd need to silence those who wish to say things in different ways, those who search beyond what is permitted, what is habitual, what is correct. Technological development, along with the evolution of all types of languages, have significantly broadened the possibilities of causing pain and also of hushing and prohibiting, eliminating dissenters in one way or another.

The problem of censorship is that almost no one wants to call it by this, its most simple and authentic name. Nowadays, the forms of censorship are transformed -dressed up- into economic

problems, self-censorship, aesthetic re-definitions, or other problems are cited to prevent specific works from being exhibited, or even produced, measures that make artists change their minds, leave their countries, cease to be artists and become mere civil servants. Although in some places, censorship takes the form of imprisonment or the most public and direct prohibition, in the countries known as advanced, democratic, and other synonymous terms, the official budgets, the granting or withdrawing of financial support for creation is often censorship enough. Or, more directly, the market will take care of smoothing out what deviates too far from the correct channel. Although that correct channel may not always appear to be so, because it is a verifiable truth that, nowadays, the most adequate channel, that most distinguished by the market and the critics, focuses on a sort of provocation that, almost always hidden behind the genius and brilliance of young artists, a conformity and a desire to enter the star system of art and the most select show business club, which annuls any real criticism. Once again, we must recall that excellent show *When attitudes become Form. Live in Your Head* (Kunsthalle Bern, 1969), curated by Harald Szeemann.

When forms become concepts, ideas, we are before a situation which requires intelligence and imagination. Neither is it admissible that one image alone be considered an intellectual salvation, nor can we avoid the fact that forms are the embodiment, the physical transmitters, of ideas and of feelings, of all those things that can hardly be expressed and that we sometimes do not even know how to explain. What is censored is what is not understood, what unravels power. Difference, variety, that which strays from the habitual is censored. Hence all that is new, that implies changes and produces a certain insecurity is susceptible to censorship if it runs into someone fearful and powerful enough to exercise that control. Although first, if he is intelligent enough, he will generate a means for that fear and insecurity to penetrate society to the extent that individuals willingly censor themselves and can thus affirm that official censorship does not exist.

The varied strategies of censorship are present on all levels of human communication. Naturally, they are more strictly regulated in public arenas than in private ones, although in private spheres, from the family to the couple itself, self-censorship, obedience to rules that often lead us to lies, deceit or double standards, are the seeds of latent censorship. In the same light, the authoritarian, intransigent and even despotic character exercising his power over some people closest to him makes us think that censorship is, in the last analysis, nothing more than a way of wielding power, a power that in many cases needs not be understood or even accepted by those it is imposed on. In fact, we shall see, little by little, that real censorship is applied only in those regimes or societies in which power is practically absolute or, for whatever reasons, unquestionable.

Censorship is applied, it has always been applied, in those fields in which intelligence, imagination and creativity can be used to criticize or deconstruct the social, cultural, economic and any other type of situation that is erected by the established power. We are thus witnessing a fight between two opposing forces: real power, force, laws, money, on the one hand and the imagination, ingenious, and also innocence and obstinacy on the other. Once again, forevermore, we have the struggle between David and Goliath. It is in the press, in education and in mass media and in social relations where censorship is applied most forcefully and assuredness. The same arenas in which a regressive or progressive education is formulated, where citizen opinion-making is done. Sometimes, censorship is unnecessary. When there is a way to pass laws or erect social structures that are sufficiently strict and inviolable, certain aspects of censorship become unnecessary. If clitoral ablation of millions of women is practised, it is unnecessary to censor the sexual pleasure of these women already impeded from experiencing it. If there are laws prohibiting private property, censorship of corporate conglomerations, in sales and purchases, cannot be applied. If television is outlawed and the right to literacy denied, if newspapers and books are banned (as in the regime of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia) censorship of the press becomes absurd, almost a sophistication.

Obviously, these extreme measures are taken only in countries that are underdeveloped socially and economically, or in those ruled by cruel dictatorial regimes. More frequently, laws convey an appearance of justice and equality while the reality is something quite different and behind those laws, applications, forms and situations are created wherein the very laws are used to defend other things, for example, through specific committees and systems of control. We are not surprised if we are made aware of censorship in Pakistan, but the Pakistan people are not surprised that in the United States the press is 'asked' not to circulate Islamic press releases, or that its articles are subject to review prior to their publication. These are two kinds of censorship, different in form yet similar in their moral base and in their results: ignorance and fanaticism, oppression and lack of freedom.

Here, it is unknown what is censored in Arabian countries, but we are astounded by the fact that in U.S. radio stations songs by the Beatles are censored because they mention "a ticket to ride" or scenes are changed in movies such as Spiderman in which the Twin Towers appear repeatedly. If the Taliban force women to cover themselves with burkas, we are all appalled by what we believe to be symptom of inconceivable cultural backwardness ; but that a Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Portuguese women, as well as those from dozens of democratic and supposedly advanced countries, ought to mourn a husband or a father and wear black for years, without going outside when not absolutely necessary, is acceptable. The fact that, according to the latest official statistics, one out of every four women is battered in Great Britain, does not seem to be alarming or a cause for protest of any kind. Nobody discusses the fact that, in Anglo-Saxon countries, young people are kicked out of their homes en masse right after their high school graduation. Nobody reflects upon the fact that there is always a double standard at the heart of the acceptance or rejection of the rules and regulations of other cultures.

In the United States the well known First Amendment presupposes the absolute protection of freedom to express and disseminate ideas, to publish any type of publication (including instructions how to murder, chemical formulas for explosives, etc.), however, Senator MacCarthy set in motion the greatest witch hunt in the history of cinema, ruining the careers and lives of actors, script-writers and technicians ; another senator, Jesse Helms, censored and discredited some of the most important contemporary artists. The once acclaimed ex-mayor of New York City, Rudolf Giuliani, personally discredited, prohibited and penalized contemporary art during his term as mayor of the Big Apple, to extremes heretofore unheard of in the art world of the foremost city of artistic avant-garde. Nevertheless, the current mayor of the same city sees his presence "amicably" suspended in the Little Italy festival parade for appearing with two actors from a TV series about a Mafia family. Censorship for all tastes. And more. These are some of the incredible contradictions we experience daily in contemporary society.

The prohibitions and persecutions meant to hinder me dissemination of information, free communication and expression of individual judgements and opinions practiced on a daily basis in countries at war, in areas of endemic conflicts, in countries that lack basic freedoms, seem more logical than that same censorship and persecution in democratic countries, whose citizens (and not subjects) enjoy all the liberties and rights imaginable. However, we can see that there are hundreds of journalists in jail all over the world, in the West as well as the East ; that the journalistic profession is still, along with race-car driving, one of the most dangerous ones in the world ; that, in Spain, no need to seek any farther, journalists die every year simply for carrying out their work ; there are still political prisoners in European countries ; in the United States, it is prohibited to publish information that is habitual in other countries.

However, censorship of newspapers, television programs or contents disseminated in the mass media may seem logical when there exists a wish to channel or prejudice public awareness of specific aspects of reality. But, in a society in which artworks are enigmas that few people enjoy contemplating or sharing, what sense is there in censoring the most contemporary artistic creation ? When the Catholic church censored a painting during the Renaissance because the bodies of angels merrily displayed their genitals or because a saint or a virgin did not really seem saintly or virginal, the reasoning was that that painting was going to be seen in a sacred place by hundreds of ignorant worshippers for whom those images were a reflection of a mystical truth. Many were those to contemplate them and very few who made them, and still fewer those who had the power to erase or manipulate them. These manipulations have always been practised, even in the friezes of the Sistine Chapel and upon many of the most well-known paintings. However, when a work by Hans Haacke is censored, one that is specifically commissioned for a New York museum, we are dealing with work that will by no means be viewed by massive crowds like those filling the world's myriad football stadiums every Sunday. In other words, demographically speaking, it is an insignificant presence, to which very few people will pay much attention, apart from those directly affected by a case of real estate speculation who, coincidentally, have close contact with the museum that commissioned the work. This type of economic or social censorship is one of the most frequent and also one of the most difficult to denounce publicly.

The Catholic church continues to censor as much as it can, in accordance with its current possibilities. Its power in the society of laymen has decreased to limits that would have been unbelievable for an inquisitor centuries ago. Nowadays, it cannot prevent the image of Jesus from being the protagonist of photographs, paintings or commercial films that do not comply with the rules of the Church. But all kinds of incongruities still exist, demonstrating that the criterion for censorship obey personal dictates more than any others and, when censorship is erected, it is not

so much in response to general but rather to personal interests, peculiar ways of interpreting reality. Thus, while the ecclesiastic authorities permit Anish Kapoor's exhibition to take place in Parisian chapels, or that of Christian Boltanski to be shown in a Santiago de Compostela church, work by Bill Viola, who has exhibited throughout the world in places such as Documenta IX, is questioned in another sacred place.

Nowadays nobody pays much attention to contemporary art. Of course, politicians are not interested at all, beyond inaugurating an occasional exhibition and appearing in the photo. The general public considers it an absurd entertainment. Indeed, most people do not even consider it art. Only a few, statistically speaking, live in a world where the most contemporary art and culture is disseminated and significant. Then, why this excessive desire to prohibit, hide and channel creation ? Why is art censorship like an unceasing ray ? Perhaps the answer has been offered by the writers who say that a good book is as dangerous to power as a ticking bomb. "Poetry is a weapon loaded with future", said Gabriel Celaya during the Franco dictatorship. It only need be remembered that James Joyce's *Ulysses* was confiscated on the borders of Great Britain and those possessing it punished : It was a prohibited book for many years, published in an almost clandestine manner like so many other books in political regimes of all kinds and in all times. The number of writers, artists, poets and musicians who have suffered and continue to suffer imprisonment, who have died, who have had to abandon their countries and their careers, is countless, and neither censorship nor repression (another, the ultimate form of censorship) have prevented the appearance of new ones. That is the force of culture, of the voice of artists and writers, and this is why there are attempts to silence them and why it may never be possible to hush a voice that can become the voice of many who are mute or who cannot make their own, individualized voices heard.

Censorship in art is always hidden in apparently moral motives. Its intention is to protect the population from images, contents and messages that could be damaging to their integrity or their morality. And especially to protect a young, still uninformed audience - and it is there where we can all practice a certain amount of censorship, in the family-. In this way, censors become everybody's parent protectors. Censorship is the grand mother protector from whom we all want to flee. She looks out for our well-being, our morals, without our asking her to do so. And she measures things, whether they are books, paintings, films, photographs, for her own ignorance and fear and never according to its objective causes or its relation with a real social interest. The censor is aware of his power and in the majority of cases, takes refuge in the darkness of the group, in the anonymity of untouchable laws. They protect us from everything and against everything: from the disparity of opinions, from sex, from homosexuality, from danger, from fear... from ourselves.

We have already said that censorship exists in all epochs and in all cultures. Until recently in China, and at present in Manila, Catholics were assassinated for spreading their religion. In Western countries, having Arabian features may get you landed in jail without further justification. From Cambodia to England, censorship is one and the same reality. And its causes the same, with the logical cultural variants issuing forth from the diverse situations of each country. The only differences are the forms in which that censorship is practiced, how it is presented to society, how it is accepted and which are its immediate consequences. And naturally, which themes it is applied to: what in Japan is a pornographic photograph (Araki), in Europe is a work of art sought after by museums and collectors.

Nevertheless, censorship of information or graphic documents is very similar in all countries : the prevention of massive dissemination of images (especially images facilitated by the photography boom) events that many would have hidden. It is not convenient for a repressive act to be photographed, for police brutality, torture or violence to be disseminated. But, interestingly, there are also attempts to protect us from horror, to prevent something "excessively" harsh from tainting our perception of reality, of a reality dictated by the establishment. Hence, from the past Gulf War, practically no images were shown to us by the media, which, in contrast, is increasingly sophisticated and capable of accessing and broadcasting from outlandish places and situations. In the news shows on the latest war in Afghanistan, dead people never appear, nor do American or European injured ; in the hundreds of hours of footage that we have seen on the 9-11 attack, there are hardly any destroyed bodies, or blood, or injured, or dead. Figures and commentaries are all that is available... in addition to declarations that those images are not offered so as not to disturb viewers still more. However, oddly, what is shown are images -from archives- portraying people celebrating the attack in other countries.

That protection of our sensitivity seems somewhat doubtful when the number of dead Africans, Asians or Arabs we see everyday on the news in any country, are countless. And when we know

that, in addition, there has been censorship of photographs that portray less tragic or melodramatic aspects -in other words, more natural- of everyday moments taking place simultaneously with the terrorist attack, I suppose to prevent us from lessening its importance, that conviction that we are being taken care of becomes a certainty that we are being dictated what we ought to know, think, see and feel.

Press photography, first-hand information, is where censorship is most strictly enforced. This is something we have all seen over the course of our personal experiences regarding the photos of murderous activities occurring in different wars all around the world. Sometimes, they are secret documents the responsible countries conceal for a prudential amount of time... when they could not be destroyed. National security is cited, as is the protection of individuals and the defence of images of symbols such as the flag, the military, the dignity or even the self-esteem of the country. Thus, the news broadcasts in the United States offer retouched images of the lynching of some American soldiers who, by error, landed in Somalia after a bombing. The massacre of students in the Tres Culturas square in Mexico D.F., the current events in Palestine..., there are hundreds of examples of news censorship that come to mind, but perhaps something new is the fact that images with peaceful aspects are filtered out (Thomas Hoepker) because it is intended that we be presented with just one side of reality, or that censorship in its most brutal form should not be shown (a man smearing paint over a painting considered anti-clerical or disrespectful). These images can be found on the pages of EXIT. We also show a few others from the world of press photography, knowing that there are hundreds, thousands of excellent censored photographs. However, we wish to delve into an aspect that is more difficult to explain: the censorship of works of art, whose presence and significance practically never pose a direct or real danger for the establishment or the status-quo they criticize, works that are personal statements about ways of seeing and living, works that are harmless and, above all, that only represent a minority. Denouncements of injustices and abuses of power, establishments of new forms, of radically different expressions, formal and vital explorations that ought to be the essence of artistic creation. But censorship is the same coin with a thousand different sides.

For amateurs and professionals of contemporary art, what is most striking about the current censorship of works of art is the absurdity it embodies in societies that are not only permissive and tolerant but, in many cases, also of more than liberal customs. Public and private morality are evidently not the same but reality and the means of communication show us that even the presidents of the United States are capable of having lovers, lying and getting drunk, and that liberal and conservative politicians of all nationalities may have sexual inclinations, hobbies or shortcomings that border on criminal activity and may be punishable. This fact, however, does not scandalize or surprise in the least. Democratic governments maintain services that parallel spying, and even terrorism. This happens, and has happened, in Germany, France, the United States, Russia, Spain... and the fact that it seems to us reprehensible and morally unseemly is as useless as denouncing real estate speculation, the high price of medicine, the destruction of the environment and hundreds of similar evils. However, a government can cut down kilometers of forest without blinking, while also prohibiting a photograph in which a young girl appears, seated, showing her innocent and almost hidden genitals. This is one photo among thousands of others that without this censorship would not have been considered problematic by anybody. A video installation was eliminated from an exhibition because the artist, in an evidently ironic act, hung a television set from the testicles of a Greek god. Before a work of art like this, we can think or smile, but prohibit ?

It is tempting to tell stories, to describe events and opinions that have arisen in recent years in which art has been censored, to make a sort of humorous text out of this approach to a reality that is darker than it may seem at first sight. Artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, Nobuyoshi Araki, Nan Goldin, Grand Fury, Jock Sturges, Francesc Torres, William Wegman, Josef Koudelka, Herman Nitsch, Ron Athey, Bjarne Melgaard, the Cuban's artists Angel Toirac and Angel Delgado have all been censored, as have many others whose names extend to all the continents, across all countries and cultures. There are always more than each one of us can remember, many more that we will never know, neither of their existence nor the reasons why they were censored. Those mentioned in this text and appearing throughout the magazine are merely examples for which we can offer illustrations and documentation about the absurdity of an ancient custom, that of prohibiting. Some of them have based their success on that very censorship, on the scandalous, provocative force of their images, whereas others have never been able to understand why their work was prohibited. Finding censored works and obtaining permission to publish them has at times become a dialectical problem solved with difficulty and occasionally, the artists themselves have opted to forget and bury that event, not to remember it. Others speak about their problems but

refuse to permit the publication of their conflictive works, so as to avoid greater misfortune. One more form of censorship, self-censorship.

We have said that censorship has a thousand faces and this is due to the different forms in which it may be applied. Nowadays, direct repression, imprisonment and judicial confiscation of work are measures rarely taken in democratic societies, regarding the censorship of works of art. Naturally, in other societies, these things do occur. There is a famous case involving a musician who is prohibited from playing in public and in the end his instrument is confiscated. The story took place in a Czechoslovakian film. Josef Koudelka does not consider himself to have been censored in his country, although his images -especially those portraying the gypsy population- were never exhibited in his country, Czechoslovakia, until very recently. Less known is the reason why the now recognized Soviet photographer Boris Mikhailov lost his job as a civil servant: pictures he took himself of his wife nude were found in his home, nudes that got him sacked for immoral conduct. Afterwards, he devoted himself entirely to photography. The difference between censorship and the refusal to show some photographs, the affirmation that a public punishment may result from a private photograph is something complicated to catalogue.

Punishment, threats, although not directly linked to the creation of artwork, are intimately linked to freedom in artistic creation. It is in these cases when artists opt for leaving their country, when they can. On many other occasions, trials and investigations are punishment in themselves. Rarely do these trials end by imprisoning or punishing the artist, in a media society such as ours, the mere fact of being accused, prosecuted or investigated for reasons of morality or breaching codes of good conduct, etc., may be sufficient cause for a rapid loss of opportunities. Other times, there is an opposite result. Each story is different and the only element present in every case is the absurdity at the heart of the reasons motivating the investigations and the harm done to individuals, and at times to their families and their private lives. Andres Serrano was a virtually unknown artist, one more photographer in New York when one of his works, *Piss Christ*, was censored and removed from the Whitney Museum Biennial. It was during the late eighties and Senator Jesse Helms was at the forefront of a retrograde and puritan censorship crusade, an absurd crusade ridiculed around the world. The response to this censorship was immediate : New York intellectuals flocked to purchase photographs by Andres Serrano. His success, evidently based on the creation of original and serious artwork with historical, social and aesthetic poignancy that has forged a school of its own, received significant boost that accelerated a process that is usually much slower. His prices went up very quickly and since then each new series is awaited with interest and curiosity.

The majority of the censored works focus on themes and aspects that are indeed harsh, ranging from sex to death, violence, drugs, homosexuality and, of course, the criticism of governments, and religious and economic symbols. But the problem lies in the distinct perception of what is permitted and permissible, of the different attitudes towards the same problem. Appearances are not always a good reason for initiating a law suit and much less a governmental prohibition, especially in a society in which reality, often broadcast live, overwhelms any imagination. Art has never been an animal easy to tame. Those who view classical art, that excellent artistic patrimony hanging in museums and palaces, as a purely aesthetic and decorative element, a pure demonstration of technical ability, is absolutely mistaken. It is ignorance to believe that, beyond those forms, there is no concept, no ideas closely related to the social, economic and political circumstances of the time and place in which it was created. Today, we -especially the public at large- are unaware of the complex conditions contributing to the atmosphere of its creation, but authentic art is never aloof from the society in which it is produced. Back then, censorship also existed, its reasons the same as the current ones : to prohibit what may be revolutionary and inappropriate for the powers-that-be and the establishment; to prevent pernicious examples. What is more, we must not forget the function of the majority of art throughout history: to be a means of communication and transmission of doctrine and social customs. It is commissioned art that must obey a set of rules.

Art is currently experiencing a period of unexpected freedom. The artist, perhaps for the first time in the history of humanity, is almost entirely free. At least, the limitations are not strictly political but, more often, economic. In these circumstances, artists produce harsh, radical art, for they are not obligated to please any particular patron by flattering his wife, or to sing the praises of President Bush as if he were Emperor Charles. They can believe in liberty since, in most cases, their dissemination will be scant and their sales unlikely. At times, it seems to me that the art world is a fenced off space, a sort of nursery school in which almost anything goes, while all around, outside that small place, the restrictions, prohibitions, codes and obligatory rules overwhelm all other mortals. Balzac said this though one of his characters, "I am a writer for this way society accepts me, praises me and supports me for doing the same thing that leads others straight to jail."

But this situation of social permissiveness does not mean that the artist, the authentic artist, not the artisan -ho follows fashions or the ingenious opportunist or the skilful and anachronistic genre painter, ceases to come into contact with the society in which he lives or be affected by the same problems others face. The difference is that he must formalize that preoccupation in his works in a way that is not necessarily obvious. He can do so in a number of ways which are sometimes contradictory, sometimes cryptic, ironic, subversive... Most often, what the artist does through his work is materialize his obsessions, a happy or unfortunate childhood, a conflictive sexuality, counter-cultural experiences, everything that makes, him not entirely different from the other people, but absolutely identical to us all. The difference is that speaking about those problems, living and working around them, is his preoccupation, his work, his life.

Sexuality is no doubt one of the persistent problems in every society. Individually, it marks our lives, whether we are heterosexual or homosexual. Our lives are equally marked by our family relationships, our childhood, pain and, indeed, our varying addictions. Hence it is not surprising that many contemporary artists deal with the body, sex and the differences between genders, the things surrounding us on the street and in the media, the things that are an essential part of the culture of our day. More surprising is the fact that war, with its beastly daily presence, is not also a theme of top ranking priority in contemporary art. Perhaps we must wait a bit, or perhaps the market is smothering some options that are even less acceptable than sex, as is doubtless the case with death and concepts such as honor, patriotism, etc.

The differing permissiveness with sex and homosexuality is one of the most customary causes of censorship. Araki cannot sell or show his photographs of nudes in Japan. However, his works, shipped out as documents of no value by his gallerists and friends, are featured in extremely important exhibitions, published in luxurious books and coveted by collectors of contemporary photography in the West. Robert Mapplethorpe and his cult of the masculine body, his experimentation with sadomasochism and socially unacceptable sexual practices, marked a before and after in the history of contemporary photography. Nevertheless, his most censored photo was, paradoxically, the portrait of a little girl, the daughter of friends, dressed but without underwear. This photo was removed from shows all around the world, one of which took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in which there were other photographs portraying much more radical scenes of homosexual sex and masculine nudes. Possibly, Rosie's genitals were more suggestive in the minds of the censors, most certainly for personal reasons. The absurd idea of protecting children from the dangers of sexual abuse implies an incongruence in countries that have the highest level of child prostitution or sexual abuse within the family. Adequate steps for solving the problem are not taken, but censorship is enacted instead. This has happened to the work of artists such as the Spaniard Pere Formiguera or the Americans Tierney Gearon and Sally Mann. Gearon was enmeshed in controversy when the London police intervened in an exhibition in London and threatened to remove her photos of her own children. Sally Mann has been involved in several law suits, accused of producing child pornography, since most of her work -exhibited all around the world and the subject of academic research and transcendental texts- consists of portraits conveying the growth process of her three children. Sally Mann now does landscapes.

There are many more cases. But there are also more subjects. Apparently, explorations of diverse aspects of privacy, such as Tracey Emin's, this being the sole theme of her photographs and installations, are not well regarded. At times, reality itself is enough. The confrontation with one image of the reality we do not like may be enough. The works of Chris Burden are illustrative of this aspect, as are those of Carolee Schneemann and Hermann Nitsch, and many more that would be impossible to enumerate here. But there are also social aspects. Oscar Bony, who died recently in Buenos Aires, was a tough, committed artist who devoted his work to the criticism of a social situation. He did this in a variety of ways, sometimes quite blatantly and other times more symbolically. In his first stage as a conceptual artist, he produced a paradigmatic installation, *The Working Family*, which consisted of hiring a working-class family -father, mother and child- and paying them a day's wage to pose in the exhibition for its duration. Bony thus pioneered new ways of exhibiting, which stars like Peter Greenaway were to make fashionable in much later exhibitions, such as the use of people rather than pieces, people who represented themselves and not actors or hired models. This same tendency has recently become popular with Santiago Sierra's work. Bony's work, immortalized and universally known thanks to its photographic register -which for obvious reasons serves as the artwork in traveling exhibitions- was censored recently in a working-class country, Cuba. We have no knowledge that Santiago Sierra has ever been censored.

There are many more aspects censored : works produced with the excrement of animals, when semen and excrement of all kinds have been employed for works that are now paradigmatic of

modernity ; death, naked bodies, economic and social criticism, such as that carried out by Hans Haacke, which takes him from being censored in one museum to being included in the collection of another museum of equal international standing. Continual absurdities that could reach the limit with the censorship of a work by William Wegman -known because most of his photographic work consists of portraits of his dogs, pure breed Bracos, in a huge variety of poses, vestments and attitudes- in which two dogs appear in bed, in a characteristically human posture, covered up to the neck and about to fall asleep. This work, in which there is no explicit sex, but rather a clear irony and his habitual sense of humor, is censored in compliance with who knows what moral code.

Just as there is a broad range of censurable themes, although the majority of them are related to naked bodies, sex and the criticism of economic power, there are also very diverse forms of censorship, that always end with the removal of the work, the loss of public support and controversy or public judgment. We mentioned above that today's censorship aims to be invisible, to avoid scandal -which is generally counterproductive and has the effect of a greater dissemination of the work meant to be excised- and prevent a polemical exhibition from taking place, advising that public funds ought to be used for something else, whereby the artist or the showroom in question find themselves incapable of doing anything about it. The economy, money and especially its absence have become the tool of censorship par excellence, more efficient and silent than governmental policies or judicial sentences, against which it is very difficult to fight. When faced with "a lack of funds" little can be said or done. But, above all, there is a form of censorship that is the most dangerous and harmful for art and that, in some way, is the sword of Damocles looming above all new and radical artistic creation : discredit.

From Nazism determining which art was "degenerate" to the Guggenheim Museum censoring Haacke, from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) of the United States to the public at large -well advised by official tastes-, similar arguments have been employed. Not only have they criticized the antisocial interests of artists and the perverse influence that homosexuality, among other scourges, has on these artists, but they also present their works and even the artists themselves as sick entities. The art is degenerate, ill ; it is by no means deserving of the money that the public treasury or the public in general can offer to support it. In the Munich of 1937, the citizens were "informed" of the costs accrued by the support of those "degenerate artists", and to convince them that this was not only not art but that, in the minds of upright people, it consisted of ugly and shameful products, the works were exhibited without frames, one on top of the other, in such a way that the conclusion could not be questioned. The same or similar arguments are used today. On the one hand is the evermore widespread question, "This is art ?" and on the other, the malevolent explanation about taxpayer's money being invested indirectly in the support of contemporary art, "This is what public funds are used for". Continuous ridicule of contemporary art from differing unquestionable tribunes is one more way of accepting and defending an unceasing censorship that today, perhaps as never before, not only takes on different forms but is accepted by the artists themselves and by society's avant-garde organizations as if it were something inevitable, for there are greater dangers that must be avoided. In the era of terrorism as the evil weapon, the criticism of a repressive system vanishes as fast as the true intention of the artist.

Rosa Olivares is EXIT's Publisher and Editor.

CENSURE : ENFANCE / MORT

Marcus Harvey, *Myra*, 1995

Seve Penelas, " Censored ", Exit, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.80

The work by Marcus Harvey, *Myra* (1995) was one of the sparks setting off the controversy surrounding the exhibition *Sensation, Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, which took place at the Royal Academy, London in 1997.

Harvey presented a large format portrait of Myra Hindley, a woman condemned in 1965 for participating in a series of murders of children and teenagers that shocked the British society. The portrait, made 30 years later and with Myra still in prison, was based on a photograph in black and white from the police file on the serial killer that was published in the newspaper several times. But it was not the choice of the person portrayed in the photograph alone that infuriated the public ; the straw that broke the camel's back was the method used to produce it : by reducing the picture to a distribution of white, grey and black zones, Harvey resorted to the collaboration of numerous children who impregnated their hands with paint and stamped their prints on the selected zones until the killer's portrait was composed.

After tense debates, the exhibition was inaugurated with the presence of significant security measures and with the portrait of *Myra* included, but that same day it was damaged by two different people, two angry artists who, within an hour, had thrown ink and eggs at the work and were immediately arrested. Jaules Role, a 48-year-old London artist, made a declaration to the press right after he was released, " There are moments when you must do something about it. Otherwise next time we will have even worse, we will have a picture of the actual torture. " The work had to be removed, restored and set up in the exhibition again with protective glass.



Marcus Harvey, *Myra*, 1995, acrylic sur toile, 396 x 320 cm
(reproduction photographique du tableau par Stephen White)

Garry Gross, *The Woman in the Child*, 1975Les personnes impliquées dans les faits en bref

Garry Gross est photographe commercial à New York. Il souhaite réaliser une série de portraits révélant la féminité des jeunes filles pré-pubères ; l'ambiguïté est donc au cœur d'un projet de livre intitulé *The Woman in the Child*. Parmi d'autres modèles contactées pour ce travail, Brooke Shields pose à dix ans pour lui en 1975. La série réalisée avec Brooke Shields est rémunérée (450 \$) par Playboy Press, partenaire du projet, et publiée dans *Little Woman* puis *Sugar and Spice* par Playboy Press. Les photographies sont également exposées en grand format par les boutiques Charles Jourdan de la 5^{ème} Avenue à New York.

