

Types of Documentary

- 1) Traditional humanist approach:**
Rooted in empiricist knowledge theory
- 2) Marxist-realist approach:**
Rooted in materialist theory of knowledge
- 3) Postmodern conventionalist approach:**
Rooted in textualist theory of knowledge

Two Approaches to Traditional Documentary

- 1) Documentary - - merely recording what exists.**
- 2) Social Documentary (or what Robert Capa called "Concerned Photography") - - documents used to awaken our social conscience, change conditions.**

The Conventions of Traditional Documentary

The events seem to narrate themselves.

Photo as transparent window onto reality.

Evidence of the image-maker is suppressed.

What is constructed is made to appear natural.

Link between referent (world) and sign (image)
seems guaranteed by optico-chemical chain of
causality.

Documentary





STREET-SELLER OF BIRDS' NESTS.





Social Documentary

E. E. J. M.

Home for Working & Destitute Lads.



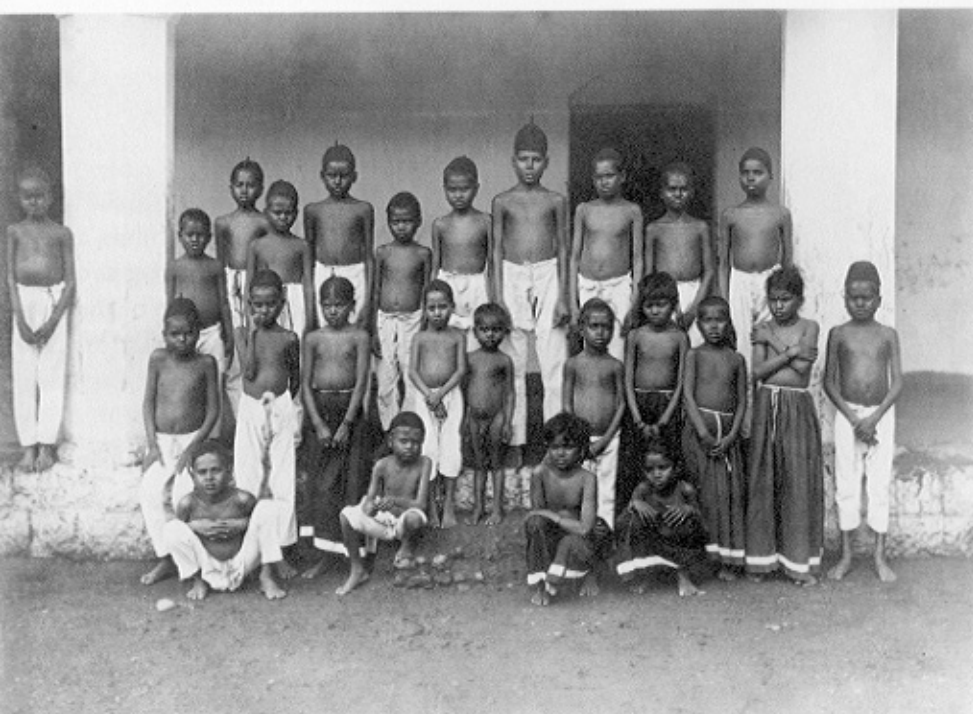
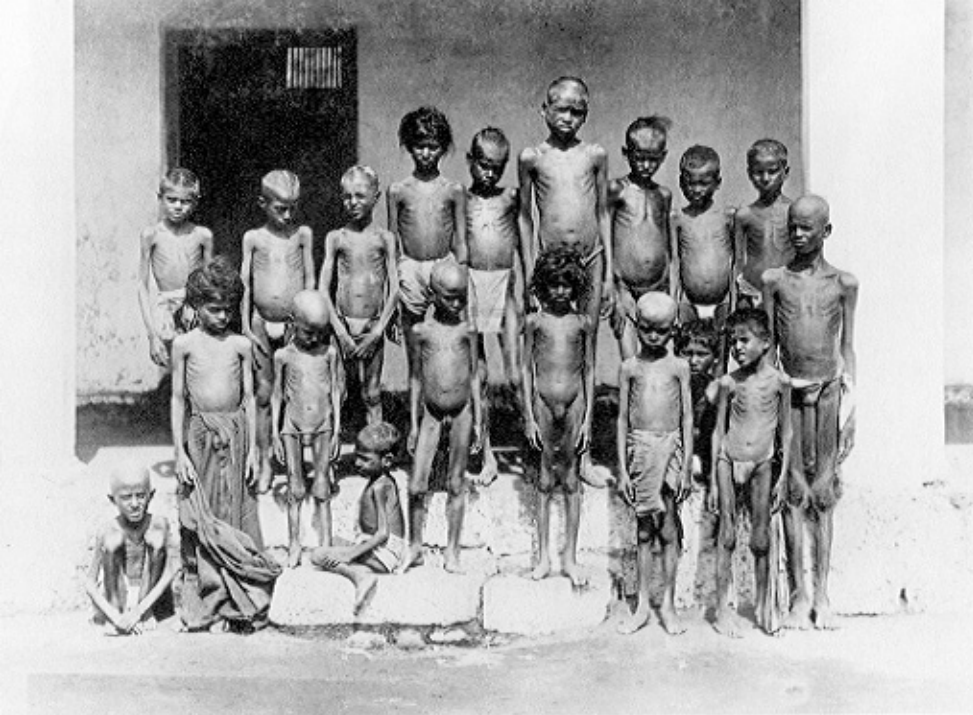
No. 27.—ONCE A LITTLE VAGRANT,
(The same lad as on card No. 28.)