Brooke Shields, née en 1965, est enfant-mannequin de la Ford Model Agency lorsqu'elle pose pour Gross. Elle joue au cinéma pour la première fois dans *Alice Sweet Alice*, 1976, d'Alfred Sole. Le rôle de Violet dans *Pretty Baby*, 1978, de Louis Malle la rendit célèbre. Fille de prostituée, Violet aura une relation complexe avec Bellocq, un photographe qui réalise une série sur les prostituées... À l'occasion de la sortie du film *Pretty Baby* en France, l'une des images de Gross paraît en couverture du magazine *Photo*, juillet 1978. L'affaire commence en 1980 lorsque l'actrice tente d'acheter les négatifs puis, en 1981, intente un procès au photographe. Elle obtient la suspension de la distribution et de la vente des images pendant le procès mais Gross gagne celui-ci en 1983. Alors que le site de vente eBay a refusé de mettre en ligne des posters de ses images car celles-ci sont susceptibles d'usage pornographique, Gross tente de les vendre comme des œuvres d'art (par exemple à la Manhattan's American Fine Arts Gallery en septembre 1998) mais il ne parvient pas à concurrencer Richard Prince ! (voir ci-dessous).

Teri Shields, la mère de Brooke, signe en 1975 un contrat avec Garry Gross qui cède à celui-ci tous les droits pour l'usage des photographies de sa fille (exposition, vente, etc.). Elle fait plusieurs fois appel au photographe pour réaliser des images de Brooke publiées dans *Penthouse* et *New York Magazine* ainsi que dans des publicités par les compagnies Courtaulds et Avon.

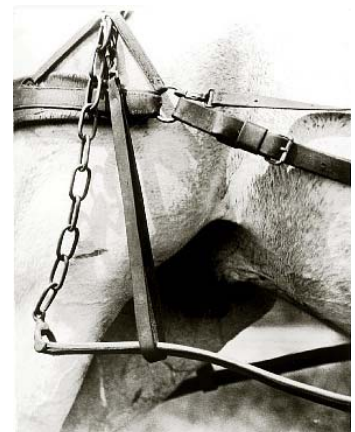
Richard Prince, artiste contemporain célèbre du mouvement postmoderne appropriationniste. " À partir de la fin des années 1970, Prince a réalisé, en photographiant des images de magazines, des tirages de grande qualité où apparaissent les points de trame des originaux. Il a supprimé les textes des publicités et organisé les images selon la typologie des clichés publicitaires. En extrayant ces photographies de leur contexte et en les regroupant, l'artiste met en lumière le processus de signification plus que le signe lui-même." David Campany, *Art et photographie*, Paris, Phaidon, 2005, p.155

Spiritual America. En 1983, alors que Gross sort à peine de son procès l'opposant à Brooke Shields, Prince lui propose l'achat des droits de l'une de ses photographies pour un tirage à 10 exemplaires (2000 \$). Un exemplaire de son œuvre intitulée *Spiritual America* se vendra à plus de 150'000 \$ chez Christie's en 1999. Le titre choisi par Prince a une explication typiquement postmoderne : c'est le titre d'une photographie de 1923 d'Alfred Stieglitz* que Prince a vue exposée au Metropolitan Museum, image représentant le détail d'un cheval au niveau du sexe. Le contraste entre le sujet et le titre frappe à tel point l'artiste qu'il le choisit pour nommer la galerie temporaire du quartier de Lower East Side à New York qu'il crée et dans laquelle il expose l'œuvre *Spiritual America*.

Sources diverses utilisées pour documenter ce texte :

<http://www.childrenincinema.com/art/person.php?id=174>
<http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~tgleason/j385/Brooke.htm>
<http://cbanotes.utk.edu/ACCT/fischer.nsf/626e6035eadbb4cd85256499006b15a6/88e8471b848b8622852568c4007729c8?>
<http://www.slate.com/id/2159172/slideshow/2159215/fs/0//entry/2159209>
http://www.mercedes-bunz.de/wp-content/uploads/2006/05/bunz_moment.pdf

Ci-contre : Alfred Stieglitz, *Spiritual America*, 1923, 11.6 x 9.1 cm



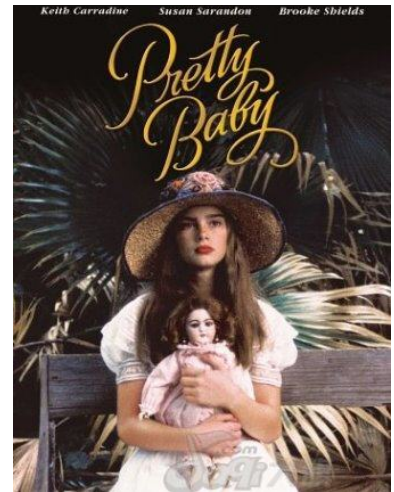
Garry Gross, *The Woman in the Child*, 1975



Garry Gross, *Brooke Shields*, 1975



Garry Gross, *Brooke Shields*, 1975



Louis Malle, *Pretty Baby*, 1978,
détail de l'affiche du film



Garry Gross, *Brooke Shields*, 1975



Richard Prince, *Spiritual America*, 1983

Garry Gross, *The Woman in the Child*, 1975

Garry Gross

Ronald Jones, rubrique American Fine Arts, New York, *Frieze*, n°44, janvier-février 1999

"From what the court has seen of his work, he is not a pornographer, but a photographer of extraordinary talent... photographs of his three youthful models contrasted with their sultry, sensual appeal... These are not pornographic shots or "nudie pix" - they have no erotic appeal except to possibly perverse minds." So Judge Edward Greenfield chose to dispense justice, ruling that Teri Shields, professional stage-mother, would have to abide by the contract she signed allowing Garry Gross full rights to the soapy bathtub photographs he made of her glistening ten year-old daughter Brooke. 'Sultry, sensual appeal' but no erotic appeal - plenty of 'extraordinary talent' ? One wonders what planet Judge Greenfield hails from. Without being legally obliged to weigh in on the artistic merits of the photographs, or for that matter to estimate Gross's talent, Judge Greenfield muddled the waters of what should have been a simple ruling on tort law: the terms of the contractual agreement between Gross and Brooke Shields' mom. And the terms of that contract are as self-evident today as they were in 1975. The right to exhibit and sell the pictures, whatever their artistic quality, and whatever their pornographic content, rests with Gross.

Recently, Gross exercised his right to exhibit and sell his pictures of Brooke at American Fine Arts and to no one's surprise stirred powerful sentiments about exploitation, decency, sexism and the First Amendment. On cue, the press and a bewitched public swarmed. But ultimately, these photographs of Brooke - all dolled-up in steamy bathroom poses - are simply what they are, stumbling into line behind Samuel Leon Walker's daguerreotype of his daughter, Henry Peach Robinson's photographs based on Greuze's paintings of young girls, and of course Lewis Carroll's Alice. In front of Gross goes Sally Mann whose pictures parade the 'innocence' of her country-girl daughters, along with the work of a few other like-minded photographers whose names I have long since forgotten.

Gross's intention in these pictures is parsimonious, predictable and in every instance tedious. He has said that he developed a fascination with the way a four year-old girl asked him for something 'with a certain flirtatiousness, coquettishness'. In graceless prose he drags us through the unbosoming of his artistic inception: 'A stereotypic example in such a situation is', he imagines, 'one afternoon a girl this age, turned down by her busy mother, wants her father to stop reading and play with her. She climbs up on his lap. What happens is this. There is warmth and physicality and he has a mild arousal response'. In this fantasy, Gross projects mature psychological depth onto a four-year-old in order to justify this mild arousal as involuntary, an arousal whose sole arbiter would be the child. He tells us he is helplessly kindled, just as Judge Greenfield is helplessly inflamed by the aesthetic and sensual ebb and flow of these photographs. But Gross's comments about arousal show that he is clearly open to the sexual content in Brooke's pictures and is therefore, in Judge Greenfield's word, 'perverse'. Gross's motives, if taken seriously, together with Judge Greenfield's opinion, career us along a perilous and precarious edge.

Source : http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/garry_gross/



Garry Gross, *Brooke Shields*, 1975, tiré de *The Woman in the Child*

Richard Prince, *Spiritual America*, 1983

Spiritual America : David Deitcher on pre-teen spirit

David Deitcher, *ArtForum*, October, 2004

[...] *Spiritual America* opened in November 1983, one year after *Nature Morte* and one year before *International With Monument* – artist-run spaces that established profitable footholds of anti-expressionism in the heart of the East Village's hitherto expressionistic punk Bohemia. Almost a decade after the opening of *Spiritual America*, in May 1992, the critic Paul Taylor – one of that era's more knowing voices and editor of the timely anthology *Post-Pop Art* (1989) – described the space on Rivington in the pages of the *New York Times* as Prince's "fake gallery." The description is apt, I believe, in that the gallery was a low-key setting for the display of new work by Prince and a handful of friends, distinctly not a place where financial gain was a high priority. Fake also, perhaps, because *Spiritual America* represented a simulacrum of an art gallery – the mere idea of a gallery – at the dawn of the art world's enthrallment with the later writings of Jean Baudrillard.

The space on Rivington opened with the display of a single work, also called *Spiritual America*. The opening was a non-event that nonetheless transformed Prince's venue into a cultish cause celebre among the few people who knew it existed. Prince's work hung alone – shrinelike in a cheap gold frame beneath a diminutive picture light at the end of an otherwise unlit, or dimly lit, narrow room with exposed-brick walls. Taylor dubbed Prince's eponymous piece "one of the biggest stunts of his career." The infamous picture was a photograph of a photograph of a heavily lubricated, extravagantly made-up, prepubescent Brooke Shields, posed to look like she has just arisen from a, steamy bath. An "extremely complicated photo," Prince has said, "of a naked girl who looks like a boy made up to look like a woman."

Complicated indeed. Commercial photographer Garry Gross took the picture in 1975, with the permission of the ten-year-old child's mother, Teri. After Shields became a star in Louis Malle's *Pretty Baby* (1978) and achieved further fame and fortune hawking Calvin Klein jeans in June 1982 she convinced the Supreme Court of New York to issue an injunction against Gross to prevent him from further sales or distribution of the image. In March 1983, eight months before Prince displayed *Spiritual America*, the Appellate Court overturned the injunction in a 4-3 decision, stating that children cannot break a contract signed by a parent or guardian, thus clearing the way for Gross to resume marketing the images to devotees of arty, soft-core child pornography.

Like historic Pop, Prince's neo-Pop demonstrates the persistence, despite the odds, of what Roland Barthes called "that old thing art." Prince borrowed the title *Spiritual America* from a well-known photograph of the same name taken by Alfred Stieglitz in 1923 – a close-up of the belly and haunches of a harnessed workhorse. The reuse of the title serves to measure the historical distance between Stieglitz's modernist equation of American spirituality with a fleshy symbol for the Protestant work ethic and Prince's postmodernist selection of a spectacular kiddie porn tableau. Prince comments, "I saw Stieglitz's photograph, *Spiritual America*, at the Met just before opening the gallery. It's really the whole reason for the show, for the gallery. I mean a picture of a gelded horse with a title like that--it just seemed to mean so much."

Clearly, however, the sight of Stieglitz's picture was not the "whole reason" for any or all parts of the *Spiritual America* episode. Friends (myself included) remember Prince's excitement about the Gross picture, which preoccupied him for some time prior to its display. Some of us were offended by what Prince did with the picture, none more so than Kate Linker, author of "On Richard Prince's Photographs" (first published in *Arts Magazine*, November 1982) and one of the artist's most perceptive early supporters. Linker recounted the episode quite vividly this past summer:

During the very late '70s and early '80s, at a time when Richard and I were good friends, he would often go to one or more bars in the West Forties where young, bit-part actresses hung out. He was fascinated by the power that a specific, minute space in the daily edition of the *Post* or *Daily News* held for them, and particularly by the way in which all of their professional aspirations and sense of success seemed to converge on the possibility of being represented in that small visual venue. Shortly thereafter, when he became overly obsessed with the storefront named *Spiritual America*, I thought that the name referred to the degree to which aspirations – or a form of the American or contemporary spirit – could be reflected in the power of surfaces or, specifically, in the suasion of images. What Richard often called "the look" was a form of that same imagistic power ; few faces or images had it. To a degree, I think he felt that he was encapsulating something paradoxically profound in his focus on the imagistic surfaces that would be chosen and displayed at this other, small visual venue.

CENSURE : ADOLESCENCE ET TRANSGRESSION (SEXE, DROGUE, VIOLENCE...)

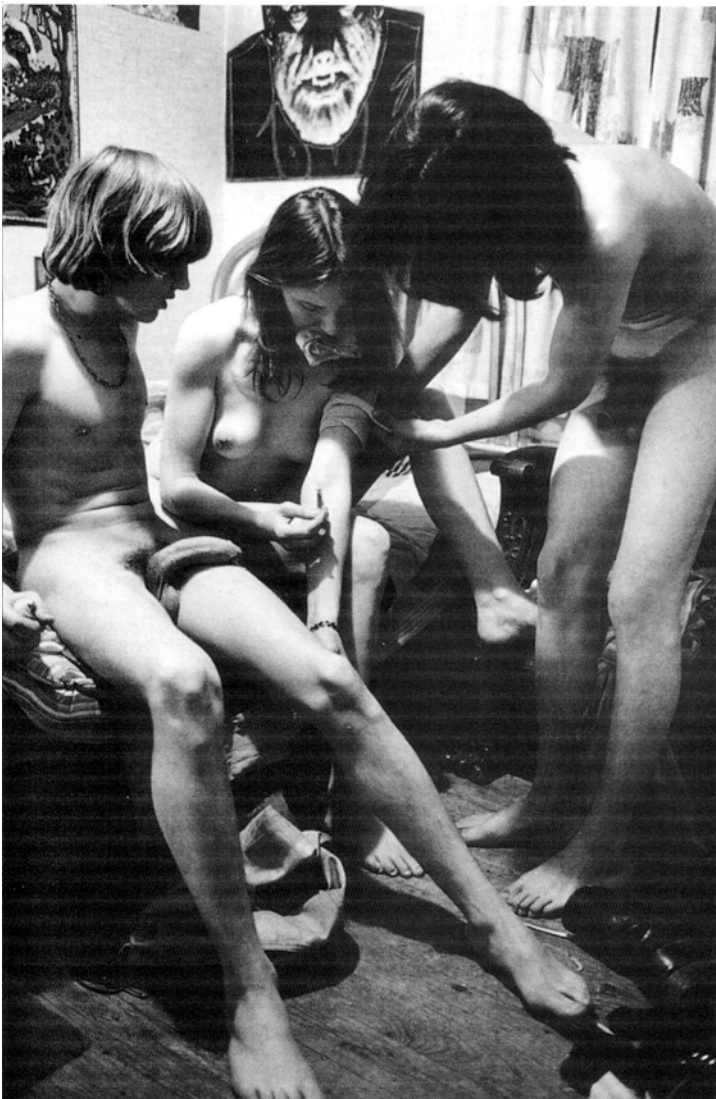
Larry Clark, *Tulsa*, 1971 ; *Teenage Lust*, 1984

Virtually all the photography and films of Larry Clark, blatantly provocative imagery depicting counter-culture teenage drug abuse, sex and violence – in which he himself partakes – have been controversial. His book of photographs *Tulsa* (Lustrum Press, New York, 1971), became a cult object but was not re-issued for many years because of a lawsuit. During the mid 1970's, he was granted an Imprimatur of Excellence grant of \$5,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts, NEA. He used this grant money to pay the lawyers who were trying to keep him out of jail for several drug and violence related offences, including shooting someone in the arm and drunk driving.

In 1984, with financial assistance from the NEA, he produced his second book, *Teenage Lust*, which was even more disturbing than the first. Ironically, selling this NEA-sponsored book became illegal, a fact which made it all the more valuable.

His independent film *Kids* (1995) released at the Sundance Film Festival, was so scandalous and successful that it enabled him to easily seek funds for a new (mainstream Hollywood) movie *Another Day in paradise* (1998), featuring Melanie Griffith and James Woods, from which an entire scene was censored. In the words of Larry Clark during an interview about the film, "The scene started and she (Sid, the character played by Melanie Griffith) was talking, and you get a really good sense of her past and where she's coming from, and the scene ends in a rough sex scene that she initiates. And this scene the censors said no to."

Dena Ellen Cowan, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.156



Larry Clark, sans titre, tiré de la série *Tulsa*, 1971

CENSURE : ADOLESCENCE ET NATURISME, INTIMITÉ vs VOYEURISME

Jock Sturges, *The Last Day of Summer*, 1992 ; *Radiant Identities*, 1994

Jock Sturges, Seattle, 2002, in "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.66

In 1990, after fifteen years of quiet and generally well-accepted work as an American photographie artist, I suddenly found myself the subject of an enormously evasive and brutal federal investigation. Alleging that my work might be child pornography, agents of the government gave themselves license to interview everyone I had ever photographed as well as gallery owners, curators, collectors and friends and family. Having raided my apartment and confiscated virtually everything I owned, they proceeded to ransack my life as far back as 25 years in the past. Their "interviewing" of some of my younger models was particularly egregious. The image "Christina after the FBI..." depicts a counter culture child with whose family I had been working practically since this child's birth. Prior to being interrogated by the federal agents, Christina had never owned a bathing suit nor had she ever possessed the least modesty or sense of shame. But the language and aggressive manners of the agents who spoke with her were so frightening and traumatizing to her that when I saw her several weeks later I found a child so confused about her physical self that she was swimming wearing all her clothes.

The government eventually gave up and left me in peace – a hundred thousand dollars in legal expenses later. As well, they did such damage to my negative and print archive that much of my early work was essentially lost forever.

Now I continue my work with a steady if cautious confidence. The events above changed my life and bruised aspects of my art that had previously been perhaps naively innocent. But none of my friends or subjects abandoned me – or even for an instant considered doing so. And I still photograph and know them all – as I hope I always will. They are the great wealth in my life.



Jock Sturges, *Fanny*, Montalivet, France, 1997

Jock Sturges, *The Last Day of Summer*, 1992 ; *Radiant Identities*, 1994

Biographie

Né en 1947 à New York, Jock Sturges vit à San Francisco. Connu pour ses photographies de nus dans les milieux naturistes en Europe et aux Etats-Unis, son style s'inscrit dans la tradition de photographes américains utilisant la chambre grand format. Sa précision des détails, la recherche d'intensité dans le portrait de ses sujets, de même que la confiance que l'artiste instaure avec ses modèles, constituent sa marque de fabrique. Il suit certains de ces modèles, adultes et enfants, sur plusieurs années, passionné par le passage du temps sur les êtres et les corps.

Source : http://www.wantedparis.com/portfolio.php/manufacturers_id/65/jock/sturges/

Œuvre

Son travail se compose essentiellement de photos de familles, d'adultes, de filles et de garçons, d'enfants, le plus souvent nus. C'est ce dernier point qui a attiré la controverse (voir plus bas). Ses endroits de prédilection sont les lieux naturistes, entre autres ceux de l'ouest de la France (le plus souvent à Montalivet), mais aussi en Italie ou en Californie. Il est lui-même naturiste.

Son style s'inscrit dans une longue tradition de photographes américains utilisant la chambre grand-format. Il évoque plus particulièrement le travail de Sally Mann: noir & blanc aux gammes de gris étendues (les ombres et les hautes lumières sont toujours détaillées), grande précision des détails (utilisation de film 20x25cm), choix de "poses" favorisant une certaine intensité du sujet, images nées d'une collaboration fondée sur la confiance entre l'artiste et ses sujets.

Nature, simplicité, être en devenir et force du regard sont les quelques domaines où il excelle particulièrement. Les instants figés sont empreints de grâce et de sensualité. On perçoit le respect du photographe pour ses modèles d'apparence si fragiles, mais au regard profond. Sturges considère ses modèles toujours avec respect: s'il partage une certaine intimité, il n'y a jamais de voyeurisme.

Ses clichés sont autant de témoignages du passage du temps sur ces êtres, de l'inéluctable transformation à laquelle sont voués tous les corps. Du passage de l'enfance à l'âge adulte, de la maternité à l'indépendance des enfants, toutes ces étapes sont saisies par Sturges.

Cette imagerie de l'évolution, de la transformation est d'autant plus prégnante que Jock Sturges *suit* certains de ces modèles. En effet, il aime retrouver d'une année sur l'autre, ou sur plusieurs années les modèles qu'il a photographié. Ainsi une femme, prise en photo alors qu'elle était en enceinte, puis maintenant, avec l'enfant qu'elle portait. L'un des modèles de Jock Sturges a même été photographié pendant une période de 25 ans!

C'est donc cette temporalité qui fait la force de Sturges: photographier la même personne à des périodes de leur vie différentes, ou photographier en même temps des personnes d'âges différents. À noter qu'il montre de plus en plus son travail effectué en couleur (voir ses dernières publications comme *New Work* ou *Notes*)

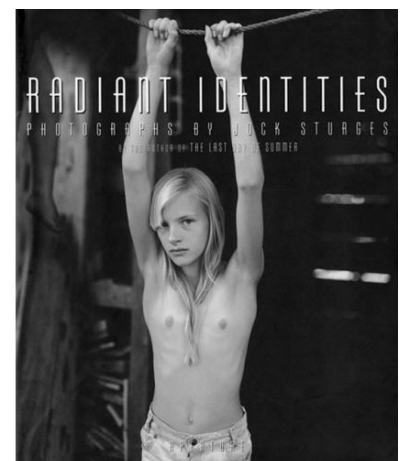
Source : http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jock_Sturges

Controverse

Ses photographies d'enfants nus, pourtant dénuées de tout sous-entendu sexuel, sont souvent mal comprises. Jock Sturges a dû ainsi faire face à la justice américaine: En 1990, il est suspecté par le FBI d'enfreindre la loi américaine sur la pornographie infantile. Son atelier est alors perquisitionné et tout son matériel ainsi que ses photographies sont saisis. Un mouvement de défense composé d'amateurs d'art et de naturistes s'est alors créé et l'a défendu publiquement. Un an plus tard, toute poursuite contre lui a été abandonnée.

Jock Sturges a depuis récupéré tout son matériel, mais de nombreux négatifs furent abîmés et cette affaire lui a fait perdre 100 000 \$ en frais de justice.

Source : http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jock_Sturges



Jock Sturges, *Radiant Identities*, New York, Aperture, 1995

Jock Sturges, *The Last Day of Summer*, 1992 ; *Radiant Identities*, 1994

Jock Sturges has long been a lightning rod for controversy for his distinctive brand of nude photography. Sturges shoots much of his work around nudist beaches in France and northern California, and his most frequent subjects have been adolescent girls. The photos have an undeniably erotic quality, unlike some types of nude photography that treat the human body more as abstract form. However, Sturges aims to draw out the models' own sense of burgeoning sexuality in a straightforward, personal, non-voyeuristic way. Sturges uses a large-format camera to create extremely detailed, finegrained images, while his strong feel for sunlight bathes his models and settings with a shimmering quality. In his writings, Sturges prides himself on the bonds of trust, friendship and collaboration between the photographer, the models and their families. Many of his photographs depict several generations naked together.

Some critics have condemned his work as thinly disguised underage pornography hiding behind the mantle of fine art. To be fair, the market for Sturges's books certainly includes a great many adult males who like looking at naked teenage girls and who have little use for the photographs' artistic qualities. Sturges and his defenders sometimes disingenuously proclaim the "innocence" of his pictures of nude adolescents. In a more legitimate line of argument, Sturges criticizes the arbitrary division of people and their bodies into sexualized adults (over 18) and supposedly asexual children (under 18). The question really is: Should tasteful, non-exploitative erotic photography of adolescents be allowed? Is such a thing even possible? The photography of Jock Sturges presents a powerful case for the affirmative.

Not surprisingly, Sturges has faced legal threats throughout his career. In April 1990, FBI agents raided his studio, confiscated his equipment and work, and charged him with child pornography. Both the art world and the naturist communities publicly came to his defense. After more than a year of investigation, a grand jury threw out the case against Sturges. An expensive lawsuit eventually got Sturges his work and equipment back, though some had been damaged beyond repair.

In the mid 1990s, his work came under attack again, this time from christian conservatives led by Operation Rescue (led by Randall Terry, best known for anti-abortion protests) and Focus on the Family (led by James Dobson). Protesters picketed major bookstores around the country for carrying books by Jock Sturges, David Hamilton and others which included photographs of nude adolescents. At some stores, protesters committed civil disobedience by openly vandalizing the books. And in two cases (both in the South), they managed to convince prosecutors to indict Barnes & Noble bookstores on child pornography and obscenity charges. Again, Sturges received strong public support from artistic and civil libertarian organizations. Sturges himself aggressively defended his work in a series of talks and interviews.

Jock Sturges received a BA in Perceptual Psychology and Photography from Marlboro College, and an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. His published collections include: *The Last Day of Summer* (1991), *Radiant Identities* (1994), *Jock Sturges* (1996), and *Jock Sturges: New Work 1997-2000* (2000).

Source : http://www.masters-of-fine-art-photography.com/02/artphotogallery/texte/sturges_text.html

Images : http://www.artphotogallery.org/02/artphotogallery/photographers/jock_sturges_01.html



Jock Sturges, *La Marmaille*, Montalivet, France, 1989



Jock Sturges, *Arianne and François*, Montalivet, France, 1991

Jock Sturges, *The Last Day of Summer*, 1992 ; *Radiant Identities*, 1994

Naked Truth

David Steinberg, *Metroactive*, 19-25 mars 1998

Body and Soul : Some of the subjects in Jock Sturges' controversial book 'Radiant Identities' are naturists photographed in Northern California and on the beaches of Montalivet, France.

Bay Area photographer Jock Sturges talks back to the Southern judges, the FBI and the right-wing Christians who would like to ban his work

Alabama and Tennessee grand juries recently indicted the nation's largest bookseller, Barnes & Noble, on child-pornography charges involving the sale of books by noted photographers whose work includes pictures of nude children. Among those artists is Bay Area photographer Jock Sturges, whose 10-year-old book, *Radiant Identities*, contains nude portraiture of children and adolescents.

For Sturges, these changes are part of the continuing saga of legal challenges and controversy surrounding his work. On April 25, 1990, FBI agents and San Francisco police officers raided his studio, seizing his cameras, his prints, his computer--everything relating to his occupation as an internationally recognized fine-art photographer. Art communities, both in San Francisco and nationally, rallied around Sturges, his work and the legitimacy of respectful nude photography of children and adolescents. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors denounced the raid and a San Francisco grand jury refused to indict Sturges on any charges.

Supporters of Randall Terry and his organization, Operation Rescue--best known for their protests against abortion clinics--take credit for bringing the books to the attention of prosecutors by such actions as physically destroying books in Barnes & Noble stores. The recent indictment in Alabama describes the work of Sturges and British photographer David Hamilton as "obscene material containing visual reproduction of persons under 17 years of age involved in obscene acts."

To this Sturges responds: "This is pretty chilling language because, in fact, the people in my pictures are not engaged in any acts at all. They are living in contexts that are naturist, which is to say that when it's warm and people feel like it, they don't wear clothes.

"It's laughable, and we'll win these cases, however far it has to go," Sturges continues. "If it gets to the Supreme Court, I'll have the directors of every museum in the country as expert testimony that my work is legitimate art. If obscenity is simply a matter of somebody being without clothes, then there are so many other things that would be inherently obscene--medical books, the *National Geographic*.

"People need to realize that a cultural war has been declared here," Sturges says strongly. "A virulent, aggressive minority has decided that Americans don't know themselves what it is they should see, and need to be protected by people who are wiser than they are, even if they are only a tiny sliver of the population. This represents a whole new level of attention to the arts by repressive forces. It's very scary, and it has to be withstood."

The following interview was conducted with Sturges in his San Francisco home by writer David Steinberg, who writes frequently about the culture and politics of sex.

Corporate Barnes & Noble stands firm, but local outlets silenced by indictments.

Metro: How is the legal situation that you are facing affecting you and your work right now?

Sturges: The problem with being investigated as invasively as I was is that you run the risk of having that episode be the defining event in your life, and I have no desire to be defined by such assholes, period. What I'm good at is making art. I became good at defending myself, but as far as I was concerned, that was a transient skill. It was an occasion I had to rise to. I'd rather get back to making art than talk about it. It's no small irony that the government inevitably and invariably ends up promoting precisely that which they would most like to repress.

Metro: Has that, in fact, happened to you?

Sturges: Well, yes and no. My work was doing pretty well, and now it is doing dramatically better. Is that because people are collecting the pictures because of their notoriety? Or is that simply because people are more aware of the work, and like it, having become aware of it? I don't know. I'll never get to know.

It's really, really hard to make it as a fine-art photographer exclusively. Now that I am, I'm permanently deprived of the pleasure of knowing whether that's based entirely on my work's merit or whether that's based on amplitudes lent by notoriety. That's something that's been stolen from me that I don't get back.

I've been taken to task by some critics for exploiting the whole situation. Those same critics never think to mention that it was something I would never have chosen to have happen to me.

All my life I've taken photographs of people who are completely at peace being what they were in the situations I photographed them in. In very many cases that was without clothes, and it simply was not an issue. They were without clothes before I got there, and they were without clothes when I left. That was just a choice that they had made, and one they didn't even think about; they were simply more comfortable that way. It never occurred to me that anybody could find anything about that perverse. It was a total surprise to me, which is obviously evidence of my having been pretty profoundly naive about the American context. But over the course of my life I've spent so much time in this context that I'd forgotten that *Homo sapiens* isn't always like that, which is indeed naive of me. I'm guilty of extraordinary naiveté, I suppose. But it's a naiveté that I really don't want to abandon, not even now.

Metro: Having been through all that you've been through, I can't imagine how you can take photographs now without having legal concerns somewhere in your mind.

Sturges: There are photographs that I don't take now that I previously would have taken without any thought at all as to any misinterpretations. The truth is that people who are naturists, who are used to being without clothes, are unself-conscious about how they sit around, how they throw themselves down on the ground, how they sit in a chair, how they stand. They don't think about it; it's not an issue. There's nothing obscene about them. Before, I'd photograph anything. I didn't think there was anything more or less obscene about any part of the body. Now, I recognize that there are certain postures and angles that make people see red, which are evidence of original sin or something, and I avoid that. I don't shoot that any more. But it's difficult. At one point, [my wife] Maia found me crossing legs, or avoiding angles, or giving instructions which inadvertently were instructing young people that some aspect of what they were doing was inherently profane, some aspect of who they were inherently were profane. I've had to relearn how I work with people so that if and when I do avoid different things I don't send any messages in doing so. I'm the last person who has any desire to instruct anybody in shame. That's no errand for me.

Metro: The semantics are tricky here, but I'm interested in whether you see your work as erotic. I don't mean erotic as sexual and I don't mean erotic as intending that people who look at your photos become aroused. But certainly, when I look at many of your photos, when I look at many of Sally Mann's photos, what I see is the natural eroticism of children, or preteens, or teens. Now I don't want to grab that and use it for adult sexual purposes, but I don't want to deny that this is often what that age is about.



Christopher Gardner Prints of Peace: Photographer Jock Sturges says because of the FBI raids and the recent indictments, "There are photographs that I don't take now that I previously would have."

Sturges: Western civilization insists on these concrete demarcations. Before 18, physically you don't exist; after 18, you exist like crazy.

Metro: Sexually.

Sturges: Sexually. Before 18, nobody has anything in their pants; after 18, they have everything in their pants. It's ridiculous. The truth is that from birth on we are, to one extent or another, a fairly sensual species. There isn't a person alive who doesn't like being caressed. Children masturbate as early as 1 1/2 or 1 year old. They do it spontaneously and without any thought that there's anything evil about making themselves feel good. That's a sensual experience in their lives, one that should remain entirely the property of the child, as it were. Nobody is going to argue, last of all myself, that it should become involved to any extent in any adult experience of sexuality. But the truth is that *Homo sapiens* is a sensual species. I think all species are, to one degree or another.

Very naturally, the ages of consent in Europe are vastly lower than they are here, in recognition of the fact that when you have people involved with sexuality, you may as well make it legal so that you can deal with them better about it, so that they'll talk to you and you can educate them.

We're really blind in this country. People don't see the extraordinary inconsistencies. I think the average age for the loss of virginity for female children in this country now is like 14 1/2 or 15. There's this vast epidemic of unwed mothers and teenage mothers, and yet we have an 18-year-old age of consent which makes them all felons. If the age of consent were lower, and you could talk to these children intelligently and not have to worry about school boards and PTAs going apoplectic if you mention the word *condom*, let alone sex and making people intelligent about it, probably we'd have a whole lot more intelligent take on the whole thing. As soon as you forbid something, you make it extraordinarily appealing. You also bring shame in as a phenomenon.

In our society there's so much shame attached to sexuality in a lot of social milieus that sexual abusers here on the average have had something like 70 or 100 victims before they're finally caught. In Holland where the age of sexual consent is, I think, 13, the average is vastly lower--it's like three or four. That's because people tell much sooner, because shame is absent.

So when moral crusaders raise limits, create still higher barriers, they're getting the opposite of what they want. It's very shortsighted, I think, to not understand better how the species works psychodynamically.

Metro: Focus a little on how that affects how you see your work. Isn't what you're calling the sensuality of children or pubescent teenagers a major part of what you go for, of what makes a photo of yours work?

Sturges: I'm an artist that's attracted to a specific way of seeing and a way of being. Any artist that's involved in their work is inevitably going to have a focus in what they do. I am fascinated by the human body and all its evolutions. The images I like best are parts of series that I've started, in some cases, with the pregnancies of the mothers of the children in question, and I continue that series right on through the birth of children to the child that resulted from that first pregnancy. I have series that are 25 years long. I just yesterday returned from a trip where I photographed a woman with two children whom I photographed first when she was the age of the older of the two children.

I have this naive and quixotic hope that in seeing the physical progress from start to no finish, from the beginning on, and looking at the body in all its different changes, looking at the fat-bellied babies turning into thinner children--they get straight, they get long, they become sticks, they begin to develop, their hips go, the whole process matures--that people understand that the person occupying that body is more than just a physical object. The pictures don't objectify: they're about the evolution of personality and self as much as they are about the evolution of the body, more than they're about the evolution of the body, because what stays the same is not the body. What stays the same is character, personality. It evolves and matures too, but there are certain ways of standing, there are certain sets to the eyes, there are certain behavioral consistencies, which from the very youngest photographs you can see. It's just always there. It's fascinating to see what stays the same and what changes.

My hope is that the work is in some way counter-pinup. A pinup asks you to suspend interest in who the person is and occupy yourself entirely with looking at the body and fantasizing about what you could do with that body, completely ignoring how the person might feel about it. That's of no interest to people who make pinup photography. They don't care who the woman is, what tragedies or triumphs that person's life might encompass. That's of absolutely no relevance.

My work hopefully works exactly counter to that. That's my ambition: that you look at the pictures and realize what complex, fascinating, interesting people every single one of my subjects is. They're all different. I don't photograph any two people who are remotely the same.

Metro: Are you surprised when people find your photos erotic?

Sturges: No. Not at all.

Metro: It seems to me that you go out of your way to deny that they're erotic, to disassociate from collections of photos that are erotic. I understand that politically you're in a tricky position.

Sturges: Let me make an important distinction here. I will always admit immediately to what's obvious, which is that Homo sapiens is inherently erotic or inherently sensual from birth. But, by the same token, that remains the property of the individual in question up until the point where they become sexually of age, as it were, and it's arguable as to what that age is. If I said for attribution that it was before 18 years old, I'd be hung, drawn, quartered, the whole thing, in American society. In Europe it would raise no eyebrows at all.

But there's something else that functions. As soon as the system, or an individual in the system, accuses another individual--as I was implicitly accused, because there were never any charges brought against me--the accused is forced into artificial polarities of political posture. As soon as somebody says that you might be X, you have to immediately say, 'Oh no, I'm Y,' even if in fact the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. I found myself serving a sentence of public denial from the very second the raid on my apartment happened. I had to pretend to be something that, quite frankly, I'm probably not, which is a lily white, absolutely artistically pure human being. In fact, I don't believe I'm guilty of any crimes, but I've always been drawn to and fascinated by physical, sexual and psychological change, and there's an erotic aspect to that. It would be disingenuous of me to say there wasn't. There it is; so what? That fascination pervades the species from the beginning of time; people just admit to it to varying degrees.

One of the fun things, or fascinating things, for me has been to look at who the accusers are, because invariably, when somebody becomes interested in your sexuality, in your moral life, what

they're very often manifesting is an attempt to disguise from others, and perhaps even in many cases from themselves, disrepair in their own personal sexual life or morality. It's what I call the trembling finger syndrome. If somebody's pointing a trembling finger at your pants and saying you shouldn't be doing that, follow that finger back, go up the arm and look at the head that's behind it, because there's almost always something fairly woolly in there.

Metro: Let me ask you this: How do you work with models, particularly young models, in a way that does not appropriate their sexuality, their eroticism, their sensuality, for adult purposes?

Sturges: There's two levels. The transactions between me and the people that I photograph are very, very collaborative. I know the families that I photograph extremely well, and I've known them for a very long time. The kids really enjoy what they do. I check with them constantly to make sure that they're really happy to be there. I give them lots of outs so that the pressure of my personality, which children find charming as a rule, does not force them into doing things that they don't want to do.

Metro: How do you do that?

Sturges: I'm always saying, 'Are you cold?' 'Do you want to stop?' 'Have you had enough?' 'I don't want you just to be here; I want you to be really glad to be here.' Language like that all the time. With some kids, it isn't necessary anymore because we know each other so well. It's just not a problem.

Metro: Do they like posing?

Sturges: They adore it. Are you kidding?

Metro: What do they like about it?

Sturges: They like being taken seriously as people. After they've been in the process for a while they realize they get all the pictures that we do--the families get a copy of every photograph that I take--and they begin to really enjoy being thought of as beautiful. We live in an age where anonymity is growing in magnitude like a bomb going off. The media stars are becoming more and more powerful, and as they are increasingly powerful, we are increasingly ciphers. The distance between their lives and our lives is growing all the time. Children feel absolutely invisible in this, unnoticed, and as if they can make no difference. The world is shrinking as we see more and more of it in the media, and the more we see of the world, the smaller we are, the more aware we are of how insignificant any one of us is.

Bodies of Evidence: After his photographs of naked adolescents were confiscated by the U.S. government, Sturges says the FBI went on to harass his models in 'the worst imaginable way.'



Kids feel this, even if they can't articulate it in quite that way. Time and again, when interviewed about being photographed, they talk about the photography as a way of becoming less anonymous. They like the admiration; they like the thought that somebody thinks that they can be art.

So the kids really enjoy the process. It's a collaborative process, very much so.

Now, on the second level, there's what happens after the photographs are made. But I no longer control that. It's not at all hard for me to imagine that there are some aspects of society that will buy my book, buy my photographs, who will look at them and have 'impure thoughts.' There are also people out there who buy shoe ads and Saran Wrap and all manner of things, who have impure thoughts. I can't really do anything about those people, except hope that, if they attend to my work closely enough, that ultimately they'll come to realize that these are real people.

What pedophiles and people who have sexual desires on children lose sight of to a terrible, terrible degree--a devastating degree--is that their victims are real people who will suffer forever whatever abuses are perpetrated on them. If I'm able to make pictures of children that are so real, as you follow the children over the years in any given book, and in subsequent books they get older and older and grow up, perhaps there might be something cautionary in that visual example, because the truth is that every pedophile's victims eventually grow up and become adults who are willing to turn around, and that's when they get caught. Every child is going to grow up. You can see it happen in the books: They get older and older and belong to themselves to a greater and greater extent.

That dichotomy between the public consumption of the work and my intent and practice in making it is an uneasy one for me, on occasion.

Metro: How does that work for the models? I know that you give them ongoing control over their images.

Sturges: Right. They control their photographs because I don't let them sign model releases. I urge them never to sign a model release for anybody unless they have been paid specifically to do a specific job on a contractual basis, for an advertising agency or something. Who knows how they're going to change? I don't want to ever be guilty of making assumptions about those

changes. They might marry a Methodist minister from Minnesota and have a very conservative life. It's not inconceivable that at some point in the future they might decide that these pictures embarrass them. That's never happened to me, but the control, the power to decide whether that happens or not, shouldn't be mine--it should be the kids', and that's where it stays. It creates a very complex life for me, I promise you. When I want to use a picture in a book, I have got to call foreign countries, find people, explain the context. My phone bills are astronomical sometimes.

Metro: Have you ever had people who have wanted you to pull pictures?

Sturges: I've had a number of American adolescents who, when they hit high school, said, "I really don't want to see these pictures published right now," and they were immediately pulled. I took them out of the galleries. They completely ceased to exist as far as the public perception of the images went. But when the kids were finished with high school they said, "Don't worry about that; I just went through a stage, and it's fine now."

When I started doing my work years ago, I had doubts as to whether the informed-consent question was answerable. But empirically I've come to understand that my photographs really don't do any harm. And the way I found that out is by virtue of the fact that a huge number of people that I've photographed over the years have now come of age and are able to speak in adult voices about the process. What they're saying is unanimous--I don't have any dissenting voices--which is that they love the pictures. They're really pleased that they exist, and they want me to photograph their kids. If these people had felt the least bit victimized by what I was up to they wouldn't be having me do the same thing to their own kids. I think it's just wonderful that they're so generous. I feel so lucky to know them.

Some of these people were bugged by the FBI in the worst imaginable way. They were interviewed very, very aggressively. They're all still willing to let me take their pictures; they think the FBI was completely full of it.

Metro: Another photographer I know who has worked with teenagers and young women says that sometimes he's concerned that he may be leading these people in a difficult direction because they get so much into how they look that then they get into the whole glamour/model thing.

Sturges: I've only once had a model go in that direction, and she was on her way there before I met her. A remarkably narcissistic human being. The principal way that I work is that I tell people not to move when they're doing something that I like. It's almost always something relatively improbable, which is to say, not a glamour pose, not the arms behind the head, not that kind of thing. The message is that who you are naturally is what I like the best. Virtually always I get my best pictures when everybody thinks the shoot's done. I'll go to do a shoot, I'll spend five or six hours at the beach with people, and when people think I'm all out of film, then they really relax and I get my good pictures. Hopefully the message is that you don't have to pose and put on makeup and be glamorous to be admirable. You're most admirable when you're the most human. I hope that's the message that my work delivers.

No two people take on the information of being admirable and being admired in the same way. I can't begin to know the psychological ramifications of what I do in the long run. I don't live long enough. It may be that the most important ramifications of what I do will come on my models in their 60s and 70s, when they look very different than they do in the pictures now, and when they will have the photographs as a reminder. It may be that reminder is painful. I hope not. I hope that they can continue to accept themselves and their bodies as they change and grow, as continuously beautiful. I can't answer that question with any kind of certainty; I just don't get to know.

Some of the people that I photographed as sticks became much more voluptuous, much rounder, in some cases dramatically so, and I think they're even more beautiful. Some of them are in their 30s now, and their bodies are beginning to obey gravity's halcyon call, and I think they're still more beautiful because now they're the origins of other people, of children themselves. That beauty is flowing back into their own children. To me that illuminates them and it illuminates the children as well. It's just all part of the same circle.

Physical beauty is such a strange thing. Homo sapiens happens to think that certain things are beautiful. Different members of different cultures will think that some things are beautiful. The Japanese used to paint their teeth black. There's no end to the variations on what it is we find aesthetically appealing, and there never will be any end to it. But the truth is that the fact that we have an aesthetic sense is part of what separates us out from the lower animals. There's no particular evidence that any of the lower mammals or any of the other animals have any interest in aesthetics at all. But Homo sapiens does, always has and always will.



Jock Sturges, *Eva*, Le Porge, France, 2003

CENSURE : LIENS FAMILIAUX

Sally Mann, *Immediate Family*, 1990

Dena Ellen Cowan, in "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.106

Sally Mann, who often photographs her own children, has been accused not only of setting a bad example as a mother, but also of using her children as sexual fetishes, of forcing them to pose in unnatural ways with pornographic undertones. The shadow of repressed incest, of child pornography, of child abuse, looms in the criticisms and commentary on these works published in the United States.

In May, 2000, the Governor of Kentucky, Jim Gilmore, called many of Mann's photographs "outrageous, lewd and disturbing". Gilmore and his wife Roxanne announced they were shocked and dismayed to hear about a slide show Mann did in Richmond and they said it was unacceptable that it took place at the state-supported Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

The governor told the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to develop guidelines to censor future displays. The museum responded by issuing its new rules in which they refuse to select material based on decency or obscenity and state that they will continue to make selections based on merit. Sally Mann praised the museum's courageous decision declaring, "The Virginia Museum has responded in a sincere and dignified way to the implied threat and the patently political issue concocted by Governor Gilmore."

Prière de voir les illustrations en p.57-59 de ce dossier.



Sally Mann, *Sorry Game*, 1989



Sally Mann, *The New Mothers*, 1989

Disturbing Images

Christopher H. Pyle

This essay is adapted from a lecture delivered at the Mount Holyoke College on April 22 [1999].

Few photographers disturb our sensibilities more than Sally Mann, whose beautifully-crafted pictures of her own children, naked, bloody, and bruised, are on display at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum until June 27 [1999].

The immediate reaction of most viewers is outrage. How could a mother, of all people, record her daughter naked, lying on a urine-soiled bed, her son with blood dripping down his chest, or her daughter seemingly impaled on a meat hook? Mann's pictures offend our conventional wisdom, both about what childhood should be and how mothers should protect their children.

Curiously, this artist has never been censored. Her work has even been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. To most first-time viewers, however, she has earned the right to be censored; her family images are redolent of decadence and child abuse. The childhood she has filmed with her documentary camera is the antithesis of what we would want for our children. Decent parents would never photograph their children in such circumstances.

Mann's children look like little Lords and Ladies of the Flies. If they lived next door, we would probably not let our children play with them. Indeed, if these pictures are to be believed, her children should be wrapped in blankets and bundled off to foster care.

If Mann lived in South Hadley, Massachusetts, she certainly would have been told what a bad mother she is. My wife got such lectures, just for letting our sons wear "coed naked" T-shirts to high school. When our boys had the temerity to challenge the censorship of their shirts in court, a columnist for *Boston Globe* insisted that they must have grown up in "a home full of cultural sludge." Another, writing for the *Valley Advocate*, compared them to the Menendez brothers, then on trial for murdering their parents. That's what happens when you wear disturbing images in my town.

When Jock Sturges, who lives in Colorado, published his pictures of pre-teens lounging about in their birthday suits, the FBI seized all his photographs and kept them for two years while they tried to prove that he sought to promote pedophilia. When booksellers displayed David Hamilton's book of budding breasts, the booksellers were indicted for purveying obscenity by grand juries in Alabama and Tennessee. But Sally Mann, who photographed her children naked in rural Virginia, has so far escaped censorship, although she lives among the Christian Right.

Why? Perhaps Virginia's prosecutors know how hard it is to censor anybody today. My sons won their case, 7-0, in the state's highest court. The prosecutions relating to the works of Sturges and Hamilton both failed, and the Supreme Court now permits pornography on the Internet.

But that doesn't explain why her exhibits haven't been closed or why she hasn't been denied government grants. To first-time viewers, her children certainly look like the neglected off-spring of dirt-poor hippies, or trailer trash in-need-of-supervision.

Of course, the good people of Lexington, Virginia, know better. The Manns drive a Chevrolet Suburban and own 400 acres of the best real estate in town. Sally's mother may have been a Yankee, but her daddy was a Reb, a good doctor who delivered nearly everyone in town. Sally went to Bennington, that hippie college in Vermont, but she also had the good sense to return home and reclaim the family farm. Her neighbors may even think it funny that she can get rich by selling pictures of her kids in New York and by giving slide shows about them to women in New England.

For the rest of us, the big issue with Mann's family photos is not free expression but privacy. More precisely, it is the wisdom of taking such revealing pictures and publishing them before the children are old enough to consent.

In occasional lectures, Mann assures us that her children not only consented to the pictures, but played an active role in their creation. They still endorse her work, now that they are adults. Perhaps, but her mode of child-rearing still looks like one of those psychologically-risky ventures that we would not recommend anyone try at home. But who are we to argue? They are her kids. She knows them best, and if anyone should intervene, it is not us, but the state department of children's services. So, rather than demand censorship, we accept her explanations and go on to admire the diaphanous beauty of her platinum prints.

Even so, we still grumble. Since Victorian times, our moral majority has felt duty-bound to shield young children from most intimations of sex, death, or doom. In my town, that has meant censoring T-shirts. But Sally Mann disagrees. By photographing children with tense crotches, standing next to menstrual-stained bedcovers, or hanging lifeless from a rope, she profoundly disturbs our conventional proprieties.

Most viewers are especially angry that she should take a picture of a daughter with a terribly battered eye instead of comforting her. Were they to attend one of Mann's slide shows, however, viewers would learn that she did hug and kiss her daughter, as any mother would have done. They will also learn that the girl's eye was swollen from bug bites, not violence, and that she was delighted to have her mother record the injury.

Still, Mann looks like a neglectful parent, allowing her pre-teens to run naked and wild. Only from lectures do we learn that she raised them on a secluded estate and watched them like a hawk. She was always there -- with a camera, of course, but she was there. Truth be told, her children are not the feral creatures they appear to be and she is not a Mommy Dearest. She's more like the guy who dressed up his dogs and made calendar pictures of them. And, like those dogs, her kids enjoyed being the center of attention. So, maybe she is not such a bad mother after all.

But, suppose Sally's husband had taken these pictures. Would we be so forgiving? If the local morals squad paid him a visit, would we be as likely to spring to his defense as we would to his wife's? If these pictures had been taken by a man, would museums be as eager to exhibit them, or invite him to explain why he was so interested in filming naked children? There is probably a reason why few museums display the sadomasochistic work of Robert Maplethorpe, despite his undeniable artistry.

In other words, it is not just the artfulness of Mann's images that shields her from condemnation; it is the artful way she excuses her transgressions. We look at the picture of the all-too-aware girl with

the cigarette and fear she is headed for trouble. Then we read the caption and discover that the cigarette is made of candy. Similarly, those scabrous legs are not diseased; flour and water just made them look that way. The red liquid on the boy's abdomen is not really blood; it is raspberry juice. The naked girl in the harlot's pose is really innocent; look closely and you will see that she has a wad of chewing gum on her finger. The children look wild, shameless, and out of control, but the captions tell us otherwise. Eventually, we are assured, Sally's little swamp foxes will put on clothes and joined the middle class, just like ours.

In this respect Mann's work is very different from that of the men who have been censored. Andre Serrano gave us a beautiful picture of a crucifix submerged in amber liquid, and then ruined it by telling us that the liquid was urine. At that point, few people were interested in learning any more, and Mr. Serrano is not likely to receive any government grants. Similarly Robert Maplethorpe is not likely to be forgiven for introducing us to a homosexual who has a whip handle stuck firmly up his behind. These men pushed the envelope in ways Sally Mann has not.

Many people took Mann at her word when she claimed to have made a documentary of her children's lives. That's something most of us, as parents, would love to do, if we only had her skill with a camera. We are outraged by what her pictures seem to say, relieved to learn that her children were not abused, and then persuaded that the whole family has been having us on. The pictures are true in one sense and fictitious in another, leaving some viewers with a vague sense of betrayal. Children are supposed to be innocent, guileless, and spontaneous; hers seem to have learned too much, too early, and are complicit in her fraud. Besides, if you can't trust a Matthew Brady camera to tell you the truth, who can you trust?

Ironically, the very inauthenticity of Mann's portraits shields her from censorship. Once we know that the images have been contrived, our anger evaporates and, with it, the impulse to censor or denounce. We are no longer sure what her pictures mean, which both heightens our curiosity and protects her from censorship.

Despite Mann's choice of equipment, she is no Matthew Brady, the Civil War photographer whose unblinking camera forever destroyed our romantic view of war.

She is more like Cindy Sherman with a touch of John Irving: like Sherman because she is something of a performance artist, and like Irving, because her pictures (including those ominous slashes of light and shadow) seem to warn us of Irving's "undertoad." But, even as we sense danger, we do not reach out to rescue these children. Something tells us that these defiant urchins are nobody's victims.

So I think we can safely dismiss Mann's claims of innocence; her bewilderment at the suggestion that pre-teens can be sexual, or her surprise that anyone would consider her work controversial. This artist and her performing children know exactly what they are doing. They are jerking our chain. We may think she is allowing us see her family album, but she isn't. For all their undeniable artistry, her photos are something of a hoax. The joke is on us and that is what preserves her privacy and saves her from censorship. Despite its documentary aura, Mann's family album does not tell the truth in the tradition of Matthew Brady, Walker Evans, or Dorothea Lange. And we are relieved that it doesn't.

Lawyers can explain why Mann's images, including mother and daughters peeing (not in the show), fail to qualify for censorship in books, at galleries, or on the Internet. My sons can explain why her pictures can now be printed on T-shirts and worn to any high school in Massachusetts. But Mann needs no legal help. By revealing how her pictures were contrived, she has protected herself from all but the most stupid of censors.

Source : <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/comm/oped/Disturbing.shtml>

Photographer depicts children in paradise

Teresa Annas, rubrique Daily Break, *The Virginia-Pilot*, Sunday, March 24, 1996, p.E7

Whatever nasty things censoring minds might conjure regarding Sally Mann's photographs, her images reflect the best family values. How you see it depends where you're coming from, of course. And, basically, Sally Mann is a '60s-reared intellectual earth mother who found her freedom in the context of marriage. Last week, Mann gave a slide lecture on her work at The Chrysler Museum of Art, where one of her prints is included in the show "Photography Speaks II."

The 44-year-old photographer lives in the small town of Lexington, Va., with her husband of 25 years and their three children. She grew up in Lexington, the child of a respected but eccentric country

doctor. The Manns spend their summers at a rustic cabin in the mountains; apparently, the kids run around naked in this isolated natural setting.

Meanwhile, Mom has been taking pictures. By now, fans of contemporary art photography worldwide know what Mann's kids look like. Art lovers have watched her beautiful, impish youngsters grow up. Her pictures have become famous; they have made her a millionaire "and the most talked-about photographer of her generation," reported *Mirabella* magazine in its February issue. Numerous books on her work have been published, from "At Twelve: Portraits of Young Women" (1988) to "Sally Mann : Immediate Family" (1992), featuring her babes in paradise. Meanwhile, her work has been criticized for teetering too close to child pornography, because of the nudity and poses that are innocently provocative. Clearly, these kids are unashamed of their bodies. Mann's work has been exhibited at The Chrysler Museum of Art since the early 1980s, when her elegant platinum prints of figures in silken slips were included in the group show "Not Fade Away."

For her slide talk, Mann presented work covering her entire career, from her first picture - a nude, photographed at age 17 - to the series on her kids. She ended her talk with her latest pictures - intimate nude scenes of herself and her husband Larry. Pictures of the couple making love were a bit shocking, a bit on the exhibitionist side. Mann explained she was trying to break ground, that men had made such portraits honoring their female lovers - but she knew of no women who had done the same for their man. One couldn't help but wonder, if these two had less perfect bodies, would they be so willing to exhibit their love-making? Still, to be married for 25 years, and to remain so passionately involved, is admirable - if a taboo subject. Besides, isn't marital bliss supposed to be sacred? Looking at least a decade younger than her age, Mann wore a demure suit and pearls. She looked so young, in fact, she appeared to be playing dress-up - like her daughter Jessie in a picture Mann took of her at age 5. Mann's hair was braided in back the same as her mother's hair was for an early photo.

For Sally Mann, picture-taking was controversial from the start. That first nude picture almost got her kicked out of boarding school, she said. That's when she learned that "photography can be dangerous." Early on, she also made wistful, evocative photographs of the sweet green hills around her Rockbridge County home. Then, during one of her pregnancies, Mann photographed herself nude and in profile each week, then created a flip book of her swelling belly for the birth announcement. "I innocently sent that birth announcement all over town," she said. "I always think things are perfectly all right, and find out later that it's offending somebody."

In the mid-'80s, she made portraits of 12-year-old girls in her town. The pictures unflinchingly presented the girls' lives and alluded to their budding sexuality. One 11-year-old girl was photographed with her newborn child in her bedroom, still very much a girl's room with shelves of dolls predicting her path. Then, while her kids were very young and playing nearby, she worked on a series of photos focused on odd objects she had thrown into a small plastic pool. Eventually, it developed into "a little compost pile of photo props that became fetid and gross."

Soon after, she got caught up in photographing her children. "It took me a long time to realize there's real art to be made while being a mother." She tried to make real pictures that showed the rashes, bumps and throwing-up as well as the natural sensuality of childhood. It seemed natural to photograph the children naked. "I was raised in a peculiar way," she said. "It was said I didn't wear clothes until I was 7. I was basically a feral child. We lived out in the country. And we lived like animals. I now realize my life was unusual."

Her mission sometimes was beyond her. When son Emmett was hit by a car, she just knew she couldn't photograph him, though he pulled through it just fine. One disturbing incident came when the *Wall Street Journal*, in 1991, reprinted a nude portrait of 4-year-old Virginia with censoring black bars across her chest and genitals. Mann shared the letter Virginia wrote to the *Journal*, in her 5-year-old scrawl: "Dear Sir: I don't like the way you crossed me out." The next few slides showed Virginia being photographed nude, but with her hands over her private parts. As Mann described these sessions, her voice cracked. You could tell she almost broke into tears.

Those dirty-minded people had made Virginia feel ashamed of her body. They had banished her from paradise. With a word from the serpent, she was out of Eden.

When the *Mirabella* reporter recently asked her if she had any regrets, she said, "it was a great relief to say no. And the children say it with even greater vehemence," she said.

"I want to make people think. I'm not guileless. I want to make art. If making my art upsets people, I don't see any harm in upsetting people."

CENSURE : LIENS FAMILIAUX

Tierney Gearon, sans titre, 2000, exposition *I Am a Camera*, 2001

In March 2001, the Saatchi Gallery held an exhibition [*I Am a Camera*] which included the photographs of the American artist Tierney Gearon. In the images, her six-year-old daughter Emily and her four-year-old son Michael appear partially undressed in some cases, urinating in the snow or posing nude, albeit wearing masks, on the beach. The British police, the Scotland Yard, threatened to confiscate said photos if they were not removed from the exhibition.

Saatchi Gallery Statement to Press :

" The Saatchi Gallery will continue to exhibit the work of Tierney Gearon. The two pictures that the police have commented upon are harmless photographs of her children disporting themselves on holiday. They lack any prurient interest and are neither lewd, nor sexually provocative. We have been advised by leading Queen's Counsel that they are not indecent.

Any prosecution of them would be a breach of an undertaking given to parliament when the Protection of Children Act was passed. The pictures have been widely published in magazines such as *Tatler* and in national newspapers the exhibition has been exceptionally reviewed. To take the pictures down and hide them in a locked cupboard would be a betrayal of artists in this country and all citizens who choose to enjoy their work. We will not give in to police threats, which have no basis in law. We shall be submitting counsel's opinion together with our evidence to the Director of Public Prosecutions next week. We do not anticipate that he will authorise a prosecution. "

Saatchi Gallery, London, March 9, 2001, in " Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.82



Tierney Gearon, sans titre, 2000, 122x183 cm, image présentée dans l'exposition *I Am A Camera*, 2001

Tierney Gearon, sans titre, 2000, exposition *I Am a Camera*, 2001



Tierney Gearon, sans titre, 2000



Ci-contre à droite :
Tierney Gearon, sans titre, *The Mother Project*, 2004

Tierney Gearon : Biography

The family snapshots of Tierney Gearon have only recently come to the attention of the artworld through her significant presence in the *I Am A Camera* exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London in spring 2001, but her work has a strength and conviction that belies her newcomer status.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1963, Gearon has led a predominantly mid-Atlantic life that was kick-started when she was spotted by a European modeling agency while studying ballet in Utah. It was during some five years of traveling the world through her modeling work that Gearon first became interested in life on the other side of the camera. An agent in Paris, impressed by a small scrap book of Polaroid photographs Gearon had taken of other models she worked with, encouraged her to extend her repertoire and she was launched into the world of fashion photography, earning respect from many of the most influential fashion houses and producing work for Times Square billboards and publications such as i-D.