E. E. J. M.

Home for Working & Destitute Lads.



No. 28.—NOW A LITTLE WORKMAN.
(The same lad as on card No. 27.)

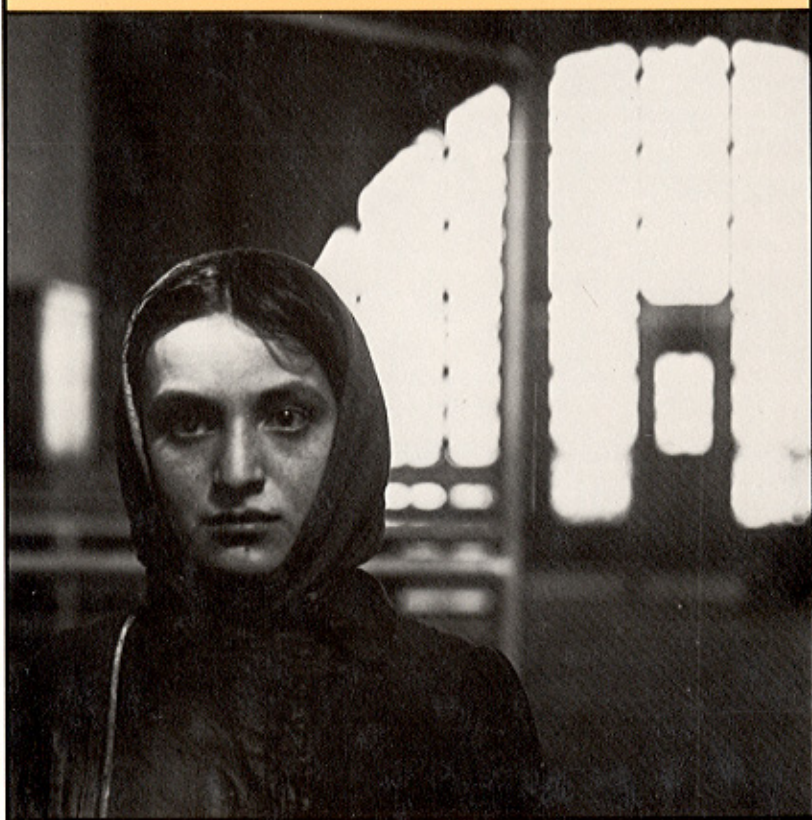




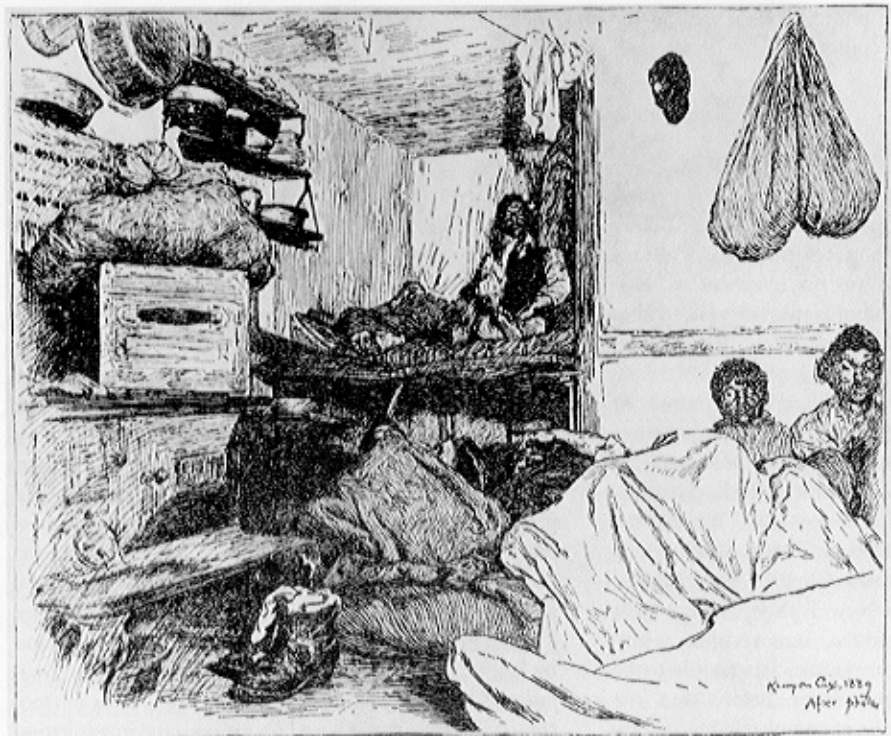
SYMBOLS • OF IDEAL • LIFE

SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY
PHOTOGRAPHY IN AMERICA

1 8 9 0 ————— 1 9 5 0



M A R E N • S T A N G E



Maren Stange on Lewis Hine:

Hine himself, deeply aware of photographs as representations, proposed that a photograph "is often more effective than the reality would have been," because "in the picture, the non-essential and conflicting interests have been eliminated."⁶² Nevertheless, as Hine was also aware, the "added realism" that enhances the medium derives from the photograph's status as *index* – that is, as a symbol fulfilling its representative function "by virtue of a character which it could not have if its object did not exist," to quote a standard semiotic definition.⁶³ Art historian Rosalind Krauss, elaborating on the definition, described the photograph as an index or *trace*, "a signifying mark that bears a connection to the thing it represents by having been caused, physically, by its referent." Photography, Krauss writes,

MAKING HUMAN JUNK



SMALL
GIRLS
AND
BOYS
WANTED

GOOD MATERIAL
AT FIRST

High Wages

THE PROCESS



THE PRODUCT



No future and low wages "Junk"