After five years of jet-setting as a busy commercial photographer, Gearon not only felt the fashion world had taught her everything it could, but also met and married a Frenchman (whom she has since divorced), settled down for the first time and had a family - Emilee, who is seven years old, and Michael, now four. Following what proved to be an emotionally difficult time after the birth of her two children and the break-up of her marriage, Gearon began the highly personal project that launched her, unsuspecting, into an artistic career. The documenting of her extended family has acted as a personal journey for herself and for her family as well, both in a literal and emotional sense.

Structured around journeys with her children to and from the homes of distant and diverse relatives - predominantly across the United States - her images show lives comprised of both comfort and confusion. Little in Gearon's pictures could be called out-of-the-ordinary: we see the generations of her family hanging out on the beach, going skiing, talking by the pool, and watching TV. There is no documentary grittiness in these bright Technicolor shots, whose backdrops range from sun-drenched beaches to the white ski slopes of the Alps, but there is an edginess at play that goes beyond the snap-happy impressions offered at first glance. Children stand naked on a beach against the backdrop of an azure sea: a family snap indeed, except that the children are wearing identical Disney masks and stare directly out towards the viewer, unexpectedly reflecting our quizzical glance back at us.

In her photographs as in her life, Gearon's children form a powerful presence among the domesticity. They roam free, play-act and play up, sometimes to the camera and sometimes to the adults they find around them. Masks are again used as props: an old man, hiding his face behind a mask in the shape of a bird's beak, looks down toward a young boy dressed in Sesame Street underpants. The boy faces away from the camera and stares up at his elder - we do not see his face, but from his confident pose we feel that it is actually the man who is hiding from his younger counterpart.

These children are not sentimentalized and neither are the adults alongside them. Gearon's talent lies in an ability to capture life with all its surreal twists and confusions, as negotiated by young people in an adult world. A boy stands forlorn by a poolside while his grandfather speaks on his mobile. Two children look down at an animal laying dead at the roadside: the girl points her fingers in the shape of a gun and the young boy removes his wolf mask, both are confused and intrigued by the body in front of them. In another image a boy stands like a neoclassical cherub on a patio wall, looking down with a nonchalant glance from his 'pedestal' at an adoring middle aged woman standing below.

These images are highly personal, keyed to Gearon's own life, reflecting its apparently equal helpings of chaos and stability. But they also remain strangely anonymous and distant. They speak of particulars but also tap into ubiquitous questions about life. Freezing these moments seemingly through children's eyes, Gearon presents us with the children's complex mixture of innocence and insouciance, which comes from experiences as yet unmediated by grown-up sensibilities. Any questions we have as we look into these images are bounced back at us as the young counterparts concentrate on life lived.

Source : <http://www.tierneygearon.com/bio.html>

Tierney Gearon : Friends, Family and Other Strangers

Martin Herbert, *Eyestrom*, 16 octobre 2001

Tierney Gearon's photographs of her children have elicited admiration and controversy in equal amounts. Here she talks to art critic Martin Herbert about artistic detachment, working with her family, and how to capture fleeting moments.

Martin Herbert: What was the origin of this current body of work?

Tierney Gearon: I've always been a photographer, and about two years ago I was going through really tough marital problems: I went through an identity crisis, really. I used to do a lot of painting, drawing and sculpture, just anything creative, and I suppressed that when I got married to a very bourgeois Frenchman. He's a really amazing person, but I entered a world that had nothing to do with what I was about, and I didn't really know who I was anymore.

And so two, maybe three years ago I started to document my family. People, especially Americans, are so busy digging up their own roots that they don't take the time to notice who's living around them, who's still alive. America's such a big melting pot, socially and economically, white and black, poor people to millionaires, and it's interesting when you have all that in one family. That's how I started, and it actually made me feel grounded to who I am as a person, which was fantastic.

So how has it changed over the years?

I have different ways of working, and I use different cameras. It's not like when you're a painter, where you usually have a particular style of working. Photography is a magical tool because anyone can take a good picture, and it could be an accident. I wanted to get better quality images, so I started wondering how I could do large-format negatives - with their endless, pin-sharp detail - but still retain the spontaneity of my snapshots. I discovered a lightweight large-format camera and started getting a different quality: the moment became more like a painting. It's actually not easy to do. A lot of photographers who use large-format cameras make very static pictures, and that's what I think is the edge to my pictures - they really feel like stilled moments. In the beginning, I got my images accidentally, but I subsequently learned how to be ready for the interesting moments.

Do you tend to stage your images more now?

No, I never stage anything. Nothing is retouched, I don't do any cropping, and I never set anything up. I know when the moment's going to come now; I can see it coming. I'm looking for something that happens to everyone, a captured moment in time that has a twist or hidden meaning to it, that can lead the mind to different things. There's a layering of meanings in there.

What about the masks? Surely that's a contrived aspect?

Well, I use elements, but I don't tell anybody where to stand or what to do, and if they don't want to, say, wear the mask, then they won't do it. I might introduce a birthday cake, or say 'let's go for a walk on the beach', because I know that something might happen there. That's the only way that I might set something up. It's become a challenge for me to take a simple, nothing moment and turn it into something significant.

The use of masks in the image with the tractor - Untitled, from 2000 - really struck me. The mask somehow brings you closer to the character, even though it is hiding something.

I know what you're saying. That particular picture is how the mask images started: it was a Mexican mask of my mother-in-laws, and the kids used to pick them up and walk around like that, and it was so funny looking, and it was totally natural. The masks really change the person. But I think I'm done with masks now...

Working with your own family, how do you maintain a sense of distance?

What's funny is, when you look at my immediate family projects they're actually quite impersonal. I started to look at my pictures and realized they could have been anybody's children. Maybe you saw my son's face in one picture, but that's it. It's not about who the person is - it's about the feeling they create.

When you look at the work of contemporary photographers like Sally Mann, or Nan Goldin, or Richard Billingham, you look at the people in the pictures, and you really get to know that person. The odd thing about my pictures - and I only realized this after all this controversy happened* - is

that you have no idea who that person really is. They're very impersonal, unsentimental photographs. Even Hiroshi Sugimoto's photos of waxworks are about the person, and that's eerie because they are wax figures! I think people have heard that I photograph my family, so they assume the images must be intimate. But actually my pictures are very detached, almost filmic.

[*On 8th March, 2001, Gearon's photographs - while exhibiting at London's Saatchi Gallery - were cited in a report by the Obscene Publications Unit of the Metropolitan Police, prompting a media frenzy over State censorship of the arts. A week later, the Crown Prosecution Service dismissed the case.]

But don't you think that's precisely why some people have a problem with them?

Well, I think that might be it, actually. When I've read reviews and critiques of these photos that say they're disturbing, that might be why they think so - because they really aren't family photos. I think Charles [Saatchi] was having a bit of fun when he called them snapshots, and he got *me* calling them snapshots. And then when all the trouble happened, he said, these aren't family snapshots, these are disturbing images! To say that they are family images puts an edge on them, but they have absolutely nothing to do with my family. What's interesting is, I thought I could only take those pictures because they were members of my family, but some of the images portray people who aren't members of my family - they're the children of friends of mine, or people we don't even know.

How much do you take on board what your children might think of your project?

A lot, actually. When I did these pictures, I thought, if these ever end up anywhere, they're going to be so proud - of me and also of themselves. And when all this gallery stuff happened to me, I thought, maybe they're going to grow up and some of their images will be on the walls of a museum. And they'll be like, 'Hey, that's me!' The funny thing is, you can't really see them anyway. But at least they can say, 'I'm part of that'.

It's difficult having a mother who's an artist, because I'm not a stable, nine-to-five person. The household that I was brought up in, though, was much more dysfunctional than the one that they're growing up in, so they're probably going to be much more stable. Someone interviewed me, and said, don't you have a problem that your children might not want to see these pictures of themselves when they get older, going through their teenage years? I said, look at them; if you feel embarrassed by something that your mom might show to one of your friends, you've got issues that you need to sort out.

But there's a difference between friends and total strangers.

Yes, but if you're proud of yourself, whether it's a stranger or a friend, what difference does it make? You're not baring your soul, they're just photographs. They're not of your first kiss with your boyfriend. If I took a video of my daughter being teased at school, that would be a really horrible, humiliating thing, but these pictures aren't humiliating. They might be eerie, but that's their power. My son peeing - big deal, men pee all the time, they still do it, but I want him to grow up never feeling ashamed of that. If you make a child feel ashamed of something, then that creates doubt - and that is a problem of your own making.

Has the controversy obscured the dynamics of the work, do you think?

Well, people look at them differently. But you can't see who the kids are, and I'm not telling them what to do. What really shocked me was that some artists said 'you are so lucky, you can't pay for press like that', and I looked at them like 'you are sick'. I'm a mother first, then an artist, and if I knew that these pictures would create even 2% of this kind of controversy, I would never have done anything with them. I look at them and think they're funny - twisted and eerie, yes, but in a funny way, not in a bad way. I didn't think people would see something so dark in them. It was never because of the nudity, for instance; it was something else people were seeing, something in their own psyche.

Martin Herbert is a London-based art critic.

Source : http://www.tierneygearon.com/press/martin_herbert.html

Saatchi gallery will not be prosecuted

BBC News, rubrique Entertainment, 15 mars 2001



Photographer Tierney Gearon was under fire
"If they had asked me to take the pictures down, I really would have doubted my moral judgement as a human being " Tierney Gearon



The photographs are part of Charles Saatchi's private collection

The gallery at the centre of a censorship row over photographs of naked children will not be prosecuted.

Police officers were called to the Saatchi Gallery in London last week after complaints about photos taken by American photographer Tierney Gearon of her own children and a second photographer Nan Goldin.

A police report was passed to the Crown Prosecution Service which decided on Thursday not to prosecute.

Ms Gearon told BBC Newsroom South East that the experience would "definitely affect" the way she works in the future.

She said: "I am so glad this has all been resolved.

"If they had asked me to take the pictures down, I really would have doubted my moral judgement as a human being."

A CPS spokesman said that after careful consideration there was no realistic prospect of any conviction under the Protection of Children Act 1978.

'Defence'

He said: "In reaching this decision, the CPS considered whether the photographs in question were indecent and the likely defence of the gallery, ie whether they had a legitimate reason for showing them."

Ms Gearon said her images had "wholesome innocent intentions".

She added: "I felt that because someone put a seed out there that my work was pornographic or obscene I felt they had poisoned my work.

"My children are such a huge part of my life and that's what I documented."

Ms Gearon's photos show her children in a variety of locations, often naked or semi-naked.

A spokesman for the gallery said staff at the gallery were delighted by the CPS's decision.

"Everyone at the Saatchi Gallery is very relieved as are all the artists in the show," the spokeswoman said.

"It's been a very worrying time for the two artists involved and their families.

"We are extremely grateful to the public and press who have supported the artists and the gallery."

The gallery is owned by the art collector Charles Saatchi, who has become a champion of modern art in Britain, and the photographs are part of Mr Saatchi's private collection.

Culture Secretary Chris Smith last week warned of the dangers of censorship while not commenting on the pictures directly.

The photographs will remain on show until the end of the exhibition on 15 April.

Source : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/1222981.stm>

A propos de l'exposition *I Am A Camera*, Saatchi Gallery, Londres, 2001

The beautiful and the damned

Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*, Arts, 13 janvier, 2001

Charles Saatchi is fascinated by the spoiled rich and the suffering poor. What does that say about him, asks Jonathan Jones

Charles Saatchi may not give interviews but his personality is there in front of our eyes, in his collection. And what animates him as an art collector is the inanimate. He is a connoisseur of the miserable edges of modern life, and his taste seems passionate and authentic only when he rubs our noses in horror. It is because it delves into the dark stuff that *I Am a Camera* - an exhibition that includes not only photographs but some painting and sculpture - is the best that has been seen at his gallery for some time.

I Am a Camera is an exploration of modern pain ; the title is taken from Christopher Isherwood's account of the rise of Nazism, *Goodbye to Berlin*. If you didn't know Saatchi was the man who marketed Margaret Thatcher and that he and his brother once held the advertising account for the National Party of South Africa, you might come away from this exhibition thinking he was a Marxist.

Who but a radical critic of modern society would juxtapose Nan Goldin's photographs of the last survivors of a bohemian proletariat, shooting up and beaten up in downtown Manhattan, with Jessica Craig-Martin's documentary exposés of uptown life in the same city?

Craig-Martin works as a party photographer for Vogue, and between official shots snatches her own cruel photographs with an eye for the grotesque like a pop-art Weegee. Cold, old and filthy rich, the people in her pictures wear diamonds against wrinkled skin, sit alone at banqueting tables. Faces are cropped out to alienate us from these people. And in case you didn't get the contrast, between Goldin and Craig-Martin stands a black cleaner taking a break from her work.

That is, an eye-fooling, hyperreal sculpture of one. Through the show are scattered Duane Hanson's painted bronze simulacra of dispossessed Americans: the old, the homeless, the workers who come in after the Grammy awards are over and Craig-Martin's revellers have departed.

The paintings in the show are terrible. The young London artist Jason Brooks shows cheap imitations of Chuck Close, and a young Los Angeles artist, Kristia Calabrese, exhibits paintings that are even worse. The failure of these photorealist paintings reveals what really drives the show. They look terribly weak compared with the photographs' verisimilitude.

The photograph has something morbid in its mechanism. The click of the shutter resembles the snap of the guillotine. The mournful quality of the photograph has been pointed out by many critics, and Saatchi seems to have been reading them. Or perhaps the photograph's morbid nature sits well with his own. This exhibition is predicated upon the photograph as simulacrum, upon art's deadly capacity to make a perfect replacement for real life.

I Am a Camera lures us into a world where living faces are frozen. Hiroshi Sugimoto's portraits of Henry VIII and his wives are isolated in the sepulchral last room of the Saatchi Gallery, presented as if they were the final secret in the inner burial chamber of the pyramid. Sugimoto is professionally morbid. He takes pictures of waxwork dummies at Madame Tussaud's, shooting them in black and white with a flat light that fools you momentarily into thinking these are living subjects. By the time you register the corpse-like stillness of the faces, you are fatally confused about where life ends and what Edgar Allan Poe called "the kingdom of the inorganic" begins.

A lot of this is cliché. Roland Barthes published his meditation on photography and death in 1980. Sugimoto's pictures, spooky as they are, risk being dead in the wrong way, dead as art. They are freakish, eccentric artefacts of the late-20th century.

Where this exhibition goes beyond cliché is in bringing this art up against what it routinely excludes: the other horror, the invisible violence that you can find anywhere you look - real life. The Saatchi Gallery is an almost parodic instance of the gallery cut off from reality, a white space station orbiting around London. It makes me think of the millionaire's home in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*, where thousands of miles above the earth is an art collection including Duchamp's *Large Glass*.

I Am a Camera contains documents of social worlds, presented as morbid simulacra of those worlds. Billingham's pictures of his father, mother and brother in their claustrophobic world, throwing cats, smoking fags, making each other cry, have been seen widely around the world, but perhaps never in a context that more painfully raises the question of their moral status. He took these

pictures for whom? For Charles Saatchi, so he could amuse himself with the sight of a working class family gone to the dogs?

I Am a Camera is a far more successful attempt to put the facts of early 21st-century life in a gallery than any of the recent wave of self-proclaimed political art exhibitions, such as *Protest and Survive* at the Whitechapel. This is a queasy thought. Saatchi is obviously not a socialist, and whatever it is that lies behind this troubling collection of modern catastrophes, it is not rage. *I Am a Camera* is finally a snapshot of the futility of representation in a world of devastating ironies. The juxtapositions of low life and high life, a ball at the Waldorf Astoria with a junkie's bedroom on the Lower East Side, the royal visage of Henry VIII with the broken face of Richard Billingham's father Ray, are not furious but celebratory.

This is where the morbid quality of it all becomes disturbing. These documents are not meant to make you act. You are not even meant to see them as documents, but as spectacular works of art, images to feast on, featuring real people. Not pickled sharks, but a pickled social order. This is the great game, with the art collector as hunter stalking his prey, the weak and the foolish, down nocturnal streets. *I Am a Camera* turns out to be a kind of confession.

I Am a Camera is at the Saatchi Gallery, London NW8 (020-7624 8299), from Thursday until March 25

Source : <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/saatchi/story/0,,926636,00.html>

Deceptive images : *I Am A Camera*

Martin Gayford, Laura Gascoigne, *The Spectator*, 27.01.2001

In the centre is Christ, a strangely serene figure, in the centre of the emotional storm his words have created. Around him, seated behind the long table, the Apostles react in differing ways to the announcement that has just been made - but only one, Judas, reveals through his posture his guilty knowledge. It sounds like Leonardo's 'Last Supper', one of the most familiar images in Western art. But actually it isn't, quite.

I am describing not Leonardo's original, but a waxwork tableau, rather loosely based on the Da Vinci painting, to be found in a small town in Japan. This in turn has been photographed, full-scale, by the artist Hiroshi Sugimoto and the result is on display at White Cube, Hoxton Square (until 3 March), along with various other portraits of waxworks including Rembrandt, Richard III, Winston Churchill and Napoleon. More, including Henry VIII, and his six wives, are on show in the exhibition *I Am A Camera* at the Saatchi Gallery.

These are thoroughly weird and paradoxical images. While the wax originals are presumably, like all their kind, easy to spot as inanimate simulacra - because, for one thing, they are unnaturally motionless these photographs are more deceptive. Shot by Sugimoto against backgrounds of deep, inky black they look startlingly lifelike, as though one were looking not at, say, a waxwork of Richard III, but at a rediscovered photo-portrait by some late 15th-century predecessor of Snowdon or Beaton. Or, at the very least, at publicity shots from a Hollywood costume drama.

This kind of confusion is part of the point. What Sugimoto manages to do here is to cast light in various shadowy and half-forgotten corners of the history of art. The family tree of the visual arts, like most families, contains several relations who, for one reason or another, aren't much talked about. One such is the waxwork - an offspring of the thoroughly respectable tradition of sculpture. Madame Tussaud trained as a sculptress, then got started on the path to fame by copying the features of guillotined aristocrats in revolutionary Paris.

Of course, wax is a material that has been used by perfectly pukka sculptors; nor is it unknown for sculptural works of art the sacred images in Spanish churches, for example - to be coloured as in life, and dressed like dolls. Still, somehow - perhaps because they are shown as a fairground attraction - waxworks have not been considered quite the aesthetic thing.

The case of photography itself is different - more like that of the illegitimate nephew who returns from America richer than the direct line. For a good century, photography was considered not really a true, noble art - though periodically practised with great distinction by proper painters such as Degas. But since the late Sixties, all that has changed. Photography is now considered, in art opinion-forming circles, to be not only a true art, but perhaps the rightful heir to the estate (painting and sculpture being hopelessly old and feeble).

Witness the last Turner Prize, won by Wolfgang Tillmans, a practitioner of what is effectively the creative snapshot. There are plenty more snapshots in *I Am A Camera* - an exhibition which blends a little painting and sculpture that edges close to the photographic with plenty of the real thing. On show there are photorealist pictures by Justin Brooks, huge black and white heads in the manner of

Chuck Close, and photorealist sculpture - if you can imagine such a thing - by the late Duane Hanson, figures so real that they can only be distinguished from visitors to the Saatchi Gallery by the fact that they are much less smartly dressed.

But the focus is on the photographers. Nan Goldin takes snaps of nouveau New York low life: transvestites, drug addicts, someone dying presumably of Aids, various tangled naked bodies. There are also Richard Billingham's photographs of his own family living a less smart version of low life in Birmingham - tattooed, drunken, brawling. And Tierney Gearon comes closest of all to the mood of the family photo album, since her subject is her own children, updated putti who do putti-like things, such as peeing in the street, in middle-class America.

It's easy to see the case for the snapshot as contemporary art. It's an admirably democratic form - intimate, unpretentious, adapted for transcribing random passing reality. On the other hand, I can't help feeling that it's not enough - that it's just too light, too flimsy to be stuck up on the walls of an art gallery. Most of the above, in fact, look as good or better in the accompanying book. That brings us to the big difference between photography and the other arts - not just painting and sculpture, but also music, architecture, poetry and drama.

All the above are capable of producing physical responses - sensations of weight, space and mass, emotional tingles down the spine, goose pimples. In a recent interview, a well-known critic pointed out to me that photography alone does not do any of that for him, or for anyone he has ever discussed the question with. What does this indicate about the status of photography as an art?

On the other hand, the waxwork portraits of Sugimoto underline how intimately interconnected are the histories of photography and realist art - going back to the days of Leonardo and Holbein. Many artists in the past, David Hockney has been arguing - and will argue at greater length in a forthcoming book - used lenses in different ways to help them with their work.

Source : http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3724/is_200101/ai_n8952026

Police obscenity squad raid Saatchi gallery : Scotland fascism

Alan Travis, home affairs editor, *The Guardian*, 10 mars 2001

The Saatchi gallery has been raided by officers from Scotland Yard's obscene publications unit and warned that they will return to seize pictures in its current exhibition, *I Am A Camera*, unless the offending images are removed before the gallery opens its doors to the public again.

The Metropolitan police confirmed last night that officers had visited the gallery twice this week after three complaints under anti-child pornography legislation and a report was being forward to the crown prosecution service.

The exhibition features the work of a group of artists and photographers selected by Charles Saatchi himself and taken from his personal collection of photographs and paintings. It has been running for eight weeks and has been reviewed in most of the broadsheet papers and magazines from the Tatler to the Telegraph, without any public complaints to the gallery.

The police have also warned a London international fine art publisher, Edward Booth-Clibborn, to remove from sale thousands of copies of his book *I Am A Camera*, on which the exhibition is based, by next Thursday or he will also face the threat of prosecution. "The police told me that they want them 'all out' of the bookstores," he said.

The images at the centre of the police action against the gallery involve two photographs by Tierney Gearon, a former fashion photographer, in a series of 15 snapshot-style images that document her personal family life. They both depict her two children, Emily and Michael, aged six and four, naked or partly naked while playing. In one the two children are wearing theatrical masks while in the other her son is urinating in the snow. The police have also voiced concerns about a small photograph by Nan Goldin on page 50 of the 499-page book, which also features pictures by Tracey Emin and Andy Warhol.

Inspector Brian Ward of Scotland Yard's obscene publications and internet unit first visited the gallery "as a member of the public" to see the photographs on display before he went to the gallery in St John's Wood, north London, on Thursday for a second time with other officers to confront the curator. He told them he would return with a warrant to seize the pictures if they were not removed before the gallery reopens to the public next Thursday.

The Met would not confirm last night that it was acting after a complaint from a Sunday newspaper but Insp Ward told the gallery's curator, Jenny Blythe, and Mr Booth-Clibborn that he was acting after receiving complaints from the press and members of the public. A Met spokeswoman said there had been three separate complaints but was not prepared to discuss who had made them.

Within hours of the inspector's second visit, Tierney Gearon, the photographer in question, was visited by two journalists at her home address initially claiming they were from the Telegraph. They gained entry while she was out by claiming they had an appointment. The News of the World last night denied that it was behind the complaint to the police or had visited the artist's home.

Ms Blythe of Saatchi's said the gallery had been shocked by the police's action and vigorously denied that the photographs in question were in any way pornographic. "I was so surprised I could not quite believe it," she said. "They are funny and delightful. Tierney Gearon is totally devoted to her children. They are snapshots of her children at play. They are not depraved in any way."

A leading lawyer on freedom of expression, Geoffrey Robertson, is believed to have advised the gallery that what it faces amounts to censorship by police threat and that the depiction of children without sexual overtones is not indecent.

The police are understood to have taken legal advice before raiding the gallery and are acting under the 1978 Protection of Children Act, which makes it a criminal offence to take an indecent photograph of a child. Police questioned the ITN newsreader Julia Somerville under the act in 1995 over pictures she took of her seven-year-old daughter in the bath. The CPS took no action.

Mr Booth-Clibborn's book is on sale in bookshops throughout Britain and also in America, Japan and Germany. One of the controversial photographs features on the cover of the British edition. He said that police suggested he cut out the pages that contained the photographs.

The raid is the first on an art gallery since the obscene publications squad seized pictures by John Lennon and others in the late 1960s.

Source : <http://www.skeptictank.org/gen4/gen02375.htm>

Saatchi & Smith

Background to an interview by Andreas Whittam Smith in the Daily Mail, 14 mars 2001
(note that Andras Whittam Smith was not representing the BBFC on this occasion)

The controversial Saatchi Gallery yesterday defied mounting criticism - and a warning from Scotland Yard's obscene publications unit - by continuing to display disturbing photographs of young children. The exhibition, entitled *I Am A Camera*, features colour pictures of naked youngsters wearing a variety of animal masks. The photographs were taken by American photographers Nan Goldin and Tierney Gearon, who uses her children, Emily and Michael, aged six and four respectively, as models.

The show, which has been running since mid-January, is sponsored by the Independent on Sunday newspaper, whose art critic described some of the more controversial images as exhilarating portraits of family life'. After a story in the News of the World, detectives last week went to the gallery in St John's Wood, North London, and warned staff to take down the photographs or risk them being seized.

Andreas Whittam Smith - President of the BBFC

I am not, by nature, a censor. But these images displayed in the name of art disturb me deeply. Nobody could call me one of nature's censors. Indeed, as President of the BBFC, I have gained a controversial reputation in some circles - not least the Daily Mail - for my belief that images of explicit but non-violent consensual sex between adults should not normally be refused a license.

Although I am tough on violence, I have passed explicit films and videos which I personally find deeply distasteful and which have no conceivable artistic merit. My view is simply this: that the public does not have to watch such stuff, but that its availability is part of the price we pay for being adults in a liberal society. But I know I am reflecting public opinion when I insist that child sex is a complete no-go area for the board.

Recently I refused to license a new Japanese cartoon video which shows broadly pornographic images of children, although, obviously, no children were involved in making the cartoon. I would do so again because I am not easy about the signals that such material sends out.

After the recent paedophile case which demonstrated both how widespread paedophilia is and the disgusting nature of the material available at the click of a mouse, nothing should be done which might suggest that sexually charged images of children are acceptable so long as they have supposed artistic merit. That is why I am so disturbed by this exhibition and that the highly-respected Saatchi gallery's curator, Jenny Blyth, is reportedly set to reject advice by the Metropolitan Police to remove these apparently sexually disturbing pictures of naked children from it.

It is worth considering the nature of the pictures in question. One photograph shows a young boy of about four or five urinating in the snow while his sister watches. Others show naked children wearing

grotesque animal masks. Although the pictures were taken by the children's mother (who is now, but was not at the time, a professional photographer earning a living selling her photographs) there is disturbing ambiguity about them. Are they young innocents at play - happy family snaps taken by a talented and loving mother - or do they hint at something far more sinister and perverse?

One thing is clear: whether or not it is unintentional, you can read into these commercial images sensational hints of ritual child abuse as well as other perverse sexual practices. These are, in short, disturbing images which could have caused these youngsters distress and embarrassment at the time they were taken - and may very well do so as they grow older and discover that their naked childhood antics are being exhibited as art for the world to goggle at. They are also the sort of pictures which could attract the excited attention of paedophiles, as well as those who have a guilty interest in the bare bodies of young children and are seeking social acceptance of their unhealthy tastes.

The Met's Obscene Publications Squad clearly hold the view that the children depicted are at some risk, which is why they are threatening to prosecute the gallery under the Protection of Children Act, rather than under the Obscene Publications Act.

The former, I must stress, is not about obscenity, nor is their any defence of artists merit. It is about the protection of children. Even so, much of the liberal establishment have decided that we are facing a re-run of the Lady Chatterley case in which Penguin Books was prosecuted - unsuccessfully - for obscenity, for publishing an unexpurgated paperback version of the once-sensational novel. The initial reaction of some of the great and the good has been exaggerated and intemperate, to say the least. For example, the moral philosopher, Lady Warnock, has called the police action 'an act of politically correct dictatorship', adding: 'I can't imagine anything more terrible than the police coming in and saying this photographer can't take pictures of their own children.' Well, we have just lived through a century in which the police in dictatorial regimes performed genuinely terrible acts. This warning is not one of them.

Alan Yentob, the BBC director of drama, said: *The implication of obscenity has only been made as consequence of the vice squad going to the gallery in a lumbering way.* This remark is, I fear, unintentionally revealing of a snobbish and elitist contempt and distaste for the police, which is all too common among those who regard themselves as members of an intellectual and cultural elite. In my experience, the police do not come 'lumbering' in like so many ignorant and reactionary Alf Garnetts. They are a sensitive and experienced group of experts whose judgement is regularly tested when cases are brought to the Crown Court. They know the state of public opinion, and are all too well aware that juries will simply throw out cases which they regard as trivial and out of touch. They are also very knowledgeable about how paedophiles think and behave, and they know what turns them on. So, at the BBFC, I listen to the police with respect, and have learned from their judgement and experience.

I now hope that those who are about to join the crusade to defend the Saatchi gallery's right to exhibit these contentious pictures will do the same. They should pause for a moment and give due respect to the informed judgement of the police, instead of dismissing it contemptuously out of hand.

Also, speaking as a grandfather, I hope that those who believe sexually disturbing or titillating images involving children are acceptable so long as they can be labelled art, will now consider how bogus this argument is. It is one which I have often heard from whose job it is to understand the warped minds of paedophiles.

Exhibits such as those at the Saatchi gallery can be used by paedophiles who can be astonishingly manipulative and obsessive, to 'groom' youngsters into accepting that perverted behaviour is normal. They will argue to vulnerable children that exposing yourself, posturing naked in masks, or urinating in front of other people is acceptable. After all, they will say, the children's mother took the pictures, and they are on display in a highly regarded gallery, and some of the country's most respected intellectuals were happy to look at them. In my view, the Saatchi curator should abandon her crusade and act like any other responsible citizen if warned by the police that her behaviour was apparently unlawful.

She still has time to say to them: 'I am sorry. I will take the offending pictures down.'

Source : <http://www.melonfarmers.co.uk/arbpsaatc.htm>

Saatchi Museum Raided by Scotland Yard :

Saatchi Exhibition Threatened with Child Pornography London Court Aborts Planned Police Raid

Drawing upon its vast and world renowned collection of cutting edge contemporary art, in January, the Saatchi Gallery opened the first of three installations, planned for 2001, with the theme, *I Am A Camera*. Part one of this in depth survey includes paintings photographs, drawings and sculptures by nine American and British artists. The work ranged from a dense installation of vintage studies of the dysfunctional nuclear families of Nan Goldin and Richard Billingham, the tongue in chic world of high society photographed by Jessica Craig-Martin, Hiroshi Sugamoto's studies of the Madame Tussaud Wax Museum, Andy Warhol's stitched photos and Duane Hansen's trompe l'oeil life size sculptures of ordinary people. The exhibition also includes ersatz Chuck Close influenced drawings by Jason Brooks and a series of deadpan paintings of enervating run down apartment interiors by Kristin Calabrese. But it was a series of seemingly benign, color photographs of the family of Tierney Geardon that prompted irate tabloid coverage that triggered a visit by police and an attempt through the courts to remove the offending works and consequently shut down the exhibition. There were potentially more serious charges against the artist and the 57 year old collector and advertising executive, Charles Saatchi, of child pornography under the 1978, Protection of Children Act. This is not the first time that Saatchi and the Young British Artists whom he has aggressively collected and promoted have come under attack. When *Sensation*, a selection from his collection was shown at the Brooklyn Museum, New York Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, did everything in his power to close the exhibition and punish the museum which is largely dependent upon city funding. That time, the issue was the use of elephant dung in an image of the Virgin Mary by Chris Ofili. This time the controversy surrounded images of Geardon's kids aged six and four. In one photo her son is depicted pissing in the snow during a ski trip and in another her son and daughter frontally nude on a beach wearing Halloween Masks. Articles in the Sunday papers precipitated Monday court motions to close down the show when the gallery opened for business as usual on Thursday, March 15. Arriving in the afternoon I joined the media stakeout of reporters and TV crews awaiting a possible police raid. Curator, Jenny Blyth, was stressed but poised as she fielded endless media phone calls, but graciously took time to see that the working press was offered tea and coffee. It has often been alleged that Saatchi invites and even orchestrates media controversy as a way of promoting his collection and enhancing its value. In conversation with Blyth, however, this was clearly not the case. She appeared to be stunned and blind sided by the attack on the exhibition and staunchly supports the integrity of the work. As the vigil awaiting the impending court decision wore on through the afternoon, there was time to study and reflect upon the works as some hundred or so visitors toured the vast renovated industrial space in suburban, middle class London. As a somewhat jaded American art critic it was difficult to comprehend what all the fuss was about. Certainly we have been over this territory a number of times in recent years. The child pornography charges against a traveling exhibition of works by Robert Mapplethorpe, that were thrown out by a Ohio court, now seem like ancient history. And debates surrounding similar subject matter in photographs by Jock Sturgis and Sally Mann are issues that would seem to have run their course. Even the work itself seemed overly familiar and hardly new or shocking. Certainly the dysfunctional images of Goldin and Billingham seem played out, overexposed and shop worn. By comparison, the hilarious views of the antics of the rich and famous by Craig-Martin seemed much more fresh and engaging than another rehash of Goldin sporting a black eye or her friends spanking the monkey. Chatting up a young art student I asked his opinion of the controversial works by Gearon. He saw nothing wrong with them but said that, "There's a lot of stuff over there that's much worse," pointing to a dense installation of Goldin photographs. While they were old hat to me it was interesting that he was seeing this work for the first time and was very absorbed by it. By late afternoon Blyth emerged from her office with a wonderful relieved smile and was immediately confronted by a TV crew from BBC. When asked if the works in question were obscene she replied that, "One would have to be rather perverted to see these works as pornographic." The following day the Daily Mail reported that, "The Crown Prosecution Service decision not to go to court was made despite strong protests from the police. Detectives are understood to have warned that a failure to prosecute would send the wrong signals to those in the child sex industry. Police have already received letters from paedophiles threatening to appeal against their convictions for possessing similar material." In coming to a decision not to press the charges Scotland Yard stated that, "The CPS considered whether the photographs in question were indecent and the likely defense of the gallery, i.e., whether they had a legitimate reason for showing them." While originally scheduled to close on April 15, because of the now considerable public interest, the exhibition has been extended for a month.

Source : <http://www.maverick-arts.com/cgi-bin/MAVERICK?action=article&issue=017>

Reality and Its Discontents in a Photographic Age

Vicki Goldberg, rubrique Art/Architecture, *The New York Times*, 01.04.2001

Philosophers worry about the nature of reality. Plato posited a cave and shadows. Bishop Berkeley contended that no object existed apart from the mind, to which Dr. Johnson responded by "striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone," and saying of Berkeley's proposition, "I refute it thus." Most people who do not ponder the conundrums of existence for a living have been in Dr. Johnson's corner, rather blithely assuming that reality simply is, that stones are hard and water wet and that it isn't just our imaginations that tell us so.

The advent of photography shone an intense light on reality and its relationship to representation, for many people faced with a photograph rather confused the two. Later in the 19th century, some writers and critics said that too much reality would be the ruin of art. The artist-protagonist of Henry James's "Real Thing" had "an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation." Certain models would not do because he could not get away from their likenesses in his drawings, which always looked like photographs or copies of photographs.

Lately, at least since the 1960's, changes in technology and the media have begun to bring the reality-representation and photography-art questions home even to the unphilosophical. Artists have been poking and prodding them ever since. *I Am A Camera*, a large show of photographs, paintings from photographs and a few sculptures recently at the Saatchi Gallery here (with a second installment coming in September), made a couple of pirouettes over familiar ground. (A catalog by the same name, with minimal text, reproduces most of the images from both exhibitions.)

The thesis of the show seemed to be that painting and photography, and even some sculpture, have become enmeshed in one another's modes of depicting reality, freely intermingling subjects, attitudes and degrees of trompe l'oeil. This is not new. The cleverest evidence was provided by several sculptures from the 1970's by Duane Hanson, whose life-size people dressed in everyday clothes and carrying actual shopping bags or whatever raise both fiction and imitation to a degree of realism that photography cannot match. In 1998-99, when Mr. Hanson's statue of a museum guard was on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art, it was regularly queried for information by befuddled visitors.

Logically, the most obvious examples in painting would also have been from the 1970's: photorealist work by artists like Richard Estes or Audrey Flack. Instead, *I Am A Camera* had recent paintings of interiors, based on photographs, but neither robustly nor deceptively photographic, by Kristin Calabrese, in addition to black-and-white portraits by Jason Brooks that do seem to be photographs at first glance but don't improve on Chuck Close's early work.

The photography, which must be Charles Saatchi's most recent collecting fancy, took up more space, created more of a commotion and departed from the painting-photography thesis to go off on tangents. A wall of photographs by Richard Billingham of his dismayingly colorful family -- drunken father, vastly overweight and tattooed mother -- was seen earlier in the "Sensation" show at the Brooklyn Museum. The text informed us that Mr. Billingham "reinvents art's classic images by breaking taboos," adding that Mr. Billingham's subjects, like a woman reclining or feeding a kitten, or a lover's embrace, have been staples of painting for centuries.

Well, yes. Put it that way and you could say that comic books and pornography have also reinvented art's classic images. Perhaps we should be grateful that painting does not dwell with such juicy insistence as the camera can, and does, on stained teeth and facial sores and the mess on the kitchen floor that the dog obligingly cleans up. Mr. Billingham's broken taboos are mostly social ones. Mom socks dad in one picture; dad angrily hurls a cat across the room in another, presumably at mom. The cat looks practiced: another day, another flying lesson.

Although photographers have made direct and indirect references to painting for some years -- see Louise Lawler, Richard Ross, Cindy Sherman (some of whose work will be in the September show) and Thomas Struth, among others -- the only one who did so in this show was Hiroshi Sugimoto, who plays an oblique game with the representation of reality in his "portraits" of wax figures at Madam Tussaud's, some of which were recently at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York.

Six large black-and-white pictures of Henry VIII's queens, each posed and attired à la Holbein, occupied a side wall looking toward the end wall, where a portrait of Henry himself much as Holbein painted him looked away from them all. These faces are almost believable enough to be modern individuals posing. Imitations of reality that depended on the painted record sit for portraits that resemble paintings but were made by the instrument that outdid painting in imitating reality.

The rest of the photographs dwelled mostly in territory similar to Mr. Billingham's: regions inhabited by social taboos and indiscreet revelations. We have traveled through Nan Goldin's autobiographical land often enough. Here 149 of her photographs chronicled her seedy bohemian republic, from the usual nakedness and expected transvestites to heterosexual and homosexual lovemaking and weddings, the fearful damage Ms. Goldin's boyfriend inflicted when he beat her, as well as babies, hysterectomy scars, AIDS and funerals. The overall title for these pictures was "Thanksgiving."

On the opposite wall were Jessica Craig-Martin's close-up color photographs of women at high-society parties and benefits. Ms. Craig-Martin photographs these goings-on politely and flatteringly for *Vogue*, then on her own time skewers the same people, usually cropping out their faces. She likes breasts, both young and reconstructed, hands and necks, both old and unreconstructable, high-heeled gold sandals seen beneath the partitions of bathroom stalls, that sort of thing. A couple of decades ago, Larry Fink covered some of the same social whirl in black and white, from what today looks like a minimally more delicate distance. The world has not grown increasingly enamored of delicacy since then, even in minimal doses.

Queenie, a sculpture of a black cleaning woman by Mr. Hanson, stood mournfully between Ms. Craig-Martin's world and Ms. Goldin's.

Tierney Gearon applies Ms. Goldin's and Mr. Billingham's tell-all autobiographical attitude to privileged lives: those of her own children. Her color photographs are snapshots that Mr. Saatchi bought and had blown up. Her children are fairly often naked -- the boy lowers his ski clothes to urinate in the snow while his fully clothed sister sucks her thumb and watches; two children bathe together, one of them staring delightedly at the other's genitals; a naked boy and girl at the beach wear masks of wide-eyed blond women.

MR. SAATCHI's collections seem to rile the authorities. "Sensation," of course, was from his collection and caused an uproar in both London and New York. Last month the London police ordered the Saatchi Gallery to remove two pictures of naked children by Ms. Gearon and one by Ms. Goldin from *I Am A Camera*. The curator refused. Advised they could not get a conviction, the police backed off. At about that time, five people staged a nude protest in the gallery.

Even when Ms. Gearon's children are clothed, their experience lies somewhere outside innocence: they encounter an old man in a bird mask, they contemplate a large dead animal on the road. Something is rotten, or at least very odd, in the land of Gearon, and her children are pressed into service to express it.

In addition to pointing out that painting, sculpture and photography now evaluate and address the world through one another's eyes, this show also implied that "reality" today, the life we live and the world we move in, is disjunct and essentially dysfunctional, and that both truth-telling and artistry consist of unmasking that fact. Ms. Goldin, Mr. Billingham, Ms. Craig-Martin, even Ms. Gearon lie on the artistic end of a spectrum that embraces reality television at its other end. One might wonder, however, in the face of mounting general distrust, how long even such evidence will be trusted.

The revelation of hitherto secret "realities" in literature, on talk shows, in the news; the debunking of photography's claim to truth; and the fascination with fool-the-eye media and special effects are symptomatic of a widespread disappointment with the ways things are and a conviction that what used to be thought of as given, as fixed, has become very slippery indeed. Digitization has rendered the world so spectacular that everyday life looks puny in comparison. And now that representation is so malleable and reality so close to becoming merely virtual, Plato's cave has been transferred to affluent living rooms, bringing home the perfect expression of an anxiety and disillusionment that were setting in before Photoshop was invented.

We are caught in a bind, wanting to believe in a more decorous world, where what looked like reality stayed put and lived up to its name, and certain ugly facts remained unseen and unsaid. But pundits and circumstances continually advise us not to accept what look like facts. The arts are on to something, whether they are making a good job of it or not. Even at times when they lack conviction or seem but to dabble in their own confusions, they reflect a common reality that is itself uncertain and confused. It is precisely in undermining comfortable traditions that art truthfully represents the shaky grasp on visual evidence and stable sets of values that pervade the world beyond the galleries.

Source :

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D04E5DE1F3CF932A35757C0A9679C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print>

Nan Goldin, *Thanksgiving*, 1999**Première exposition de l'œuvre à la galerie White Cube, Londres, 26 novembre 1999 - 5 janvier 2000**

American artist Nan Goldin made an installation of photographs that depict events spanning the period of her life from 1973 to 1999 – a kind of micro-retrospective, the show covered the gallery walls from floor to ceiling. It created an intense, shrine-like environment that completely immersed the viewer in Goldin's world, functioning as a homage both to the friendships that had survived through those twenty-six years, and to those friends she had lost.

Goldin says that photography taught her how to function as a human being ; how to have relationships with people. She has continually recorded her community of friends and lovers and, in turn, her own intimate, personal history: "My work originally came from the snapshot aesthetic. I think it's one of the purest uses of photography. Snapshots are taken out of love and to remember shared times." Empathy is perhaps Goldin's greatest asset, and she uses it to capture the ambience and texture of a volatile world of cheap hotel rooms, low-rent apartments and dirty bedsits, bars and clubs – all shot from an insider's point of view.

Goldin also uses her camera as a means of self-preservation, often making harrowing self-portraits – in one, her face in horribly swollen and bruised – in order to remind herself of the damage caused by being in an abusive relationship. She has also taken photographs as a means of recording, over time, how her community dealt with the effect of AIDS, and struggled with drug addiction.

There is a documentary immediacy to Goldin's work, while, at the same time, the pictures possess an intensity that results from a combination of formal clarity and marked corporeality. In her more recent images of light-infused landscapes, the artist defines a new kind of beauty, as well as communicating an overwhelming sense of loss. Goldin has said that until she detoxed, she had no real relationship to daylight and the natural world, as she lived totally in the night and so could not connect. Since detoxing, her work has revealed an intense emotional response to the forms and colours of the natural landscape – something largely untouched in her earlier work.

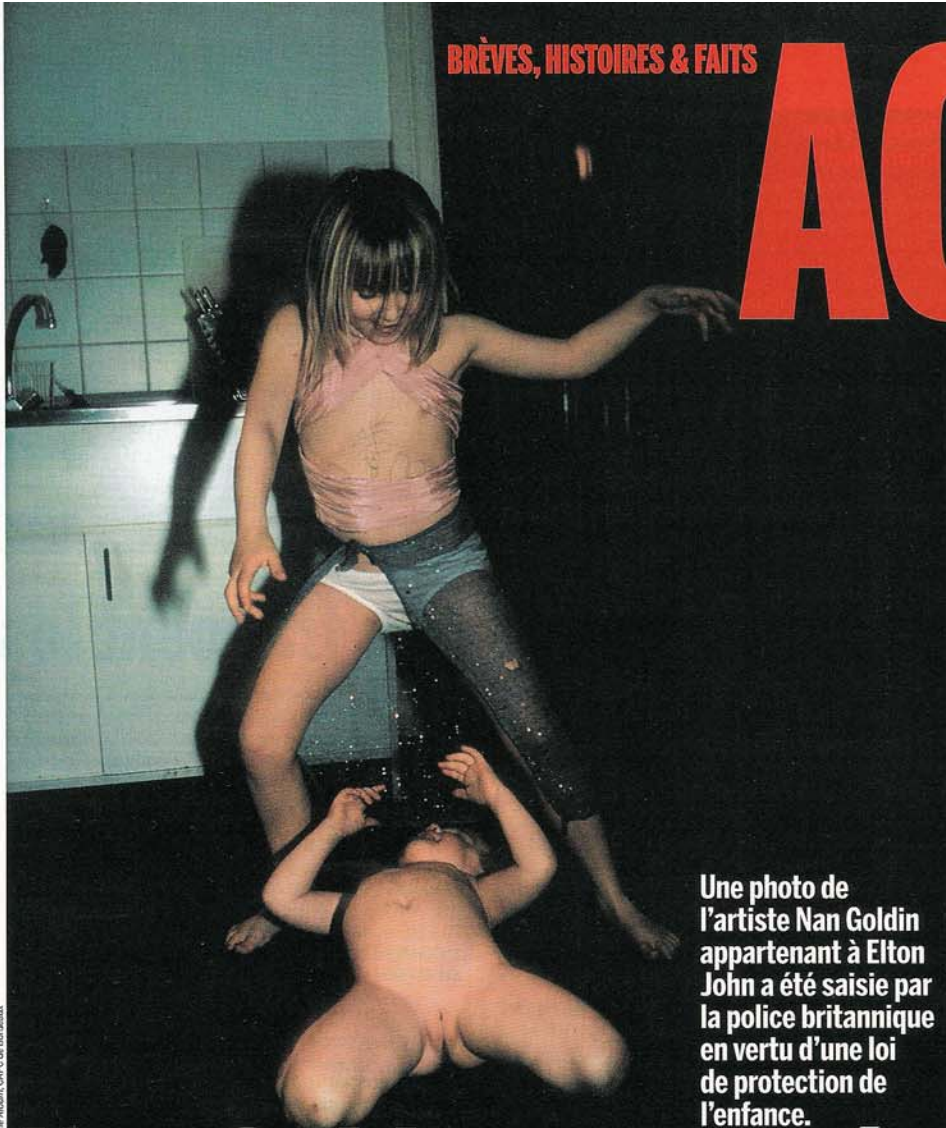
Source au 07 11 13 : <http://www.whitecube.com/exhibitions/thanksgiving/>



Nan Goldin, *Thanksgiving*, 1999, vue de l'installation à la galerie White Cube, Londres, 1999-2000

BRÈVES, HISTOIRES & FAITS

ACTU



Une photo de l'artiste Nan Goldin appartenant à Elton John a été saisie par la police britannique en vertu d'une loi de protection de l'enfance.

Nan Goldin censurée

Que peut-on encore photographier ? Que ne peut-on plus montrer ? Plus encore, comme le posait explicitement le titre d'une performance programmée il y a quelques jours au Centre Pompidou dans le cadre du Festival d'automne et dont les auteurs (les Libanais Rabih Mroué et Lina Saneh) ont eux-mêmes été censurés dans leur pays : "qui a peur de la représentation ?" Autant de questions qui ont brutalement surgi dans l'actualité de la fin de la semaine dernière lorsqu'est tombée une nouvelle venue d'Angleterre à propos d'une œuvre de la photographe américaine Nan Goldin, qui venait d'être saisie par la police.

L'événement s'est produit à la veille de l'ouverture d'une exposition rétrospective consacrée à l'artiste au Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art de Gateshead, dans le nord de l'Angleterre. Une exposition pour laquelle plusieurs collectionneurs privés avaient été sollicités afin de prêter des œuvres en leur possession. Parmi eux, il y avait Sir Elton John, détenteur depuis 1999 de *Thanksgiving*, une installation de 149 photos parmi lesquelles se trouve la photo sa-

sie par la police. Titrée *Klara and Edda Belly Dancing*, la photo montre deux jeunes filles nues en train de jouer ou, comme le dit le titre original, de faire la danse du ventre. Nan Goldin est connue pour ses photos d'un réalisme cru, tournant autour du sexe, de la violence et de la drogue, mais aussi de la famille. L'une de ses œuvres majeures est *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, constituée de 800 diapositives et dont la mise en œuvre a pris seize ans (1981 à 1996). La police britannique s'était déjà intéressée à elle en 2001, demandant le retrait d'une de ses photos d'une exposition. Mais à l'époque, la galerie exposante avait refusé, et la police avait cédé.

L'histoire évoque l'affaire récente en France de l'exposition *Présomés innocents*, qui s'était déroulée du 8 juin au 1^{er} octobre 2000 au musée d'Art contemporain de Bordeaux et pour laquelle le directeur du musée avait été mis en examen pour "corruption de mineurs". Cette même photo de Nan Goldin y était déjà exposée... La police n'a en tout cas toujours pas saisi l'autoportrait de Nan Goldin défigurée, qu'elle avait pris après avoir été frappée par son petit copain de l'époque.

J. G.

Intermittents au tribunal

L'affaire remonte à octobre 2003 : en direct pendant la *Star Ac*, quelques dizaines d'intermittents du spectacle – alors en plein bras de fer avec le gouvernement pour la réforme de leur statut – avaient envahi le plateau. Quatre d'entre eux furent arrêtés et comparaissent vendredi dernier au tribunal de Bobigny pour "violences" et "entraves à la liberté du travail et d'expression". Un comble quand on sait – et tout le monde peut le savoir, désormais, grâce à une vidéo révélée sur internet – la violence avec laquelle les intermittents, venus protester contre le manque de médiatisation de leurs revendications, avaient été ce soir-là matés par le service de sécurité de TF1. En soutien aux "4 de la Star Ac", une trentaine d'intermittents ont demandé à comparaître aux côtés de leurs collègues incriminés à Bobigny. Les autres étaient certainement trop occupés avec l'ouverture vendredi dernier des inscriptions pour la *Nouvelle Star*...

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The strange case of Sir Elton's 'obscene' photo (first time around)

Andrew Johnson, *The Independent*, 30 septembre 2007

There is more than a sense of déjà vu to the seizure by Northumbria Police of a photograph by Nan Goldin on the grounds it may be child pornography. Six years ago Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Unit hauled the same photograph out of an exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London. A week later the Crown Prosecution Service ruled there wasn't enough evidence to go to court, much to the annoyance of the police, who believed that a failure to prosecute would send the wrong message to paedophiles. The photo is part of Goldin's celebrated *Thanksgiving* installation of 149 pictures, one version of which is owned by Sir Elton John, recognised as the world's biggest collector of photography. "Elton purchased *Thanksgiving* in 1999," Jane Jackson, curator of the collection, said earlier this year. "It's very biographical, speaking about her life and addictions and her relationship with it. When [Elton] saw it he said, 'I have to have this. I've been there.' This is a chance for people to see this kind of work firsthand. And Elton's name brings in people who don't normally go to a gallery." Detectives were called to the Baltic Gallery in Gateshead a week last Thursday after being contacted by a concerned member of staff. The exhibition opened on the Friday as planned, without the picture, which is being examined, again, by the CPS to see if it breaches the 1978 Protection of Children Act. Goldin, an American, is known for the provocative nature of her work, which often involves explicit pictures of couples in her flat in New York. The picture in question, called *Klara and Edda Belly-Dancing*, shows a partly clothed girl dancing above a naked girl who is kneeling with her legs apart and towards the camera and her back arched to the floor. The girls are no more than seven years old. We have decided against showing it. The only comment Sir Elton wanted to make was posted on his official website. It read: "The photograph entitled *Klara And Edda Belly-Dancing* (1998) is one of 149 images comprising the *Thanksgiving* installation by renowned US photographer Nan Goldin. The photograph exists as part of the installation as a whole and has been widely published and exhibited throughout the world. It can be found in the monograph of Ms Goldin's works entitled *The Devil's Playground* (Phaidon, 2003), has been offered for sale at Sotheby's New York in 2002 and 2004, and has been exhibited in Houston, London, Madrid, New York, Portugal, Warsaw and Zurich without any objections of which we are aware." A spokesman for Northumbria Police said: "This item is being assessed, and Northumbria Police in consultation with the CPS is investigating the circumstances surrounding it." A spokeswoman for the Saatchi Gallery confirmed the picture was the same one seized from the *I Am A Camera* exhibition in 2001.

Source : http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article3013048.ece

Police investigate Goldin photo

Rubrique news, *The British Journal of Photography*, 3 octobre 2007

Police are investigating a photograph taken by American photographer Nan Goldin, re-opening the debate as to whether legal restraint should take precedence over artistic freedom. The image, titled *Klara and Edda Belly-dancing*, was due to go on show as part of a major exhibition of Goldin's work at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead. It is part of an installation of 139 images called *Thanksgiving*, which documents the photographer's life from 1973 to 1999.

But it was pulled after staff at the gallery raised concerns about the image, which shows two young girls dancing - one of which is lying on the ground with no clothes on and her legs apart.

Northumbria Police was asked in to advise the gallery and has now launched an investigation in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service as to whether it might be considered 'indecent'.

A spokesman told BJP that Northumbria Police could not comment any further on the case as it is an ongoing investigation.

In an interview with the BBC - the only one the gallery has given - Baltic's chairman, Sir Ian Wigglesworth, defended his staff's actions: 'We had an exhibition of 139 photographs and the management of Baltic thought this particular one was possibly beyond the pale. So the management took advice from the police as to whether it should be put on display or not ... When that doubt was raised about this particular image, advice was taken and I think the management behaved extremely responsibly, and did what most people in the public would want them to do.'

The story has gained extra prominence because the collection is owned by Sir Elton John, who has released his own statement pointing out that, 'The photograph exists as part of the installation and has been widely published and exhibited throughout the world'. The statement continues: 'It has been offered for sale at Sotheby's New York in 2002 and 2004, and has previously been exhibited in

Houston, London, Madrid, New York, Portugal, Warsaw and Zurich without any objections of which we are aware.' It adds that the installation was purchased from White Cube gallery in London in 1999, and the installation is presently on loan to the Baltic.

The image was also published by Phaidon in Goldin's monograph, *The Devil's Playground*. It is within a chapter titled *From here to maternity*, showing images of Goldin's friends becoming parents. Richard Schlagman, publisher at Phaidon, told BJP that there was no controversy about this particular photograph when the book was published in 2003. 'Our in-house lawyer did look through the images in the book but found nothing problematic.' Schlagman added that he isn't aware how any CPS ruling on the image would affect Phaidon, which is still selling the monograph in bookshops around the world. He concluded: 'It is our role to publish art and this is art'.

The image will also go on show in Sweden next month as part of an exhibition celebrating Goldin as winner of this year's Hasselblad Prize. A spokeswoman told BJP that lawyers are aware of the situation but that the image is currently included and will be on view from 10 November.

In the meanwhile, Goldin herself has refused any interviews, but friends and colleagues have jumped to her defence. Gigi Giannuzzi from Trolley Books, who published her monograph *Ten Years After* in 1997 and himself features in *The Devil's Playground* says: 'The photograph, the photographer and the buyer are beyond any suspicion. The kids in the image are playing as kids should. The photographer has taken a photo as she usually does, with her Leica, which is constantly attached to her neck. Only the particular times in which we live brings us to assume that there is something pornographic'. He continues: 'According to the law in this country, an image is considered indecent if it involves somebody under 18 years of age involved in a sexual activity or being sexually provocative. And this is not the case for this picture.'

The CPS investigation continues. Meanwhile, *Thanksgiving* will run at the Baltic without the picture until 20 January next year.

Just hours after BJP went to press, Sir Elton John requested that the Nan Goldin exhibition at the Baltic Centre be closed down. More details will follow in next week's issue of BJP

Source : <http://www.bjphoto.co.uk/public/showPage.html?page=470964>

Nan Goldin image closes Baltic show

Rubrique news, *The British Journal of Photography*, 10 octobre 2007

Gateshead's Baltic Art Centre has been forced to close down an exhibition of Nan Goldin images - one of which is being investigated by the police.

The gallery shut the exhibition, *Thanksgiving*, on 01 October after the owner of the installation of 139 images, Sir Elton John, requested they be returned to him.

The singer/composer was angered by the removal of one of the images in the piece by order of the police. In a statement on the singer's website, Jane Jackson, curator of the Elton John Photographic Collection says: 'We have made arrangements to close the *Thanksgiving* installation at The Baltic with immediate effect.

'It was always intended that the installation be exhibited as a whole, and not on a piecemeal basis, and our decision has been made with regard to the artistic integrity of the work and the artist.'

In an interview with the BBC, Baltic responded that it was 'sympathetic' of Sir Elton's request and 'supportive of the decision'.

Northumbria Police removed the image after being asked into the gallery by the management. The image in question, *Klara and Edda belly-dancing*, shows two children dancing - one of whom is lying on the floor naked. It is currently being investigated by Northumbria Police and the Crown Prosecution Service over concerns that it is indecent.

There were no further developments on this as BJP went to press and the press office at Northumbria Police is making no further comment on the investigation.

Source : <http://www.bjphoto.co.uk/public/showPage.html?page=474502>

Elton John's Goldin photo not indecent, prosecutors say

CBC News, October 26, 2007

A photograph of two young girls by American Nan Goldin is not indecent, Britain's Crown Prosecution Service has decided. The photo *Klara and Edda Belly-Dancing*, part of a collection owned by singer Elton John, was removed by police from an art exhibit in Gateshead in September. John then asked for the exhibit, titled *Thanksgiving* and featuring 149 photos taken by Goldin and owned by him, to be shut down. The Crown's Northumbria South unit revealed that this is not the first time it has considered indecency charges over the image of two young girls, one of them naked with her legs apart.