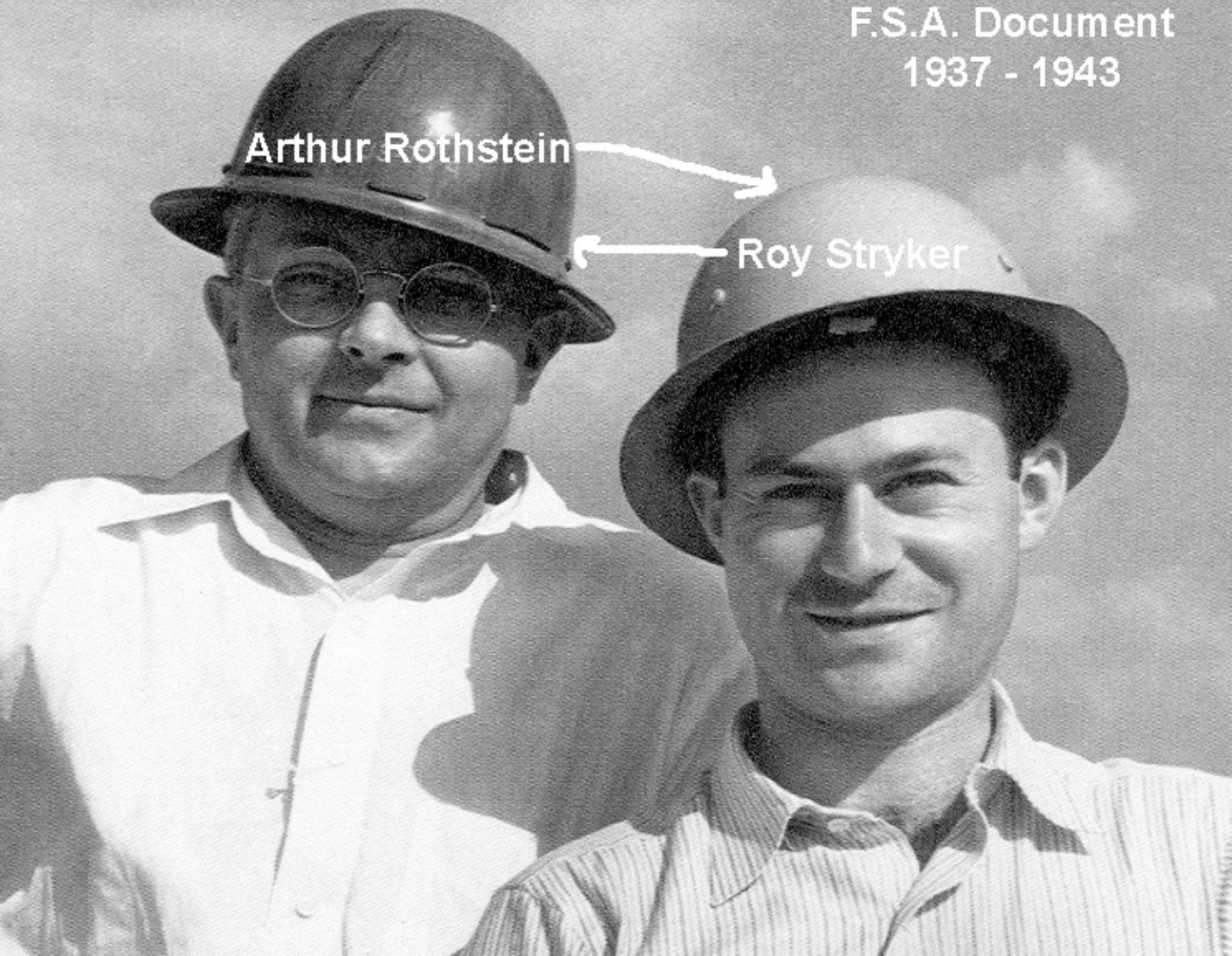
SHALL INDUSTRY BE ALLOWED TO PUT
THIS COST ON SOCIETY?



F.S.A. Document
1937 - 1943

Arthur Rothstein

Roy Stryker



The Farm Security Administration Document

Franklin D. Roosevelt initiates the R.A.
(Resettlement Administration) and puts
Rexford Tugwell in charge.

R.A. name changed to F.S.A. in 1937 and
Tugwell hires Roy Stryker to oversee photo
documentation to promote F.D.R.'s farm
policies of rural relief and land administration
as carried out by the F.S.A.

F.S.A. Photographers

Stryker oversees many socially-concerned photographers: Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, Carl Mydans, Ben Shahn, Dorothea Lange, Jack Delano, John Vachon, Marion Post Wolcott, John Collier.

In 1938 Edwin Roskam hired to solely design exhibits and supervise the use of FSA photos in books and magazines. By 1940 over 1400 images per month.

The documentary or realist film tries to take subjects of national importance and place them on the cinema screen without the use of fiction stories or glamorous actors. Its makers follow a policy which suggests that, by a common sharing out of everyday experience, a desire for a betterment of social conditions will arise. They believe in using cinema as a means of popular education ... In the simple job of presenting facts as facts they believe that correct implications will inevitably be drawn. They have found in this everyday material of the streets, the factories, the fields and the foundries a certain freedom which has its true roots in public service. They have brought to the screen the dignity of human labour.

The photographers did not own the pictures they made; these went into a central file over which Stryker had complete authority. He had the option to suppress or even destroy images he deemed politically inappropriate, and of 270,000 negatives made for the file, Stryker punched holes in about 100,000. He was also in a position to control the captions that accompanied any photographs he released for publication or exhibition and thereby ensure that viewers would be directed toward desired interpretations of the pictures.

as David

Peeler has observed, the photographers tended to concentrate on women and children as the innocent victims of the depression, knowing that they would most readily arouse the sympathies of the middle class.

FSA Books

Edwin Rosskam oversaw the publication of the following books:

American Photographs by Walker Evans

Land of the Free by Archibald MacLeish

American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion
by Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men by James Agee
and Walker Evans

12 Million Black Voices by Richard Wright and
Edwin Rosskam



DUST STORM - ELKHART, KS. 5-21-37.



Arthur Rothstein wrote about his widely reproduced photograph *The Dust Storm* (1936), of a farmer and his sons trudging through a dust-beclouded landscape:

In the beginning it was a record, after which it became a news picture, then it became a feature photograph, eventually an historical photograph, and now it's considered a work of art in most museums. It has a life of its own.

COLORED
BALCONY

• *Open* •

• Saturday
• Sunday...



Garbo

• *ANITA* •
• *STCHKA* •

Melvyn

Douglas

Ina Claire



TOPPING SECRET

The shadows cast by the fire-escape rungs overwrite the language of the sign. "Open," proclaims the word at the center of that sign; "closed," declares the grid cast across the sign by the shadows from the slats of the fire escape. If the "colored" balcony is open temporally, these diagonal bars suggest, it is enclosed spatially, its restrictive railings amplified in number and symbolic weight to the bars of a viewing cage; and if the balcony is open weekends, it is closed during the week (the deceptive ellipses after Sunday notwithstanding). The shadows propose a structure of intermittency: not only the opening and closing of the balcony but also the blinking of the organs of perception, human and mechanical.





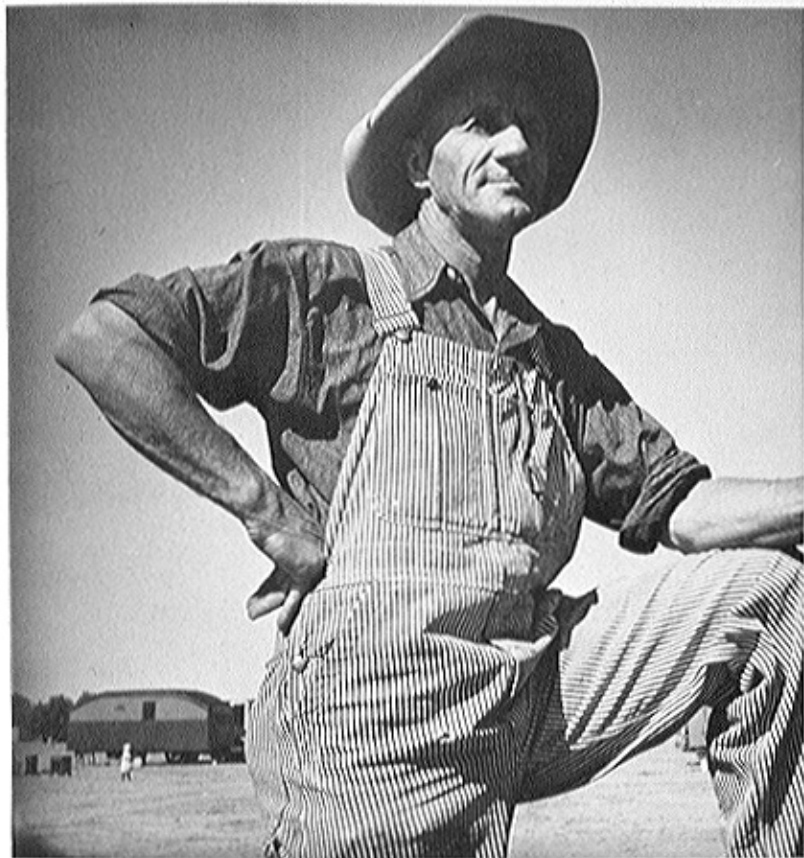


Stryker Statement

From 1935 - 1943 some 270,000 photos were shot under the auspices of RA & FSA. Of this work Roy said:

"I think the work we did can be appreciated only when the collection is considered as a whole. The total volume has a richness and distinction that simply cannot be drawn from individual pictures themselves. Most, there's rural America in it. It's the farms and the little towns and the highways between."