It said it had investigated the picture in 2001 when it was part of another exhibition at the Saatchi gallery in London and had decided then that it was not indecent. To consider the photograph indecent now, the CPS would have had to determine that standards of decency had changed since 2001. "I am not satisfied that is the case," CPS representative Kerrie Bell said on Friday. "Even if the photograph was now considered to be indecent, a defendant would be able to raise a legitimate defence, given that the photograph was distributed for the purposes of display in a contemporary art gallery after having been deemed not to be indecent by the earlier investigation." *Klara And Edda Belly-Dancing* had been exhibited in the Saatchi gallery in London in 2001 as part of the *I Am A Camera* exhibition. John said on his website that the photo has been exhibited in Europe and offered for sale at Sotheby's in New York in 2002 and 2004 without any objections. He bought the *Thanksgiving* collection in 1999. Goldin is renowned for her sexual imagery of herself and of gay and transvestite people. The Baltic Gallery in Gateshead welcomed the decision that the image was not indecent but issued a statement saying it was disappointed that an important exhibit had been shut over the incident

Source : <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/artdesign/story/2007/10/26/goldin-photo.html>



Elton John, shown at an AIDS benefit in October 2006, said he's exhibited the photo *Klara and Eddy Belly Dancing* in Europe without any objections.

CENSURE : LA NUDITÉ EN PUBLIC

Spencer Tunick

" Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.22

Spencer Tunick's body of work may come to help define or at least clarify the social, political and legal issues surrounding art in the public sphere. Since 1992, Tunick has been arrested five times while attempting to work outdoors in New York City. Soon after his Times Square arrest, as with the previous four arrests, all charges were dropped. Determined to create his work on the streets of New York the artist filed a Federal Civil Rights Law Suit against the City to protect himself and the participants from future arrests. In May, 2000, the Second U.S. District Court, sided with Tunick, recognizing that his work was protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. On June 3rd of the same year, in response to the city's final appeal made to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the court at large, the United States Supreme Court also ruled in favor of Tunick by remanding the case back down, allowing the lower court decision to stand and the artist to freely organize his work on New York City streets.



Spencer Tunick, *Queensboro Bridge, NYC, 1, 2000*, 180x227 cm

CENSURE : LIMITES AMBIGUËS ENTRE ÉROTISME ET PORNOGRAPHIE

Nobuyoshi Araki

Araki's images are considered pornographic in Japan, where the publication of books and the public exhibition of photographs in which pubic hair or explicit sex could be contemplated were still prohibited and legally penalized only a few years ago.

From the existing documentation on law suits against him for breaching pornography laws, and his corresponding censorship for obscenity, we can cite the closure, by court order in 1988, of *Photo Age*, one of the magazines that published his photos. This closure came about after every method of side-stepping the legislation had already been resorted to : since pubic hair was forbidden, the models were shaved ; since genitals had to be covered, they covered them by painting on pubic hair ; if they were forced to wear underwear, the garments they wore were transparent... and on and on until the definitive closure.

In 1992, his exhibition *Photomaniac Diary*, at Egg Gallery, Tokyo, was shut down by the police, and eight of the slides exhibited were confiscated. Araki and two of his assistants were accused of obscenity and disorderly conduct. The photographer had to pay a fine of 300,000 yens. In 1993, on the occasion of his exhibition *Erotos*, at Pareo Gallery, Tokyo, the censorship and arrests even affected the public spectators and the gallery director for having sold copies of one of Araki's books, *Akt Tokyo*.

Currently, anecdotally, some international shipping companies and couriers refuse to work with Araki or any service related to him in fear of being held up by customs inspectors, charged extra fees or mixed up in law suits for shipping 'obscene' merchandise.

Araki, who, among other challenging stances, refused an invitation to participate in the 1994 Venice Biennial, is unwavering in his belief that " without obscenity, cities are monotonous places and life is dreary ".

Seve Penelas, " Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.92



Nobuyoshi Araki, tiré de *Akt Tokyo*, 1989, 51x61cm



Nobuyoshi Araki, tiré de *Akt Tokyo*, 1989, 51x61cm



Nobuyoshi Araki, *Flower, Yamorinski and Bondage Woman*, 2007



1



2



3

N.Araki, tiré de *Pola Eros*, polaroid, 8.8x10.8 cm [1. 1999-2001 ; 2. série *Flowers and Jamorinsky*, 2007 ; 3. *Nude*, n°6, 2006]

Des cocktails molotov lancés sur le musée de la photographie à Charleroi

AFP, 25.09.2006

Plusieurs cocktails molotov ont été lancés sur la façade du Musée de la photographie de Charleroi (sud de la Belgique), où est accroché depuis une dizaine de jours un grand nu du célèbre photographe japonais Nobuyoshi Araki, a indiqué la direction du musée. Les "deux ou trois" cocktails molotov n'ont occasionné que peu de dégâts, la grande toile tendue sur la façade n'ayant pas pris feu, a expliqué la porte-parole du musée, Cécile Druart, en précisant qu'une plainte avait été déposée. La photographie visée représente une Japonaise nue, le sexe caché par des plumes, les bras gantés et les jambes gainées de bas noirs (voir reproduction sur cette page). Selon la porte-parole, depuis son ouverture, la rétrospective Araki a suscité des protestations de gens "outrés" par le sujet abordé par le photographe, connu pour ses nus sulfureux. Des personnes ont dit que c'était honteux et un homme a promis de "casser la gueule au directeur", a ajouté Mme Druart. "On ne peut que s'indigner d'un tel extrémisme qui s'en prend aux images comme dans les pires théocraties", a déclaré dans un communiqué le directeur du musée, Xavier Canonne. Le responsable estime également "déplorable" que d'autres photographies placardées ces dernières années sur le musée "n'aient pas suscité une telle indignation". "La guerre, la misère, les mines antipersonnel seraient-elles plus acceptables au XXI^e siècle que la représentation d'un corps de femme?", s'interroge M. Canonne dans ce communiqué. "Il n'est pas question de se laisser impressionner, de céder à la menace et de retirer cette affiche", a-t-il ajouté.

Source : http://www.week-ends.be/breve.php3?id_breve=53



Façade du Musée de la photographie, Charleroi, Belgique, exposition Nobuyoshi Araki, "À la vie À la mort", 23 septembre 2006 - 14 janvier 2007



N. Araki, série *Colorscares*, 1991, 51x61 cm



Nobuyoshi Araki, tiré de *67 Shooting Back*, 2007, 77x97 cm



Nobuyoshi Araki, sans titre, 1998, 70.5x106 cm

CENSURE : PORNOGRAPHIE OU ART ?

Thomas Ruff, *Nudes*, 2002

Seve Penelas, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.86

The German edition of the magazine *GQ – Gentlemen Quarterly*, which belongs to the Conde Nast publishing group – commissioned an eight page portfolio with images from the *Nudes* series by the photographer Thomas Ruff, to publish in its September 2002 issue. The photographs were provided by the prestigious Schirmer/Mosel publishing house based in Munich, which thus sought to promote the launch of the book *Thomas Ruff : Nudes*, to be out in October 2002.

With the magazine already printed, the lobby group of publishers and wholesale distributors Presse-Grosso utilized their force against the publication, as they considered the images to be a justification of pornography. They refused to distribute the magazine if some of Ruff's photographs were not first mutilated with black squares that hid the most explicit sexual acts and zones.

GQ, a magazine designed for male readers, with more or lesserotic photographs of women abounding on its pages, yielded to the pressure of the distributors and inserted the black squares on the photos so that the magazine could be sold at newsstands.

Schirmer/Mosel reacted by uploading, on August 14th, a press release onto their website – www.schirmer-mosel.de –, entitled *Pornographic Panic in GQ. Conde Nast, censors of contemporary art*, in addition to a letter by Lothar Schirmer addressed to *GQ* publisher Bernd Runge, in which he declares his surprise and consternation, the unilateral rupture of a contractual agreement and the denouncement of an act of censorship and self-censorship unprecedented in German magazines. While awaiting a reply or for *GQ* to retract in its forthcoming issues, the case has become a noteworthy controversy in the press and the cultural and contemporary art arenas in Germany.



Thomas Ruff, *Nude wf08*, 2004, c-print, 110x155cm

CENSURE : SEXE ET ARGENT

Tracey Emin, *I've got it all*, 2000

Rosa Olivares, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.84

Tracey Emin's work *I've got it all* was censored from the group show *Trans Sexual Express* after being on exhibit for a month at the Santa Monica Art Centre in Barcelona in the summer of 2001, as part of the Barcelona Triennial, apparently in response to a request by a commission from the Catholic church.

When the exhibition traveled at Kiosco Alfonso in A Coruna in the autumn of 2001, it seemed that the work was going to run into better luck, for the culture councilman, José Luis Méndez Romeu, himself stated during the opening, "To some, it may seem odd that such a conventional space should house this type of project, but our role is merely that of commissioner for something that is out there. These days, sex is not linked to procreation or pleasure, but to the search for identity."

Nevertheless, Emin's photo, which presided on the showroom's façade, was removed by orders from the City Hall a few days after the inauguration in response to the request of some citizens who considered the work obscene and degrading to women, and not at all edifying for the numerous children spending time in the park situated opposite the Kiosco Alfonso exhibition hall. Paradoxically, the general public that had requested the removal of the photograph attended en masse after its removal, making the show a popular success and demonstrating once again that censorship is the best publicity.



Tracey Emin, *I've got it all*, 2000, ink-jetprint framed, 122x92 cm

CENSURE : SIDA

David Wojnarowicz

Dena Ellen Cowan, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.90

Funding was pulled for the catalogue of the exhibition *Tongues of Flame*, at Illinois State University, which criticized prominent political and religious figures for being indifferent to people suffering from AIDS.

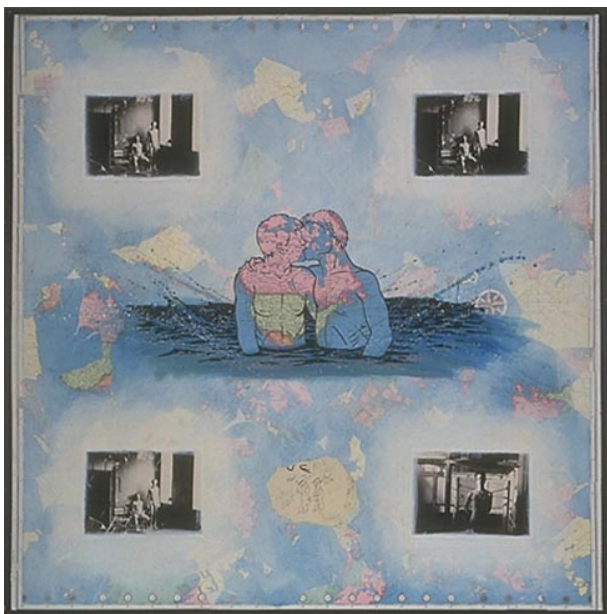
The AIDS exhibition *Witnesses : Against Our Vanishing*, which was accompanied by an inflammatory essay by David Wojnarowicz, was attacked by Reverend David Wildmon's American Family Association and Congressmen Alfonse D'Amato and Jessie Helms and pressured the NEA to act as a self-censor. Although the NEA grant of \$10,000 was eventually restored for the exhibition at the Artists Space in Tribeca (New York City), funding for the show's catalogue, with a text by Wojnarowicz, was categorically denied. The essay criticized Helms, Representative William Dannemeyer, Cardinal O'Connor, and others for their support of policies that ensure the spread of AIDS. NEA chairman John E. Frohnmayer stated that "A large portion of the content is political rather than artistic in nature." And, "Any show that is primarily intended to make a political commentary must be privately funded".



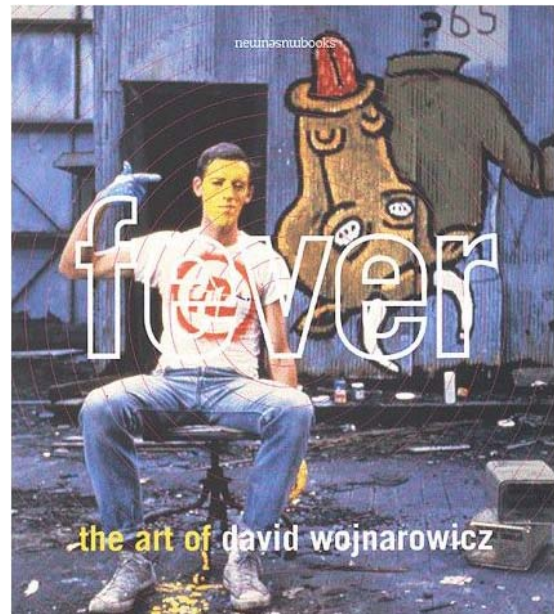
David Wojnarowicz, *Arthur Rimbaud in New York (Duchamp, Pier)*, 1978-1979, série de 24 photographies

David Wojnarowicz s'est imposé comme l'un des artistes américains incontournables des années 80. Il naît dans le New Jersey en 1954. Enfant battu et maltraité, il s'enfuit à New York, découvre son homosexualité, vit dans la rue, subsiste grâce à la prostitution occasionnelle. Il traverse les États-Unis en auto-stop. Pendant les années 80, il devient un artiste reconnu (photographe, vidéaste, peintre, sculpteur et écrivain). Il appartient au mouvement artistique de l'East Village et évolue dans le milieu alternatif new-yorkais (Nan Goldin, Richard Kern, Lydia Lunch, Kathy Acker...) Homosexuel militant, farouchement critique de la société américaine, il meurt du sida en 1992. "C'est parce que l'œuvre créatrice de David Wojnarowicz procède de toute sa vie qu'elle a acquis une pareille puissance. Alors que tout semble dit et redit, quelque chose émerge du chaos de David Wojnarowicz qui nous place devant notre responsabilité d'être pour quelque chose dans le cours du mouvement du monde." Félix Guattari

Source : http://www.editions-desordres.com/auteurs/david_wojnarowicz.php



David Wojnarowicz, *Fuck You Faggot Fucker*, 1984, photographies, acrylic, collage sur masonite



David Wojnarowicz, couverture du livre *Fever. The art of David Wojnarowicz*, 1998

CENSURE : CONFUSION DES GENRES

Ma Liuming

Yu Yeon Kim, excerpts from the catalogue of the exhibition *Translated Acts, Performance and Body Art from East Asia, 1990-2001*, at The Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2001, in "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.148

Ma Liuming is one of the most influential artists of this so-called *Beijing East Village* art movement, which involves performance artists exploring issues of sexuality, identity, gender and personal suffering.

Ma Liuming was discovered when he performed *Fen-Ma Liuming Lunch II*, June 1994 (the first version had been performed in his apartment in April 1994) cooking pictures of potatoes that he had drawn with real potatoes, jewelry and a watch. All of this, of course, was performed naked in an East village court yard while wearing female makeup – an act that earned him two months in prison and led to the dispersal of the East Village artists colony a few days later. Ma Liuming had brought the androgynous figure *Fen-Ma Liuming* – Fen is a common Chinese girl's name meaning incense or fragrance – into existence in a 1993 performance in which he wore woman's makeup, a floral dress and the drank his own semen after masturbating in front of the audience. Ma Liuming's defiance is an alchemical sexual ambiguity with which he consistently challenges the material props by which we define our identity. His disquieting self-documented interactive performance series *Fen-Ma Liuming* has also been made with Western audiences who can choose to sit beside his naked body and be photographed. Ma Liuming becomes the voyeur of his own performance by depressing the hidden cable plunger attached to the camera.



Ma Liuming, *Fen-Ma Liuming Walks the Great Wall*, 1998, photographies argentiques d'une performance, 127x240 cm

CENSURE : OPPRESSION RACISTE ET CENSURE DES MÉDIAS

Ian Berry, South Africa, 1960

Colin Jacobson Excerpts from *Underexposed* (Ed. By Colin Jacobson), Vision On Publishing, London, 2002, in " Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.144

Two rival political groups, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) were leading the opposition to the system of apartheid in South Africa at this time. A large crowd of unarmed protesters, including women and children, congregated in the township of Sharpeville near Johannesburg demonstrating against the infamous " pass laws " which controlled the black population's access to jobs and freedom of movement... When the crowd approached the local police station ; the police opened fire. [...]

[...] Ian Berry, who joined the prestigious Magnum agency two years after Sharpeville, was the only photojournalist present at this massacre... Berry was on the staff of *Drum* magazine... edited by Tom Hopkinson (later Sir Tom) and owned by a maverick character, Jim Bailey. Hopkinson was a distinguished journalist who had edited *Picture Post* magazine in the UK in its heyday... Hopkinson knew an exclusive when he saw one and responded with great excitement to Berry's pictures, editing an impressive lay-out of the story. But Jim Bailey stepped in and refused to allow the story to be run ; he was scared that the magazine would be closed down by the white authorities. For Hopkinson, this was a terrible case of déjà-vu ; in 1954, he had been fired from *Picture Post* for refusing to suppress a story about maltreatment of Communist prisoners during the Korean War. [...]

[...] The Sharpeville pictures have never been published in a South African publication. Incredibly, those wounded protesters who survived (69 people were killed and another 178 injured) were charged with police obstruction. At the subsequent inquiry into the shootings, Berry's photographs became central evidence, emphatically disproving police claims about the number of rounds shot, the position of the police and so forth.



Ian Berry / Magnum, *Sharpeville*, South Africa, March 21, 1960

CENSURE : RACISME

Chris Ofili, *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996

Colin Jacobson Excerpts from *Underexposed* (Ed. by Colin Jacobson), Vision On Publishing, London, 2002, in ["Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.128

Sensation, a show of contemporary British art, caused something of a stir in America. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani tried to have the show closed down even before it opened at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Here, a 72-year-old man, Dennis Heiner, is seen vandalising one of the more controversial works, Chris Ofili's *The Virgin Mary* (with elephant dung), described by Giuliani as "sick stuff". Heiner evaded security and smeared paint from a tube all over the canvas. He was promptly arrested while the photographer was escorted from the building.

Almost every museum in New York City receives money from City Hall. Giuliani announced he was setting up a commission to keep such offensive works out of museums that receive public money. He had "a few ideas" about who should serve on this committee: "basically decent people".

Giuliani's attempts to shut down the museum over the *Sensation* exhibition was overturned in the courts. A federal judge ruled that the mayor had violated the First Amendment when he cut city funds to the Brooklyn Museum and started eviction proceedings against it. Giuliani's attempts at censorship succeeded in attracting some 175,000 viewers to *Sensation*, close to a record for the museum.



Phillip Jones Griffith / Magnum, *Sensation*, New York, décembre 1999, détail

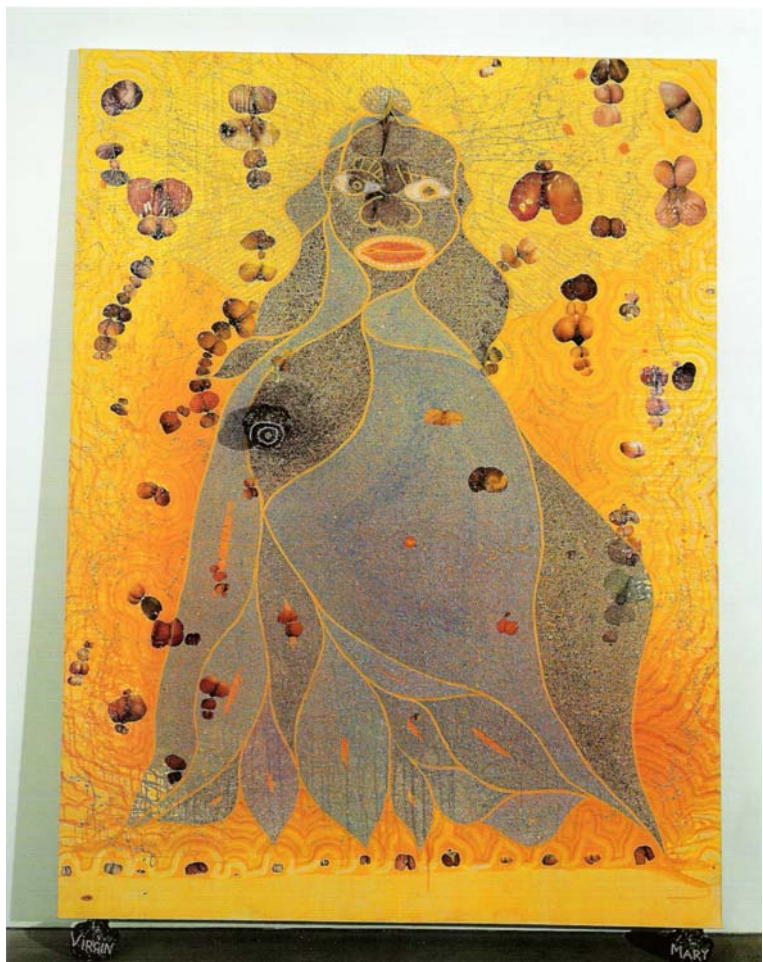
Chris Ofili (né en 1968 à Manchester) utilise du fumier d'éléphant dans ses toiles depuis son voyage au Zimbabwe au début des années 1990.

Œuvres sur :

http://www.cfa-berlin.com/artists/chris_ofili/

Article avec interview sur :

http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/the_elephant_man/



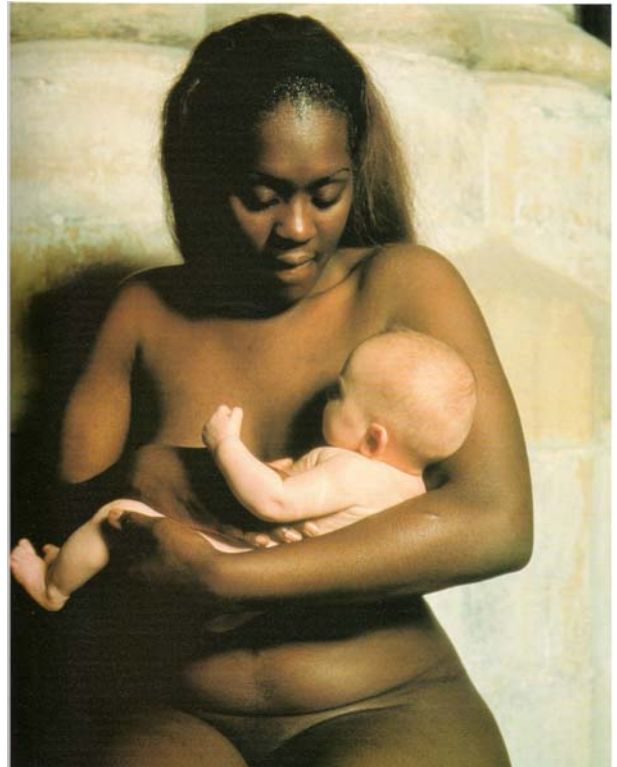
Chris Ofili, *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996, collage papier, peinture à l'huile, brillant, résine polyester, épingles, excréments d'éléphant sur toile de lin, 244x183 cm

CENSURE : MIXITÉ ETHNIQUE

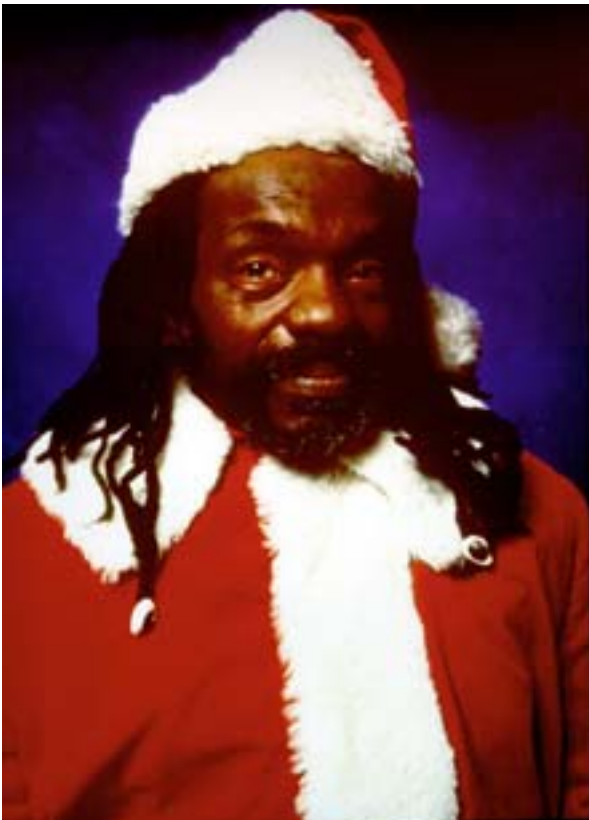
Andres Serrano



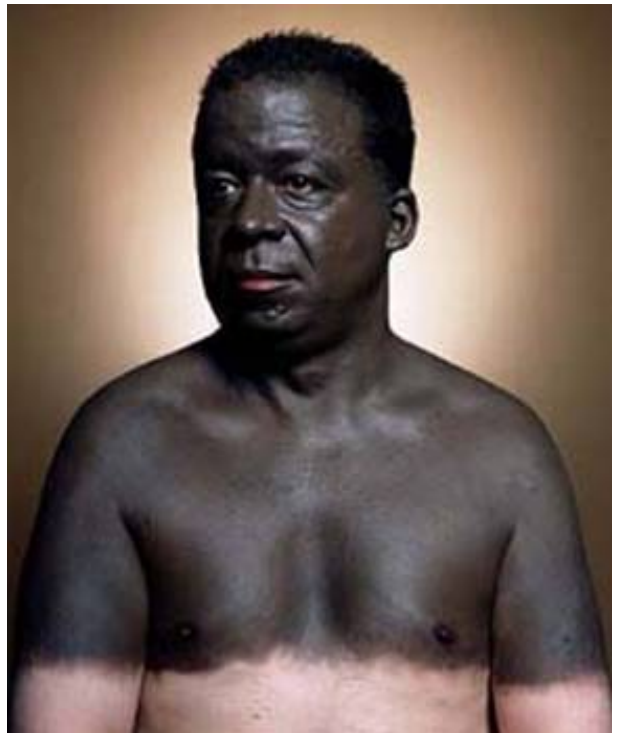
Andres Serrano, *The Interpretation of Dreams (The Other Christ)*, 2001, cibachrome, 152 x 126 cm



Andres Serrano, *Woman with Infant*, 1996, cibachrome, 152 x 126 cm



Andres Serrano, *Black Santa*, 2001, cibachrome, 96x107 cm



Andres Serrano, *White Nigger*, 2001, cibachrome, 83x102cm

CENSURE : LES TABOUS DE LA SOCIÉTÉ AMÉRICAINE

Interview : Andres Serrano. Challenge, risk and provocation

Barbara Pollack, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p. 44-53

For more than a decade, Andres Serrano has been America's favorite whipping boy, the artist who, for better or worse, has become the target of the public's love-hate relationship with contemporary art. Serrano's classic image, *Piss Christ* (1987), may not have launched the Culture Wars, but certainly fanned the flames when it was "discovered" by members of Congress in 1989. Since then, he has churned out bodies of work that uncannily return the favor, by targeting middle-brow sensibilities and disrupting zones of comfortability that infuse our expectations of high art. I met with him on the eve of the opening of his latest show, ironically titled *America*, at Gimpel Fils in London this fall. The setting was an editing studio where the film, *Leo's Fantasy*, a documentary about the making of Serrano's 1996 series *The History of Sex* at the Groninger Museum in Holland, is nearing completion.

B.P. At the time you did *Piss Christ*, at least in New York, there were many artists doing work about the identity politics and the body. There were penises all over the place, or so it seemed, yet your image of a crucifix set off the biggest controversy.

A.S. I'll tell you a story. During that time, I met an artist in San Francisco who said to me that he had been to a dinner the night before with a bunch of artists who were griping about *Piss Christ*. They did not understand why so much attention had been focused on *Piss Christ*, since they had been trying to do provocative work for many years. You see, when you are trying to be provocative it doesn't work. Whereas many artists have been confronted with controversy surrounding their work which was not necessarily their intent at all. It was certainly true for me with *Piss Christ*. I was 37 when I made *Piss Christ* and the controversy really took place 2 years later. Before *Piss Christ*, I had a very limited audience. I had my supporters but I was certainly not very well known outside the New York art world. So, it was a very strange feeling for me to wake up one day and find myself being denounced in Congress. I have always said it was a very Kafkaesque experience.

B.P. When you were making that work, were you conscious that it was going to be provocative ? Was it provocative to you ? [fin p.44]

A.S. Early on, I was working on religious images. Then, I started exploring this new idea where I wanted to photograph bodily fluids very close up, in a very abstract way, referring to abstract painting, geometric painting, and action painting. Initially the fluid pictures, which consisted of milk, piss, and blood, were very abstract. So, at some point, I decided to submerge a crucifix in one of the liquids for two reasons : to go back to the religious issues that I was exploring earlier and to go back to representation. So *Piss Christ* was two different directions in my work coming together in one image and certainly it didn't provoke anything in me.

B.P. But, it is quite a different thing to look at a red and white painting than to look at a photograph of blood and milk. When you use materials such as blood or urine, you know you are going to provoke something in the viewer, don't you ?

A.S. I used the fluids because they were a little more meaningful than red paint. But I certainly didn't anticipate what happened with *Piss Christ*. I wouldn't call it a fluke. I have since understood it as an act of destiny. But it certainly wasn't something that was intended to be provocative.

B.P. For you as an artist, what was it like living through that period, with day after day after day of news headlines and television coverage.