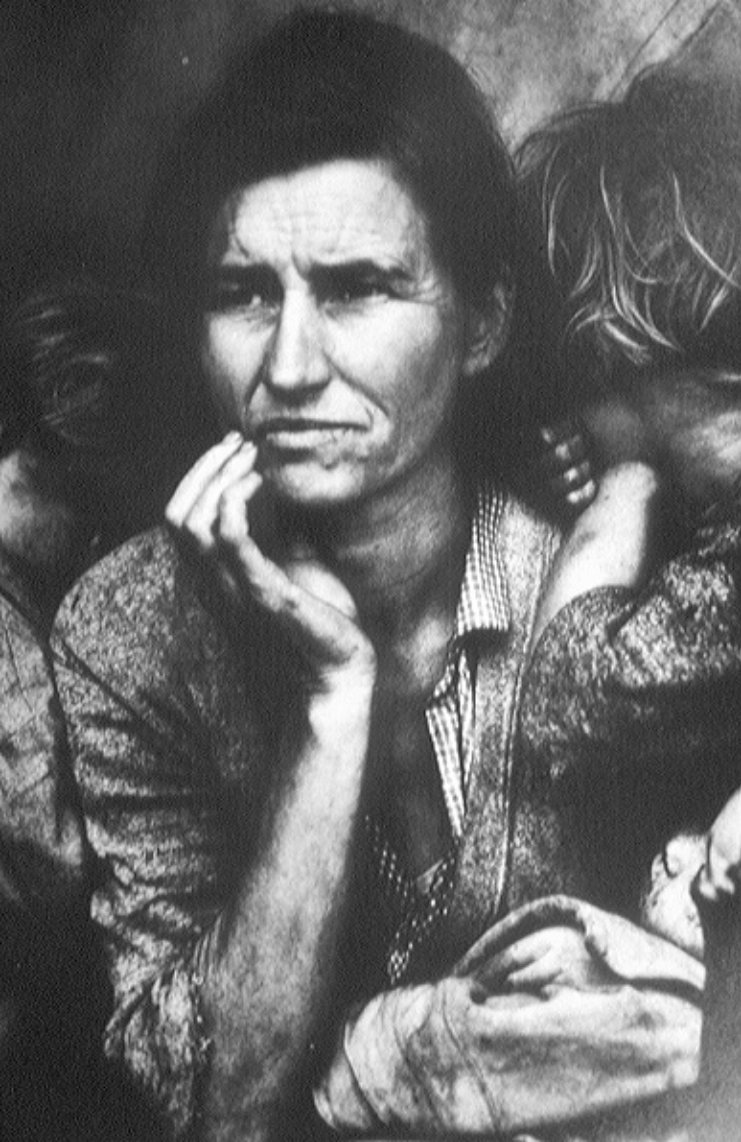




Dorothea Lange, *Farmer Who Left Nebraska, Calpatria, California, February 1939*
An American Exodus

CAPTION: "I put mine in what I thought was the best investment—the good old earth—but we lost on that, too. The Finance Co. caught up with us, the Mortgage Co. caught up with us. Managed to lose \$12,000 in three years. My boys have no more future than I have, so far as I can see ahead."





“When Dorothea took that picture, that was the ultimate. She never surpassed it. To me, it was *the* picture of Farm Security. . . . So many times I’ve asked myself what is she thinking? She has all of the suffering of mankind in her but all of the perseverance too. . . . You can see anything you want to in her. She is immortal.”

When Florence Owens Thompson, the woman in the photograph, finally was identified and interviewed by the Associated Press in the 1970s in a story that appeared under the title "Woman Fighting Mad over Famous Depression Photo," she declared of Lange that "I wish she hadn't taken my picture" and complained that "I can't get a penny out of it. She didn't ask my name. She said she wouldn't sell the pictures. She said she'd send me a copy. She never did." In effect, Florence Owens Thompson was complaining that her rights had been violated.

THEIR BLOOD IS STRONG



by
JOHN STEINBECK

25¢

Dorothea Lange, Okie mother and child in California, 1936;
FSA photograph used as the cover to John Steinbeck's "Their Blood Is Strong," 1938

Look in her Eyes!

These women in working clothes
 (Facing page) are not in
 luck and her children who are
 a part of America. You can see in
 her eyes the burning of white. In
 Southern States she is not looking at it with
 the appearance of a philosopher or
 a student. She is looking in a study of
 a man's mind, but is feeling the
 same.

Although she has not been to
 look of the eyes before to find that
 the evidence of white and negro
 would certainly not only and
 suffering. These women give by
 looking into this and with the
 same, another and another.