A.S. Actually, it was a living hell. Some people would probably welcome the attention focused on their work all of sudden, even if it's good or bad, any kind of attention, especially for an artist just struggling to get by. But, I was afraid, really. I was afraid because I thought these people were coming down so heavily on me over a photograph, just an idea, just something that popped out of my head. So, I was afraid that my life itself would be even a greater offense. I was afraid on a personal level. I had a few threats, just a few letters that came to me by way of the gallery. Actually, one of the scariest moments for me was about a month or so after the controversy erupted and I was getting all this hostile reaction in papers across the country. I told my dealer at the time, Stefan Stux, that I thought I needed a show to vindicate myself and he said to me, this was in July of 1989, 'Frankly, Andres, I can't give you another show because I can't afford to lose money on you again. You know your last show didn't sell at all so I would advise you to find another gallery.' That hurt me the most, that at the height of it, not only was I being vilified by the press – by

people who didn't know about art or didn't care – but also I was beginning to get slammed from the other side, by art professionals who do know something about art, but most importantly, my gallery abandoned me. About three weeks later, Stux called me saying that he had reconsidered and he gave me a show that December and that show really turned my career around.

B.P. Your career has always straddled that contradiction. You can't really say that this is a case of the art world supporting you against the masses. It is true that you have been attacked by politicians and the religious right, but you also have a huge audience that reaches beyond the art world.

A.S. I am happy for that. My work reaches people that do not necessarily go to galleries. And better yet, I often get people who don't know my work at all, but they have heard something about it in [fin p.46] the press that excites their imagination, so it compels them to come see the work. I have always considered myself a man of the people, an artist of the people, so I like that cross-over audience.

B.P. So, you are a man of the people, even though you have been represented as the enemy of the people, even the antichrist at times ?

A.S. Well, I will say one thing. I am not an aloof artist. I am not an artist who is making art about art. I think sometimes the general public is offended by things they don't understand. My work is pretty understandable. You may not like it, but it's easy to access.

B.P. When you approach a new body of work, do you anticipate that it will provoke controversy ?

A.S. Not really. It is funny how little has impacted me from my audience, my collectors, my supporters, my detractors, even my dealers. They really don't have that much influence over what I do, which I think is the way it should be. I have never got cold feet from the public's reactions or overreactions. On the contrary, it makes me feel that I am on the right track.

B.P. So do you actively try to get that response ?

A.S. Not at all, I follow my own drummer. What's the expression ? I dance to the beat of my own drummer. For example, I knew that the Budapest show in 1994 was not especially offensive or provocative and knew it would not necessarily get a big reaction because it was not so provocative but I still felt compelled to do it So I feel the need to do the work that I want to do, regardless of how people respond to it.

BP: So, let's talk about the bodies of work from the early 1990s – *Nomads*, *Klansman*, and *The Morgue* – what do you think you were working out there ?

AS: In the case of the Klan, I had already done *Nomads*, the homeless portraits, and I wanted to continue doing more portraiture, but I wanted them to be unusual. I immediately thought of masks and when I thought of the mask, I thought of the Klan, which I knew – because of who I am, because I am not white – would be a challenge. Not so much for me, but especially for them, for us to do this work together.

BP: It's interesting that you use the word challenge. I think a lot of times when people call your work provocative, for you it's merely a challenge, but actually you both mean the same thing, the same experience.

AS: Not always, but it is sometimes the case that I do need to feel challenged in my work and I do need to challenge my audience as well, because if I didn't do that kind of work then it would all be too decorative for me. I believe that Ezra Pound said 'make it new'. I have always believed that it is necessary not only to make it new but to make it real as well. So, a lot of times, I feel that I am trying to be a pioneer, looking at new avenues of thought and looking at new things, trying to incorporate themes and issues that may not have not been thought of being worthy of art or beautiful. [fin p.48]

BP: But, you're a smart guy. You know when you do that that people are not going to simply respond, 'oh thank you for opening up this new avenue, Mr. Serrano.' They are going to experience it as 'why the fuck are you doing that ?!'

AS: I am not always so smart sometimes. Certainly when I did *The Morgue*, I had a lot of hostile reactions within the art world. I remember one interviewer asking me what's the difference between your work and pornography because you are objectifying these people. It threw me for a loop. All I was trying to do was to take a closer look at death, which I thought was a very natural thing. We all are curious about death because we fear it. And hence that is part of our curiosity. So sometimes I am taken aback by reactions to my work.

BP: I took my kid when he was eight to *The Morgue* show. We were just going around galleries that day. People in the gallery were appalled that I brought a child to the show but he was really interested in the images.

AS: When that show opened at Yvon Lambert in Paris I remember a woman bringing her three year old and she said to me, 'He knows what these things are and he has his own interpretations of what he is looking at.' This child was not upset by what he saw and he filled in the gaps for himself.

BP: But in the case of all three of those bodies of work, you are pushing the boundaries of legality. You photographed the homeless in the subway without a permit, which is illegal in New York City. You photographed the Klan which is a semi-illegal association, And photographing the dead, without permission of the families, is also illegal.

AS: Well, you know I have problem when I am told you can't do that or you can't go there. The homeless are outsiders, so I felt the need to operate as an outsider. And, the obvious thing would be that I wouldn't have access to the Klan or I shouldn't have a desire to photograph the Klan, and that's exactly why I wanted to do it. Because I am not supposed to.

BP: So do you think of yourself as a good boy or bad boy ?

AS: I am conflicted. On the one hand, I think of myself as a pretty simple guy. On the other hand, I know I have my complexities. I always feel the push and pull that you see in my work. I always feel that conflict, but it is not too big of a conflict because I can always resolve these various references within myself by just accepting everything.

BP: But there seems to be an element of you courting punishment, that the work cannot even be understood until the moment that it provokes negative reaction, and that it is a cathartic moment and feels much more resolved. Some of the work feels that you are begging to be punished.

AS: Well, I don't know about begging but I certainly am putting myself on the line and this is something I feel need to do as an artist because it would be vacant if I didn't do it. It would be decadent or merely decorative. I have tried to push my audience because I am pushing myself. I feel [fin p.49] the need to put myself to the test and go the limit, the same way I ask my audience to take chances. I don't need a negative reaction or a positive reaction but I do need some sort of reaction. The worst reaction that the work can get is indifference. So even though I would like people to like the work, I would rather that they overreacted and got mad at me, then not feel anything at all. So, for me, the work of art is not completed until you have an audience.

BP: So, with *The History of Sex*, you must have known that you would get a reaction ?

AS: Holland is a country that is surrounded by sex, especially Amsterdam. Its red light district is a famous tourist attraction. You see pornography on the streets right in the windows. Yet, when *The History of Sex* opened in Groninger, it was very successful. At one of the last interviews I did there, a journalist asked me, 'Mr. Serrano, how does it feel to know that all of Holland is talking about your sex pictures ? And that question made me feel good, because Holland is nothing but sex and for my pictures to stand out, meant that I had succeeded. But in New York, the reaction, even the press coverage was extremely different. In Groninger, my images were on the cover of magazines, even images like *Fisting*. It was all over town.

When the show came to Paula Cooper, the *New York Times* carried a review, but no photograph. *Time Out* gave me a negative review, saying the work was too timid, but the photograph they ran was the picture of the priest tied up. In other words, the one image that had no nudity at all. You know, for years, the *New York Times* could not print the words *Piss Christ*. It is only during the last few years that they have done that.

BP: Do you think you have been unfairly misunderstood or attacked. After all, the flipside of the censorship issue is who we think has the right to make certain images, who we think has the right to be an artist ?

AS: Exactly. I have always felt that because I am sort of maverick – I am not white, I am not black, I am not gay, I am not this or that – they can take potshots at me because I am not aligned with any group that is going to take offense or sue or stick up for me.

BP: Just like many of the people in your portraits. I thought your series, *Muslims*, which appeared in the *Sunday New York Times Magazine* right after September 11th, was particularly interesting. And now, you are doing portraits of Americans. What does that mean ? What was in your mind, when you say America ?

AS: I am thinking a lot of things. After 9/11, we were all affected to a great extent. We were all in the state of wanting to do something. At first, I felt that I wanted to enlist in the war effort as an artist. I felt patriotic, in the sense that I felt that we were all in this together.

BP: Well, that must have been interesting in that you have been accused, at times, of not being American or being anti-American values or un-American for making certain images.

AS: There was one thing that Jesse Helms once said that really struck me. He said that I was not an artist. [fin p.52] He said I was a jerk who is taunting the American people. That to me was an amazing statement. It's the same thing with Christianity. There are some religious groups that thought I was attacking Christianity as an outsider but I never felt like an outsider. I have always felt that even if I am not a practicing Catholic I still have a lot of Catholicism in me. I still regard myself as a Christian.

For the upcoming show, *America*, these are portraits, not of the people, but of an idea about what is an American. There's a boy scout, a policewoman, a couple of fire fighters, a homeless guy. I have a guy there who looks the posterchild for the Taliban, but he's actually a Sikh and an American citizen. Also, I have a problem with people like Helms who think that they're right and we are all wrong, even the notion that they have the right to define who is American, what is America, what is a good American. These distinctions are invisible in my work. They are all people.

BP: But, some people may be insulted that the likes of Andres Serrano is allowed to define what an American is ?

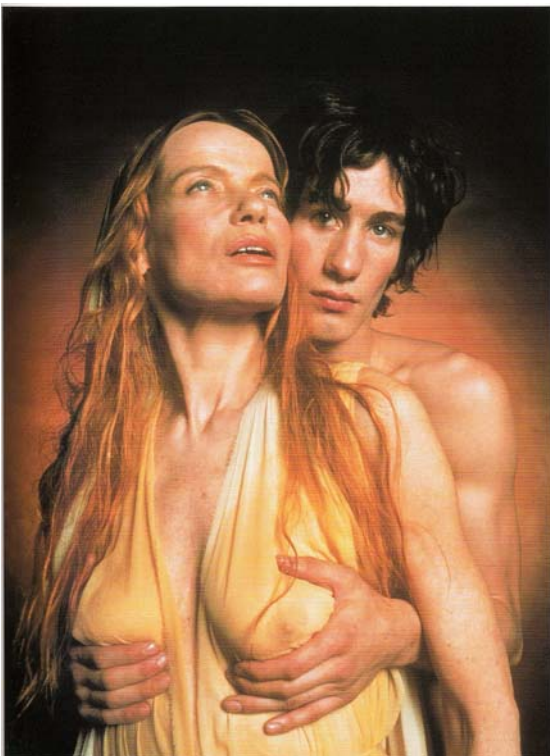
AS: That's a funny notion, that's a laugh. I thought someone has got to do this show, so it is up to me. Actually, it's a natural for me. Some people will see some subversiveness in my taking a picture of a 4 year old little girl, or a boy scout, or a little altar boy, so I think there is a certain amount of irony. But I thought I was the one to do this show and that's why I did it.

BP: Did it make a difference that it was scheduled for a gallery in Europe ? Outside the United States ? Especially at a time when the rest of the world may not agree with our military tactics ?

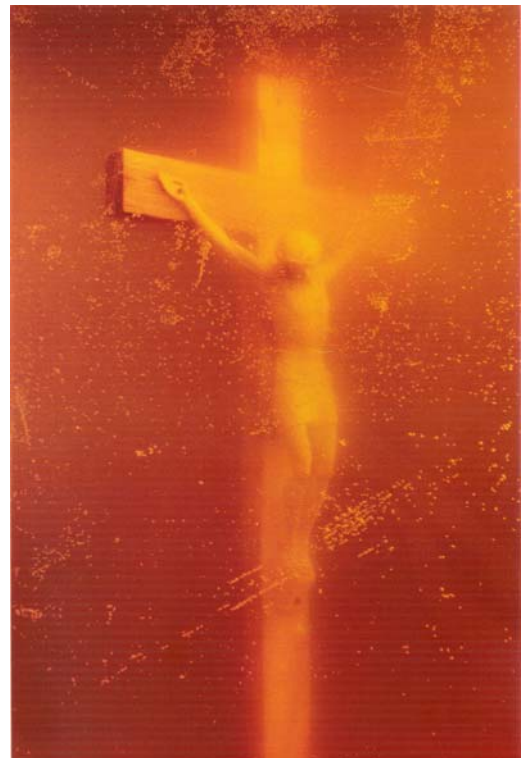
AS: Yeah, are we the good guys or bad guys, right now ?

But the question has always been 'Is Andres Serrano a good guy or bad guy ?' We will never know.

Barbara Pollack writes frequently on contemporary art for *Artnews*, *Art in America*, the *Village Voice* and other publications. She is a professor of the history of photography at the School of Visual Arts as well as exhibiting her own photo-based installations and video work, most recently at Esso Gallery, New York, PSI, MoMA. New York and the Aldrich Museum of Art. [fin p.53]



Andres Serrano, *The Interpretation of Dreams (Edipo)*, 2001, cibachrome, 126x152 cm



Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ*, 1987, cibachrome, 102x152 cm

CENSURE : RELIGIONS

AES Group, *Islamic project : The Witnesses of the Future*, 1996

AES Group. Moscow, September 2001, in " Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.18

Between 1996 and 1997, AES Group produced a series of photographs, *Islamic Project*, with monuments and buildings that are emblematic in Western civilization – the Statue of Liberty, New York ; the Reichstag, Berlin ; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris ; the Kremlin, Moscow – that appeared transformed by computer imaging and invaded by Islamic elements and people dressed with Muslim costume, etc. After September 11, 2001, the online gallery www.eyestorm.com removed some of the images of *Islamic Project* from its website. After a statement from the AES Group, the images were put back on the site.

" We, the members of AES Group, produced in 1996 the *Islamic project : The Witnesses of the Future*, which was shown all over the globe (Moscow, Belgrade, Graz, New York, Paris). Now, together with the whole world, we are shocked by the catastrophe in New York and Washington. We never expected that the absurd hyperbole of our project could become real. [...]

[...] We think that contemporary art cannot deal with aesthetic matters, closing its eyes to things that determine the present and future world. As many writers have noted (Mike Hannula, Evelyne Jouanno, Hou Hanru, and others), the *Islamic Project* is neither pro nor anti-Islamic, nor is it pro or anti-Western. The project was created to visualize, and thus reveal, a problem that people refuse to admit, or understand in a very narrow way (through an exchange of violence and victims)

Our work is clearly against the mutual paranoia between the East and the West. We think that right now, when terrorists' attacks show that unthinkable phantasms can become real, the *Islamic Project* must be widely shown, for people to see the absurdity and tragedy of this kind of relationship between East and West. Civilized society must not be afraid of the grotesque language of contemporary art when it is concerned with real events that are happening now or can happen in the future. Contemporary art does not solve the problems, but it can raise the major questions. "



AES Group, *Liberty*, tiré de la série
Islamic project : The Witnesses of the Future, 1996

CENSURE : CRIMES

Andy Warhol

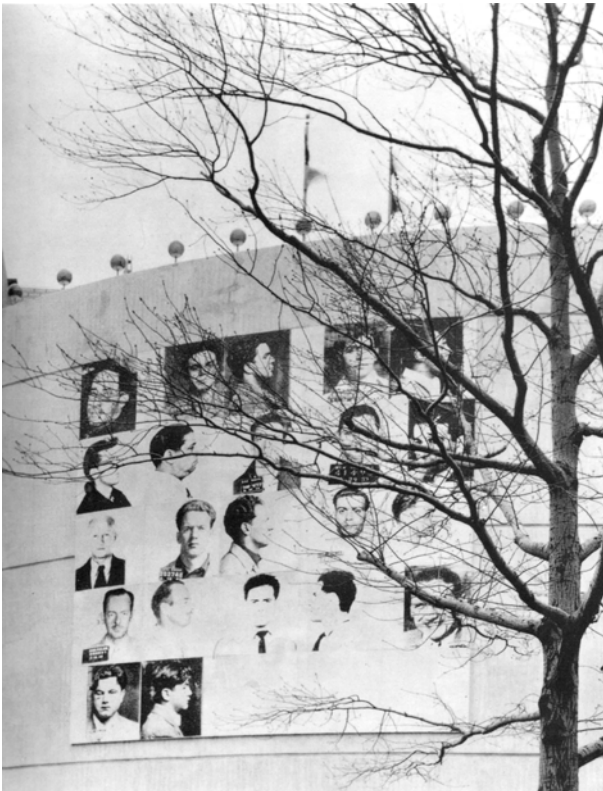
Seve Penelas, " Censored ", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.76]

[NB : Bien que ce ne soit pas un artiste contemporain, son œuvre entre en résonance avec des œuvres plus récentes...]

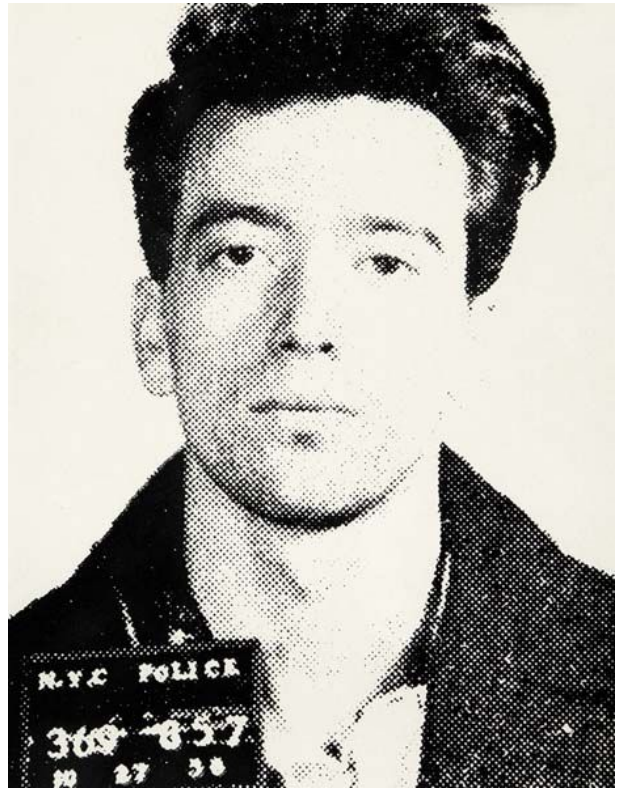
In 1964, on the occasion of the New York World's Fair, the architect Philip Johnson, commissioned to design the New York State Pavilion, invited several artists, Andy Warhol among them, to create pieces for the building's exterior. Warhol produced a work entitled *The Most Wanted Men*, which consisted of a huge mural with twenty-five panels with frontal and profile portraits of thirteen criminals wanted by the FBI. The portraits came from police files, tiny photos enlarged to 1 x 1.5 meters by employing screen printing techniques, often used by Warhol, which increased the graininess of the photographs.

Warhol liked the idea that these were wanted men, even to the extent that he played with the idea that they were *desired*. He also toyed with the remote possibility that one of them might be arrested if he were to come to the fair and be recognized. Most of them were criminals originating from Italy and involved with the Mafia, but the photos were actually rather out-dated and some of them had already been caught by the police. These compounded circumstances caused unrest in the Italian community, which presented its complaints to the authorities.

Finally, the then governor of New York, Nelson A. Rockefeller, and the president of the fair, Robert Moses, ordered that the portraits be removed. Offended, Warhol wanted to rebel against Moses and produced twenty-five screen prints with his grimacing, proposing that they be used as substitutes for the criminal portraits. Johnson, the architect, did not consider it such a good idea to ridicule the all-powerful president of the fair and, despite his admiration for Warhol – in fact, he was a significant collector of his work–, he argued with the artist and decided to cover the criminal portraits with a coat of silver paint.



Andy Warhol, *The Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, 1964, sérigraphie sur 25 panneaux de 101x122 cm, World's Fair, Queens, New York City



Andy Warhol, *The Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, n°11, John Joseph H., dossier n°857, 1967, sérigraphie, 21x16.5cm

CENSURE : MORT

Joel-Peter Witkin

Dena Ellen Cowan, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.98

"The subjects of my work are not freaks, degenerates, or the grotesque. They are ourselves. In this most violent and visually wallpapered age, I have chosen to evoke the darkness rather than the light : as Goya, Blake and Redon have. Because we argue for Divine Madness as an honorable choice in a society devoid of human honor. The themes of my work are the things which constitute human existence, history, beauty. The work has at its very core the evidence of conscience presented as photographic metaphor. I strive to create experiences no one has seen or felt before. "

Joel-Peter Witkin, Albuquerque, September, 2002

Photographs, such as *The Kiss* and *Still Life, Marseilles*, were used by U.S. Senator Jesse Helms in his crusade to end the NEA grants to individual artists. During the congressional debate on September 14, 1993, he stated the following :

"Now, Mr. President, let me tell you about the photographic award that the National Endowment for the Arts gave to a man named Joel-Peter Witkin. Joel-Peter Witkin is what the NEA deems a "visual artist". Over the past decade, he has received four Fellowship awards from the National Endowment for the Arts. Just last year, 1992, the National Endowment for the Arts gave him a \$20,000 Fellowship based on work such as this photograph. That is this photograph right here. I hope the cameraman will focus on this. This is a picture of the head of a cadaver, cut in two – right down the middle – and laid flat so as to appear to be a photograph of two men kissing each other. Mr. Joel-Peter Witkin received a \$20,000 fellowship for a series of photographs such as this. But most of them are worse than this. The NEA's art experts, self-declared art experts, who reviewed Witkin's work in 1992, called him, if you can believe this, Mr. President, "a major talent". To which I say, "horsefeathers". "



Joel-Peter Witkin, *The Kiss*, LS: V. Hinz, 1982, tirage argentique viré, 50x40 cm

Joel-Peter Witkin



Joel-Peter Witkin, *Still Life*, Marseilles, 1992, tirage argentique viré, 76x102 cm



Joel-Peter Witkin, *Anti-Christ*, 1984, 37.5x37.5 cm

CENSURE : MORT

Sun Yuan

Ci-contre : Sun Yuan, *Honey*, 1999, 90x126 cm

Installation présentée en 1999 à Pékin puis à la 49^e Biennale de Venise en 2001 (photographies).



" En 1999, un jeune artiste chinois de 27 ans Sun Yuan expose une installation dans un lieu clandestin de Pékin. Il s'agit d'un nouveau-né mort couché en position fœtale sur une tête de vieillard décapité qui émerge d'un lit de glace. L'exposition se termine au bout de la journée alors que la glace a fondu. L'œuvre est intitulée *Le miel*. Selon l'artiste, elle évoque l'acte d'amour et non la violence. La position de l'enfant mort suggère la quête du lien de filiation. Depuis, les photos de cette installation ont été présentées dans plusieurs villes européennes. Au premier regard, sans explication, ces images nous interpellent par leur atmosphère d'étrange. Elles suscitent des questionnements sur cette mise en scène singulière. L'acte de création artistique est généralement investi d'intentions subjectives et de la volonté d'exprimer de l'artiste. Lorsque l'œuvre est dévoilée au public, elle est porteuse de significations qui n'appartiennent pas à l'artiste seul. Si l'acte de créer doit être assujéti d'une quelconque éthique, elle doit se manifester dans la forme de l'expression et dans la pensée visuelle de l'artiste. L'humain voit dans la représentation de la vie, joie et espoir, dans la mort, inquiétude et désespoir. La mort, sa représentation et la signification de celle-ci ne peuvent être substituées de façon arbitraire à des valeurs personnelles. "

Source : <http://www.productionmyarts.com/arts-en-profondeur/art-et-scandale/1999-sun-yuan-miel-fr.htm>

Exposition "Post-Sense Sensibility, Alien Bodies and Delusion", Shanghart Gallery, Pékin, janvier 1999

'Transcending Media' and the Role of Contemporary Art Practices in China

Thomas J. Berghuis

[...] Public experience of new media art often comes in the form of perceiving finished products at exhibitions ; one rarely witnesses the process that produces the works. Such an emphasis informed two major events that Qiu Zhijie organised (with Wu Meichun) in 1999 and 2001: *Post-Sense Sensibility: Alien Bodies* and *Delusion and Post-Sense Sensibility: Spree*. The first will be remembered as a major turning point in 'underground exhibitions' in China ; the second event introduced time-based and site-specific works that opened up the stage for more radical live art practices and direct confrontations between artists and audiences. [...]

Source : <http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/berghuis.htm>

Letter from Beijing

Jonathan Napack

[...] The most important recent show, however, was curator Wu Meichun's "Post-Sense, Sensibility, Alien Bodies and Delusion." Although it included a wide selection of artists from all over China, this exhibition was most notorious for sculptures using human corpses and dying animals. Sun Yuan's *Honey* juxtaposed a cadaver "borrowed" from a morgue with a stillborn fetus; another room in the exhibition displayed a severed human arm hanging from a meat hook; yet another echoed with the blood-curdling moans of a goose starving to death with its feet glued to the floor.

The artists said their primary aim was to create art that wouldn't be collected by Westerners, a sentiment in tune with the nasty xenophobia of some intellectuals in Beijing. In 1998, Sun Yuan "protested" a campaign by animal-rights campaigners in San Francisco's Chinatown by creating a kind of torture chamber for live seafood, which was "exhibited" writhing and gasping on a cement floor.

That this would be lauded locally as "self-confident nationalism" reveals the extent of resentment against Western power, especially after the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. For a while, artists even accused their foreign collectors of "plotting to control Chinese art."

Recently, however, with China's looming entry into the World Trade Organization, the pendulum has swung back to xenophilia -- at least, for the time being. The same kids who spit on Westerners a year ago now show off their English. The Sanlitun bar district and its newer, hipper neighbors, Cafe Havana and Club Vogue, buzz every night with young Chinese and foreigners, and underground rock bands flourish. [...]

Source : <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/napack/napack8-30-00.asp>

Voyage dans l'underground pékinois. Les aventuriers de l'art extrême

François Caviglioli, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, n°1800, 6 mai 1999

Ils exposent des cadavres, malaxent des chairs en putréfaction, s'exhibent nus couverts de mouches ... Leur révolution culturelle est moins sanglante que l'autre, guère moins sanguinolente. Choses vues.

Une banlieue, sur le 4^e périphérique nord de Pékin. Seuls ceux qui y vivent savent qu'elle s'appelle Shaoyao. Il neige. Ils sont quelques dizaines à progresser dans la boue sale. Ils ne sont pas du coin, ça se voit tout de suite. Ils sont trop bien habillés. Ils viennent des beaux quartiers. Des peintres, des sculpteurs, des comédiens, quelques Occidentaux, et même un ambassadeur, qui a quitté sa limousine et patauge comme les autres. Ils ont un rendez-vous. Avec la mort.

A l'entrée d'un immeuble, sévère comme un pénitencier, des jeunes gens fébriles les accueillent et les conduisent dans un sous-sol. Une crypte, où les attend un garçon de 27 ans, qui a encore quelque chose d'enfantin dans sa bouille ronde. C'est Sun Yuan, un plasticien contestataire qui dévoile sa dernière œuvre, «Honey». Il s'agit du cadavre d'un vieillard, enfoui sous une pellicule de glace, d'où seul émerge un visage de cendre. Un vrai cadavre. Sur le corps du vieil homme est posé un autre corps, celui d'un enfant mort-né. Les invités à ce happening se souviennent encore du froid, et de l'odeur fade des chairs mortes.

L'ambassadeur se croit obligé de prendre un maintien recueilli, comme s'il assistait à un enterrement. «Mais on n'était pas à des obsèques, dit Li Xianting, le pape de l'off-off Pékin. Il y avait entre ce mort et cet enfant qui n'avait pas vécu une rencontre, quelque chose de vivant.» Il faut être chinois pour distinguer un peu de vie dans cette morgue. Un Européen a posé une question. Les Européens en posent toujours, c'est leur manie.

Il a demandé à Sun Yuan: «Mais qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?»

L'artiste a répondu ce que répond obstinément la Chine au reste du monde: «C'est mon secret.»

Ce genre de manif blasphématoire, ça s'appelle à Pékin une «installation». L'installateur le plus fou s'appelait Zhang Huan. Il s'exhibait dans une baignoire remplie de sang, avec son copain travesti. Il s'enduisait de miel et restait nu pendant des heures au-dessus des waters, jusqu'à être complètement recouvert de mouches. Il vit aujourd'hui aux Etats-Unis. Assagi, dit-on.

Une installation a toujours lieu dans la périphérie de Pékin, le plus près possible de nulle part. Les invités sont prévenus au dernier moment, uniquement par téléphone ou par le bouche-à-oreille, pour déjouer la police. Mais la police est, bien sûr, au courant. Elle a ses indicateurs artistiques. Elle vient ou elle ne vient pas, c'est selon. Ce jour-là, elle est venue pour Sun Yuan. Des policiers en civil, courtois, civilisés. Ils ont longuement considéré la composition de Sun Yuan. Puis ils ont dit que ça leur semblait intéressant mais qu'il fallait tout remballer et déguerpir. «En général, ils laissent faire, à condition que ça reste réservé à une petite élite, dit Li Xianting. Mais là, ils ont eu peur. Cette installation n'avait pu être réalisée qu'avec la complicité des médecins qui avaient prêté les cadavres. L'affaire débordait le cadre autorisé du microcosme intellectuel. Il y avait un commencement de contamination.»

Les auteurs d'installations ne sont pas des artistes installés. Ils sont une trentaine à Pékin. Ils ne gagnent rien, ou presque, puisqu'ils n'ont pas le droit d'exposer, et que les nouveaux riches chinois, uniquement préoccupés d'amasser le plus d'argent le plus vite possible, n'ont pas encore appris à investir dans l'avant-garde. Les installateurs fous ne sont jamais sortis de Chine. Ils n'ont aucune expérience et ils en sont fiers. «Les Chinois ont l'impression d'avoir tout vu, disent-ils. Pas nous.» Vierges de toutes références, ils représentent l'enfance de l'art. A leur tête, les trois mousquetaires de l'installation. Sun Yuan, c'est d'Artagnan. Toujours prêt à ferrailler. A 20 ans, il était professeur à l'Institut central des Beaux-Arts. Mais il enseignait à ses élèves que la technique est un handicap, que le dessin ne sert à rien, que la peinture et la sculpture sont également excrémentielles. Il a été solennellement mis à la porte. Il a pris depuis le maquis culturel. Il est secondé par Han Zi, que sa force physique apparente à Porthos. Han Zi a une activité créatrice plutôt réduite, enfin à première vue, mais il est très utile dans la logistique compliquée des installations. C'est lui qui trimballe les cadavres d'hommes ou d'animaux, les cercueils et autres accessoires indispensables à une contestation radicale de la société chinoise. Avec toute la finesse aristocratique d'Aramis, le jeune Zhu Yu a le génie de dénicher les immeubles les plus introuvables et les sous-sols les plus lugubres.

Ils respectent tous le critique Li Xianting, qui est leur Athos. Un mandarin à la barbiche dessinée au pinceau. Enigmatique comme les grands maîtres cachés qui hantent les montagnes chinoises. On l'a envoyé aux champs pendant la Révolution culturelle. Il lui en est resté une grande méfiance à l'égard de la culture. Il ne croit plus qu'aux jeunes profanateurs. Il les reçoit chez lui, dans le quartier de Houhai. Il habite un pavillon au bord du lac Shishahai. Il est très fier de sa cour pavée, qui date

de l'époque Ming. Malheureusement, ce sanctuaire est menacé. Le site a été acquis par des investisseurs de Hongkong et va être rasé. Victime du capitalisme après l'avoir été du maoïsme, il attend les bulldozers avec sérénité. Il a déjà empaqueté ses livres.

Li Xianting traduit en paroles ce que les trois mousquetaires disent en actes. «*Ils expriment*, dit-il, *les tabous de la Chine*.» Sun Yuan écoute avec une déférence filiale, mais il glisse tout de même que l'explication d'une œuvre, c'est l'œuvre elle-même. Le seul ancien qu'il vénère avec le vieux mandarin du lac, c'est Gu Dexin, un artiste qui appartient à une génération très marquée par l'Occident. Grand sculpteur de viande en putréfaction, Gu Dexin la malaxe jusqu'à en faire de petits morceaux de poudre séchée. Son obsession, transformer la chair périssable en ce je-ne-sais-quoi qui n'a plus de nom dans aucune langue au monde, comme a dit Bossuet. Les mousquetaires approuvent: «La mort, disent-ils, apporte une sensation de plaisir.» Ils ne veulent plus être que les créateurs de l'éphémère. «Ne pas laisser de traces, mais une légende.»

Source : http://hebdo.nouvelobs.com/hebdo/parution/p19990506/dossier/a10818-les_aventuriers_de_l%E2%80%99art_extr%C3%Aame.html

After Exoticism - review of art festival, Shanghai, China

Richard Vine, *Art in America*, July, 2001

[...] If the "advanced" work now produced has a distinct character, it is that of heady, youthful liberation. Images from abroad--whether from videotapes, newly available Western magazines, or the Internet--are voraciously consumed and almost manically reprocessed into high-energy art. The urge for practitioners to "catch up" with the West and to stand out from the overwhelming competition leads many to a strategy of shock. If one "Fuck Off" artist uses a dead baby (Sun Yuan in *Honey*, 1999, or Zhu Yu in *Eating People*, 2000), the next, it seems, must use two (Peng Yu in *Link of the Body*, 2000).

After decades of censorship, China's young talents now seem obsessed with testing the limits of tolerance: How much provocation will the government permit? When will viewers begin to react with physical disgust or moral outrage? At what point will the artist's own performing body revolt or give out? In short, these "progressives" are remarkably like avantgarde artists everywhere--in manner, in dress, in conversation, in critical and formal concerns. Nothing is more uniform, it seems, than art-world nonconformity. Thus 137 years after the first Salon des Refuses, the paradigmatic revolt against the Academy is again being played out, in eerily familiar form, amid the pre-and postmodern tumult of the world's most populous nation.

The Shanghai Biennale 2000 took place at the Shanghai Art Museum [Nov. 6, 2000-Jan. 6, 2001] and was accompanied by a 276-page Chinese-English catalogue.

Source : http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_7_89/ai_76332991/pg_6

Transgresser le principe céleste. Dialogue avec le groupe cadavre

Fei Da Wei, in "Représenter l'horreur", *art press*, hors-série, mai 2001, p.60-64

Au cours des deux dernières années, le milieu de l'art chinois a vu l'apparition du groupe Cadavre. Ces jeunes artistes, âgés d'une trentaine d'années, utilisent des cadavres humains dans leurs œuvres. En Chine; ce phénomène fait scandale. À l'étranger, certains ont pensé que ce type de matériau était plus facile à obtenir en Chine qu'ailleurs, et l'utilisation des cadavres plus aisément acceptable par la tradition chinoise. Rien de tout cela, il s'agit-là d'un pur phénomène avant-gardiste. Ces jeunes artistes manifestent leur dédain vis-à-vis des courants principaux de l'art contemporain chinois, ils sont en révolte contre la professionnalisation, l'enfermement et le non-sens du monde artistique. Ils sont animés par le désir d'imposer leur image à l'aide de moyens violents et provocateurs. Pour eux, en effet, le cadavre est non seulement un vocabulaire permettant d'exprimer la violence, mais ils ont également parfaitement conscience qu'il s'agit d'un support extrêmement sensible sur le plan moral. La présentation de leurs œuvres lors des expositions de Pékin (*Post-Sens*, 1999 ; *Obsession with Harm*, 2000) et de Shanghai (*Fuck Off*, novembre 2000) a porté ces artistes sur le devant de la scène. Leur notoriété n'a depuis cessé de croître, et ils ont très vite été invités à participer à d'importantes expositions, telle la Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon en 2000. Ce succès est-il la conséquence d'une stratégie artistique étudiée? Ces pratiques sont-elles le fruit d'une sérieuse réflexion? C'est dans cette perspective que j'ai organisé un dialogue, via l'Internet, avec les principaux acteurs du groupe.

Des modes d'expression extrêmes

Tout d'abord, je voudrais savoir comment vous en êtes venus à utiliser de véritables cadavres dans vos installations ?

Zhu Yu : C'était en 1998, et cela pour une raison simple : élargir et exploiter de nouveaux matériaux artistiques.

Sun Yuan : Dans mes installations, j'ai utilisé des corps morts. Pour en expliquer la raison, il faudrait évoquer ma première œuvre, intitulée *Animals Inside Wall* (Mur d'animaux aquatiques, septembre 1998), dans laquelle j'ai utilisé une cinquantaine d'animaux marins vivants. Une partie de leurs corps avait été encastree dans un mur. Au début du vernissage de l'exposition, les animaux se contorsionnaient et le public assistait à leur lente agonie : leur environnement ayant changé, ils sont morts au bout de plusieurs heures, voire une journée.

À l'époque, peu de choses m'intéressaient parmi les principaux courants artistiques contemporains en Chine. Je cherchais alors d'autres points d'attaque. Notre génération se passionne peu pour la politique. Réfléchir à des problèmes fondamentaux touchant à l'essence de l'homme nous intéresse davantage. J'y trouve une plus grande liberté, car cela ne nécessite pas l'intervention de formules et de règles préexistantes. Aussi pensai-je que pour traiter des problèmes touchant le fondement même de l'être, il fallait des modes d'expression extrêmes, c'est-à-dire recourir à des matériaux et des supports totalement différents, afin de tenter une nouvelle expérience par laquelle on pourrait créer réellement son propre espace de liberté. C'est ainsi que j'ai choisi la vie (et non pas l'animal en lui-même) comme support d'expression : laisser la vie disparaître sous une forme donnée, et permettre au public d'assister à cette disparition.

J'estime qu'il y a quatre raisons pour lesquelles on peut utiliser le cadavre en tant que matériau artistique :

1 : le corps matériel est le support de l'homme spirituel;

2 : la disparition de la vie accompagne la disparition de l'homme spirituel ;

3 : le corps humain est composé d'hydrate de carbone : après la mort, il se transforme en matière. C'est pour cette raison que le chimiste M. HU Yadong (ex-directeur de l'Institut de chimie de l'Académie de sciences naturelles en Chine) a avancé la thèse selon laquelle « un mort n'est plus un être humain ». Sur le plan conceptuel, le cadavre n'est plus un être humain, mais sur le plan psychologique, pour les vivants, il le demeure. Voilà la spécificité de ce support.

4 : la recherche en sciences naturelles doit transgresser des tabous, il en est de même pour la recherche artistique.

Dans vos travaux, la relation entre l'auteur et le mort n'est-elle qu'une relation d'artiste à matériau ? Au cours du processus artistique, arrive-t-il que vous ayez une communication d'ordre plus « affective » avec les morts ?

Peng Yu : Pour nous, il ne s'agit effectivement que d'une relation entre un artiste et son matériau. Mais, étant donné la quantité d'informations que ce corps possède (le fait qu'il ait vécu), cela influence inévitablement la manière de travailler. C'est d'ailleurs ce contenu, comme support artistique, qui donne vie à l'installation. Mais si l'on se force à « communiquer » d'une manière affective avec les morts, il n'en résulte que de la souffrance, c'est peine perdue, et cela n'a pas de sens. En revanche, si l'on change de vision par rapport au devenir-cadavre de son propre corps, on peut aborder la vie d'une nouvelle manière.

S'il s'agissait de vos parents, traiteriez-vous ces corps de la même façon ?

P. Y : Oui. Je ne vois aucune différence entre le corps des membres de ma famille et celui d'autrui. Je pense que je les utiliserais, si besoin était. Ce ne serait alors qu'une question de formalités administratives.

Partout, vos installations ont provoqué de vives réactions. En Chine, elles ont suscité de violentes critiques, tandis qu'à l'étranger, leur accueil a été plutôt favorable. D'après vous, pourquoi cette différence ?

S. Y. : En Chine, l'art d'avant-garde est encore très jeune, et nous devons passer par de nombreuses expériences, qui se soldent souvent par des échecs. Si l'on regarde l'art chinois d'un point de vue occidental, les malentendus sont inévitables. On pourrait penser que c'est en raison de leur caractère extrême que nos œuvres ont été par la suite sélectionnées pour des expositions internationales. Mais nous n'en sommes pas responsables, et cela nous plonge dans l'embarras. L'idéal serait que nous puissions exposer librement en Chine, et que nos œuvres soient évaluées en dehors de ce débat sur la différence entre la Chine et le reste du monde.

En conflit avec la tradition

Pensez-vous qu'il y ait une relation entre l'utilisation du cadavre dans vos œuvres et la tradition culturelle chinoise ?

S. Y. : Que ce soit en Occident ou en Orient, le corps humain est considéré comme inviolable. Nous craignons tous la vengeance des esprits, l'intervention des dieux et la punition pour nos mauvaises actions. C'est pour cette raison que l'offense aux morts représente un sacrilège extrême. Mais dans la Chine ancienne, il existait une pratique de flagellation des cadavres ; et en Occident, on a jeté les organes de Jeanne d'Arc dans une rivière après l'avoir brûlée vive. D'un autre côté, on utilise des cercueils de cristal et on procède à de somptueux enterrements pour glorifier les défunts. Nous pensons qu'il est plus facile pour les Occidentaux d'utiliser les cadavres, car c'est en Occident qu'est apparue l'anatomie. Nous n'avons pas cherché à établir une relation avec la tradition chinoise, nous serions plutôt en conflit avec elle.

Parmi les critiques qui ont été émises à propos de vos œuvres, certaines affirment que vous avez dépassé les limites de l'art. Pensez-vous que l'art ait une limite, et si oui, laquelle ?

S. Y. : L'art, souvent, se doit de transgresser « le principe céleste ». Après cela, on peut se demander ce qu'est ce « principe céleste ».

Au cours de l'exposition Fuck Off, Zhu Yu a tenté d'exposer une photographie le montrant en train de dévorer de la chair humaine. Finalement, les organisateurs ont préféré ne pas présenter cette image, mais elle a tout de même été reproduite dans le catalogue de l'exposition. Je voudrais qu'il nous en dise quelques mots.

Z. Y. : Quand je souffre d'insomnie, apparaissent souvent dans ma tête des scènes d'anthropophagie, et cela depuis longtemps déjà. J'ai souvent pensé avoir recours aux corps conservés dans le formol, mais la forte odeur m'a fait renoncer à ce projet. Comme je ne peux décemment pas consommer des êtres vivants, il m'est apparu possible de dévorer les corps d'individus récemment décédés. Mais il est nécessaire que leur volume ne soit pas trop important. C'est pour cette raison que j'ai eu l'idée d'utiliser un bébé mort-né.

Mon projet consistait donc à me procurer dans les hôpitaux un bébé issu d'une fausse couche, à le conserver dans un réfrigérateur, à acheter un beau service de table, à préparer un plat délicieux avec la chair du bébé et enfin à le consommer.

Lorsque vous considérez l'anthropophagie comme un art, que voulez-vous exprimer ?

Z. Y. : Nos connaissances sur l'anthropophagie proviennent uniquement de personnes qui n'ont pas vécu cette expérience. À l'heure actuelle, on explique le phénomène anthropophage par la pathologie ou la criminologie, ou bien on le considère comme un acte primitif. Je cherchais seulement, au travers d'une performance, à montrer l'expérience de l'anthropophagie par un individu qui ne serait ni un cas pathologique ni un criminel. D'autant qu'à ma connaissance, ni les religions, ni les lois modernes n'ont réellement interdit le cannibalisme (*sic*).

J'estime que dans la vie, afin de satisfaire leurs propres besoins, les gens devraient eux-mêmes déterminer les raisons pour lesquelles ils peuvent faire, ou ne pas faire, telle ou telle chose. La religion, la morale, les lois ne sont que des règles du jeu choisies et adoptées momentanément. Je ne crois pas qu'il existe un ordre fondamental. Lorsque l'on considère que l'anatomie est utile, on passe outre le respect du mort. On avance alors comme critère moral l'intérêt de la science, et l'attitude envers le cadavre change. Ainsi, si l'anthropophagie est actuellement considérée comme un tabou universel, toucher à ce tabou serait pour moi un moyen de prouver qu'il demeure des principes qui peuvent être transgressés.

Traduit du chinois par Meng Tian

Voir aussi l'article : Mary Bittner Wiseman, "Subversive Strategies in Chinese Avant-Garde Art", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 65, n°1, hiver 2007, p.109-119 (disponible à la bibliothèque d'art et archéologie, GE ; payant sur le net)

CENSURE : MORT DANS LES MÉDIAS

Une censure intériorisée ? Les premières images des attentats du 11 septembre 2001

Christian Delage, in "De la censure à l'autocensure", *Ethnologie française*, n°105, 2006 / 1, p. 91-99, résumé de l'article

Société du spectacle, ère du tout-information, non-respect de l'intimité des personnes : il est désormais d'usage de se plaindre de la place trop envahissante prise par les médias, en particulier audiovisuels et de s'interroger sur l'éthique de la profession. Il est vrai que ce sont plutôt les faits tragiques, le surgissement d'une violence meurtrière, l'atteinte à la vie des individus qui aiguissent l'appétit des journalistes, certains de répondre à une attente du public. Pourtant, lors des attentats commis à New York le 11 septembre 2001, pratiquement aucune image n'a été prise – en tout cas diffusée – des victimes. Certains ont cru pouvoir attribuer cette absence à une censure d'État. Or, ce jour-là, le président des États-Unis, loin de la Maison-Blanche, a dû patienter de longues heures avant de rejoindre la capitale fédérale. Pendant toute la journée, il a pris la mesure de l'événement par le biais des écrans de télévision disposés ici ou là sur son trajet. L'auteur s'interroge sur la nécessité ou non de se confronter à des images terribles pour être informé en temps réel du bilan matériel et humain d'un acte de terreur, en retraçant le déroulement de la journée du président Bush le 11 septembre 2001 et la manière dont les premiers témoins ont – comme les frères Naudet, deux jeunes réalisateurs français parmi les premiers présents sur les lieux – refusé de filmer les cadavres jonchant le sol des deux tours du World Trade Center.

Source au 08 06 24 : http://www.cairn.info/resume.php?ID_REVUE=ETHN&ID_NUMPUBLIE=ETHN_061&ID_ARTICLE=ETHN_061_0091



Shannon Stapleton / Reuters, *Father Mychal Judge is carried from the rubble of the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11, 2001* [Le père M. Judge était l'aumônier du NYC Fire Département, il fut tué pendant son travail dans le hall de la tour nord lors de l'effondrement de la tour sud dont les débris envahirent le hall]

CENSURE : MORT DANS LES MÉDIAS

Todd Maisel, New York, 11 septembre 2001GIRARDIN, Daniel, PIRKER, Christian, *Controverses. Une histoire juridique et éthique de la photographie*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2008

[...] Todd Maisel, reporter du *New York Daily News*, a certainement été l'un des principaux héros de cette page épique et terrible de l'histoire du photojournalisme – plusieurs représentants de la profession seront tués ou blessés pour avoir voulu couvrir l'événement au plus près. Quand il apprend qu'un avion de ligne a heurté l'une des tours jumelles, Maisel se précipite *downtown* en suivant un véhicule de police. Il arrive sur les lieux quand le second attentat se produit. Il sait qu'une immense catastrophe est en train de se produire. Il remonte en courant Liberty Street au milieu des gens paniqués et des décombres – entre morceaux d'avion, bagages, voitures en feu et débris de corps humains. C'est là, sur le trottoir, qu'il aperçoit une main au bout d'un bras déchiqueté qui le pointe du doigt. Maisel la photographie. Puis il passe le reste de la journée à prendre des images et à assister les secouristes, échappant de peu à la mort lors de l'écroulement des tours.

Le *New York Daily News* publie sa photographie de la main, et provoque un scandale. Ses confrères de la presse écrite et de la télévision ont en effet pris la décision ne pas montrer de cadavres – les seules images admises sont celles des corps tombant des tours au loin, puis des cercueils couverts du drapeau. Pour tous les médias américains, c'est une question de décence. L'heure est donc à l'autocensure et ils ne peuvent accepter qu'un des leurs rompe l'accord. Les éditeurs conspués répliquèrent : « nous ne sommes plus à l'école. C'est le monde réel et nous ne devrions pas protéger nos lecteurs de cela »¹. Aux yeux de ses concurrents, le *New York Daily News* commet un sacrilège, doublé d'une trahison car, comme le martèle l'Administration Bush, le pays est en guerre et, dans une telle crise, le contrôle de l'information relève de la sécurité nationale. De fait, les autorités ferment le périmètre de Ground Zero aux télévisions étrangères, les seules images disponibles sont celles de CNN. Le journaliste du *Monde* Jean-Michel Frodon a trouvé une expression parfaitement appropriée quand il a parlé de « très haute teneur en invisible »² pour définir la situation. Les morts sont cachés. Pourquoi ? Afficher l'horreur du carnage aurait servi la cause américaine, démontrant à quel point les terroristes étaient inhumains et devaient être punis en retour. Est-ce un sacrilège ou un hommage de montrer les morts ? Le monde entier s'est étonné de l'extrême réticence de l'Amérique à se regarder dans le miroir de la mort. Est-ce la honte que cela ait pu se produire sur le sol même des Etats-Unis ? Que des vies américaines innocentes aient été sacrifiées en réponse à d'autres vies volées ailleurs dans le monde, peut-être par les américains eux-mêmes ? Le monde s'est interrogé sur les causes et la nature de ce qui apparaît comme un véritable refoulement. La guerre du Viêt-nam serait à l'origine de ce phénomène, l'opinion publique américaine ne se montrant plus disposée à s'infliger les mêmes mortifications que par le passé. Le souci des médias de ne pas choquer par des images trop dures a aussi été invoqué. L'artiste Alain Kirili considère, quant à lui, que la bouffée d'autocensure déclenchée par les attentats du 11 septembre reflète, une fois de plus, l'opposition entre Orient et Occident : à la négation d'Eros par les uns répondrait la négation de Thanatos par les autres.³ Dans les deux cas toutefois, le tabou resterait le même : le corps, vivant ou mort, la grande menace à exorciser.

Notes

1. Cité par Franck Van Riper, « September 11th: the impact of Photography One Year Later », *Washington Post*, sept. 2002.

2. Jean-Michel Frodon, « À Manhattan, la puissance abstraite des images », *Le Monde*, samedi 13 octobre 2001, p. 18.

3. Alain Kirili, « L'art contre les deux intégrismes », *Le Monde*, jeudi 8 novembre 2001, p. 1



Todd Maisel, New York, 11 septembre 2001

CENSURE : MÉDIAS

Antoni Muntadas

Excerpts from *Notes on Projects 1998-1974*, by Eugeni Bonet, in the catalogue *Muntadas Projects*, exhibition at Fundación Arte y Tecnología, Telefónica, Madrid, 1998, and from www.thefileroom.org, introductory notes by Muntadas; in "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.56

A physical installation in time and a permanent, extendable database in the virtual, interactive and multimedia space of the net and the World Wide Web : all in relation to censorship – specifically artistic and cultural censorship – on a world scale, taking in historical cases and some bang up to date, still smouldering examples.

The installation recreates the sombre, bureaucratic atmosphere of a somewhat sinister archive ; the wall are full of filing cabinets that add to the darkness of the room, illuminated, on the other hand, by computer screens that facilitate the *in situ* consultation of the compiled archive. The execution, evolution and maintenance of this project involves a collective spirit set in a public and social space of dialogue, debate and successive contributions.

Initiated, in 1994, as an artist's project by Muntadas, *The File Room* was originally produced by Randolph Street Gallery – a non-profit artist run center in Chicago –, with the support of the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the contributions of other collective and individual organizations. After the closing of Randolph Street Gallery in early 1998, *The File Room* went on hiatus. Currently, it is back, thanks to a new collaboration with the Media Channel/One World Project. Since 2001 *The File Room* has been maintained by the National Coalition Against Censorship. In June, 2002, Antoni Muntadas (*The File Room*), Robert Atkins (Media Channel) and Svetlana Mintcheva (National Coalition Against Censorship) organized two discussion panels entitled *Censorship in camouflage : Free Markets and Free Expression ?* and *Self-Censorship : The Censor Within ?* at The New School, New York (www.nyu.edu). The transcripts will soon be published and more discussion panels will be organized.

The file is accessible via Internet at the following Web address: www.thefileroom.org.

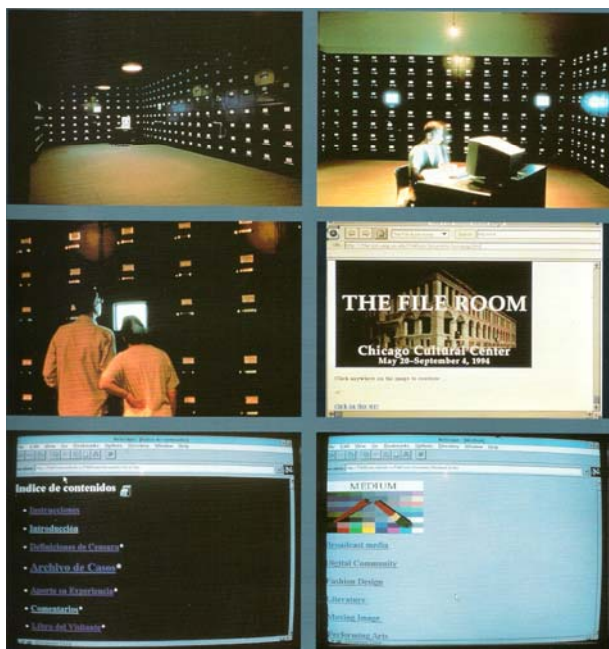
Antoni Muntadas, TVE: Primer Intento, 1989

Seve Penelas, "Censored", *Exit*, n°8, novembre, décembre 2002 – janvier 2003, p.58

In 1988, Antoni Muntadas was commissioned to produce a video for the program *Metrópolis* produced by the TVE (Spanish Public Television) channel. Muntadas focused on TVE itself as a public entity, a means of information, language, media and memory. For nearly two years, he employed materials made available by the TVE archives, in addition to material filmed in the exteriors and interiors of the TVE studios in Madrid. The final result was a 40 minute piece. The video was never broadcast on the public channel, and Muntadas was never given an official explanation for this. Faced with the absence of arguments and the silence on the part of TVE, all that is left is the terrain of hypothesis and intuition. Muntadas' work presented, among other fragments, speeches by the dictator Francisco Franco, shots of shelves and archives replete with tapes and film canisters in very odd order, exteriors with abandoned vehicles and mobile units, storerooms with broken-down apparatus destined for junkyards or potential museums... As a final brushstroke, there are fragments of program endings that progress from those used in Franco times to the most recent ones with king Juan Carlos I, with scenery that do not differ much from the earlier ones except for the special effects. Throughout the video, there are also paragraphs of text as inter-titles, suggested by Mariano Antolin Rato, among which the following is worth citing : *The process the State employs to limit artistic expression is no longer called censorship but "possibility of commercial viability"*.

Considering the contents, TVE executives may have thought that the work did not have "commercial viability" or, more explicitly, that the artistic proposal offered a look at a reality of lights and shadows that could lead to a questioning or misinterpretation of the history and present of the public entity. In any case, the only certainty we have is that the broadcast of the commissioned video became a typical case of censorship/non-censorship. In other words, it is something that is not outwardly expressed as a traditional form of censorship but its consequences are nonetheless the same : the disappearance from the public sphere of material that was meant for a broad audience.

CENSURE : MÉDIAS



Antoni Muntadas, *The File Room*, 1994, installation à Chicago, <http://www.thefileroom.org/>



Antoni Muntadas, *TVE: Primer Intento*, 1989, vidéo, 40 min.



Antoni Muntadas, *TVE: Primer Intento*, 1989, vidéo, 40 min.



Antoni Muntadas, *TVE: Primer Intento*, 1989, vidéo, 40 min.

CENSURE : À SUIVRE...



Dissidence culturelle

En Russie et en Chine, c'est par l'art et la culture que s'expriment les voix contestataires. Comme le montrent plusieurs expositions françaises.

Dimanche 21 octobre, s'ouvrait à la Maison Rouge de Paris une exposition intitulée *Sots Art : Art politique en Russie*, mais qui, avant même d'être inaugurée, subissait une censure venue d'ailleurs : dix-neuf œuvres (sur 160 sélectionnées) ont été retenues au pays par leur galerie, sur "conseil" des autorités russes. Toute l'ambiguïté étant que ces œuvres, vues en Russie, ne sont pas jugées dignes d'être exportées et montrées ailleurs : chez Poutine, le linge ne se déballe qu'en famille. Le ministre russe de la Culture, Alexandre Sokolov a même déclaré avoir "tout fait pour que l'exposition ne parte pas à Paris". Parmi les œuvres litigieuses, il y a une photo intitulée *Ere de la miséricorde*, signée Viatcheslav Misine et Alexandre Chabourov (du collectif Les Nez bleus), montrant deux hommes en uniforme qui s'embrassent sous la neige, ainsi qu'un portrait du président ukrainien Iouchtchenko à poil. Cela étant, l'art russe est de plus en plus présent en France : cinq expositions, comme *Moscopolis* à l'Espace

Louis Vuitton, qui traite de l'imaginaire lié à Moscou, ou encore l'exposition consacrée par la galerie Anne de Villepoix à l'artiste Alexeï Kallima – qui recycle des images de la Russie soviétique –, permettent d'ici la fin de l'année d'en découvrir plusieurs facettes.

Ces expositions montrent aussi que c'est au sein de l'art contemporain qu'une certaine forme de dissidence se joue en Russie, et cela au moment même où les Russes les plus fortunés font exploser dans les ventes aux enchères les cotes des œuvres d'art datant d'avant l'avènement des bolchéviques, comme une manière de rester aveugle aux années 2000 en célébrant l'art du passé.

La position des artistes russes contemporains est sans doute aussi complexe que celle de leurs homologues chinois. C'est en tout cas l'impression qui ressortait d'une poignée d'œuvres chinoises montrées la semaine dernière à la Fiac à Paris, dévoilant un ensemble d'artistes contemporains chinois qui, au-delà du folklore, semblent tous commenter leur pays, sa politique et son histoire récente, à commencer par les manifestations qui avaient eu lieu en 1989, place Tian'anmen, à Pékin. En dehors des galeries et des expositions, les artistes chinois et russes sont de plus en plus visibles sur le net où leurs œuvres circulent d'un blog à l'autre, se défiant ainsi de toute censure. **J. G.**

www.lamaisonrouge.org ; www.guelman.ru ; www.galleriacontinua.com ; www.shanghartgallery.com

Gore pas candidat

L'ancien vice-président démocrate américain Al Gore, co-lauréat du Nobel de la paix 2007, ne sera pas candidat à la Maison Blanche en 2008. Il l'a affirmé lors d'un entretien diffusé le 17 octobre par la radio-télévision publique norvégienne NRK : "Je n'ai aucun projet d'être de nouveau candidat." Il semble que le prix Nobel de la paix qui lui a été attribué (ainsi qu'au Giec) le 12 octobre pour sa lutte contre le réchauffement climatique ait quelque peu changé sa façon de concevoir son engagement. Jusqu'alors, Al Gore n'avait pas fermé la porte à une nouvelle candidature à la présidence des Etats-Unis. Sur le net, ces derniers mois, des citoyens réunis spontanément au sein de ce qu'on a appelé le "Draft Gore Movement" avaient été très nombreux à se mobiliser pour réclamer la candidature de Gore pour les Démocrates. "Je suis impliqué dans un autre type de campagne, a-t-il précisé. C'est une campagne globale, c'est une campagne pour changer la façon de penser des gens en ce qui concerne la crise climatique."

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