There have been many who
 ally to an America which is
 everywhere, and only in part
 from then, from then in the
 from the clear, from then, from
 from the land, from then.

Butler, especially the
 especially the day of her own
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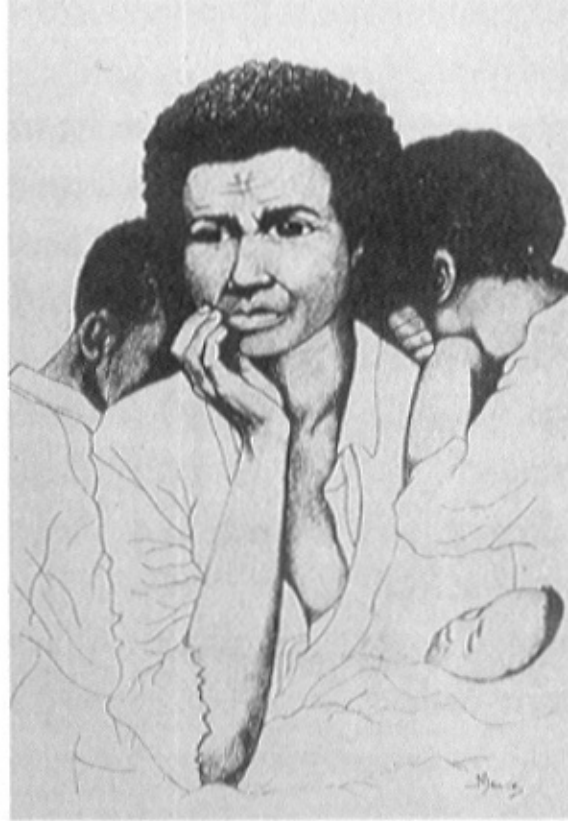


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October 17, 1936

5.11 Dorothea Lange,
 Untitled, from *Midweek
 Pictorial* (Oct. 17, 1936),
 FSA Scrapbook, U.S.
 Farm Security Admini-
 stration Collection,
 Prints and Photographs
 Division, Library of
 Congress.

the north. It is a long, long
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p.2 "Dia de las Madres," *Bohemia Venezolana* (May 10, 1964), Oakland Museum.

p.3 Malik, "Poverty Is a Crime," *Black Panthers' Newsletter* 9, no. 8 (Dec. 7, 1972), back cover. Special Collections, Alderman Library,

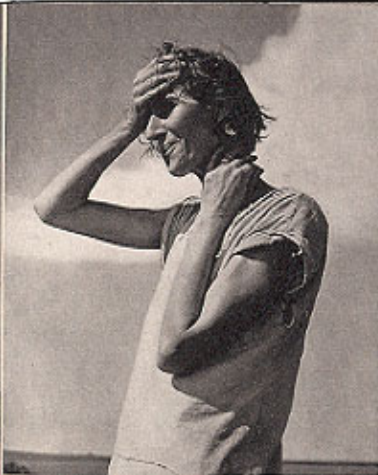
AN AMERICAN EXODUS

*by Dorothea Lange
and Paul S. Taylor*

A RECORD OF HUMAN EROSION



COVERED WAGON - 1939 STYLE



"Is You Do, You're Done-That's So."

Time Publishers, 1917



Great Economy, Simple Well, and Good Pumps on the High Plains

"TOP O' THE WORLD" FARM AND DAIRY LANDS

OSAGEWATER, TEXAS

ALTITUDE 4,000 FEET

Level, Rich, Tilable, Deep Soil, Best of Water

CAPITAL RESERVATION LANDS
DALLAM AND MARTINEY COUNTIES, TEXAS

RAWLINGS LAND COMPANY

OSAGEWATER, TEXAS

Mails 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000

Branch Office
Dallas and Lubbock, Texas

FRAUD AND PLURTY

SKINDE AND CONVENTMENT

Three winds have a most pleasant ring to the average man, fighting against great odds in the terrific struggle for existence, which is going on all around us, in this age of the strenuous life. To know that we will have plenty to live on in our old age, without worry, is the greatest favor we can be given in years of mind and contentment of spirit. Add to that, days of warm sunshine, in which we can feel physically and mentally, conditions to create an ideal condition of life, such to be desired by all.

If you will invest in 100 to 200 acres of "Top O' The World" farm and dairy lands, you are a good well, with a direct bank to hold enough water to irrigate 4 or 5 acres on which to raise cotton, sugarcane, orchard, and all kind of garden fruits, planting half of the remainder of your land to beef, milk making, hogs, calves, chickens, horses and such other crops as you wish to raise, half a dozen good cows, a few hogs and plenty of chickens, it will only be a question of a very few years until your income will make you entirely independent of your present dreams, and you can then retire to your farm, where whatever old age you please will cause you any amount. For your eggs in this field will truly bring you contentment, peace and plenty; in one word—happiness. Does it appeal to you? If so, get busy. Come and pick your farm and then give the road to happiness and contentment.

Exclusively of Real Estate Investments

1925

18288 C

Migratory laborer's wife with 3 children.
Near Childress, Texas.

"We made good money a pullin' bolls, when we could pull. But we've had no work since March when we miss, we set and eat just the same.

The worst thing we did was when we sold the car, but we had to sell it to eat, and now we can't get away from here. We'd like to starve if it hadn't been for what my sister in Eldid sent me. When it snowed last April we had to burn beans to keep warm. You can't get no relief here until you've lived here a year. This county's a hard county. They won't help bury you here. If you die, you're dead, that's all."

18284 C

Campaign posters in garage window, just before the primary. Waco, Texas.

18285 C

J.R. Butler, president of the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union, Memphis, Tennessee.

18286 C

Mechanization in the Arkansas Bottoms was beginning to expel farm people by 1937, adding to the refugees to the West coast. There are many vacant cabins. Near England, Arkansas.

18287 C

Fruit jars being sterilized on Old Lady Graham's back fence in berry season. Near Conway, Ark.
"We just gather and can -- peaches, beans, berries, and sausage when we butcher a hog in the winter. We put up 75 quarts of berries, 60 qts of beans, 80 qts of kraut, 30 qts of grapes, and 20 qts of peaches. I swapped 2 bushels of grapes and got 2 bushels of peaches, --and I swapped one bushel of grapes for one bushel of apples."

18288 C

Colored field hands hoe cotton from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. for 60¢ a day. Near Benton, Arkansas.

18289 C

An "Arkansas Hoosier", born in 1865.
Conway, Arkansas.

"My father was a Confederate soldier. He give his age a year older than it was to get into the army. After the war he bought 200 acres from the railroad and cleared it. He never had a mortgage on it. In 1920 that land was sold, and the money divided. Now none of my children own their land.

"It's all done gone, but it raised my family"

"I've done my duty -- I feel like I have. I've raised 12 children, 6 dead and 6 alive -- and 2 orphans.

"Then all owned their farms. The land was good and there was free range. We made all we ate and wore. We had a team and a wheel. The old settlers had the cream. Now this hill land has washed, and we don't get anything for what we sell. We had two teams when this depression hit us. We sold one, we had to get by, and we sold 4 cows.

"In 1935 we got only 60 and 80¢ a hundred pounds for picking and in 1936 only 60 and 75¢, and we hoe for 75¢ a day.

"Then the govt reduced the acreage, and where there was enough for 2 families now there's just one. Some of the land owners would rather work the cotton land themselves and get all the govt. money. So they cut down to what they can work, and the farming people, they go to town on relief. The sharecroppers are just out out.

"Then the lord took a hand in it, and by the time he'd taken a cudge there was drouth and army worm. I don't know for sure whose work it was, the lord's or the devil's, but in 3 days everything wilted.

"Folks from this part has left for Calif, the last yr. and my 2 grandsons went to Calif to hunt work. It was a case of 'had to'. When you see 'em out there tell 'em you were talking to Oldie."

GRAND, IN ARKANSAS



SETTLEMENT A

SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION



SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION IS COMPLETING

9,000,000

AND IS NOW

AND IS NOW

AND IS NOW

ENHANCING RURAL LIFE



RESTORING THE FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL LIFE



RESTORING THE FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL LIFE

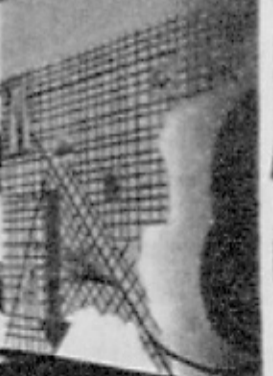


RESTORING THE FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL LIFE

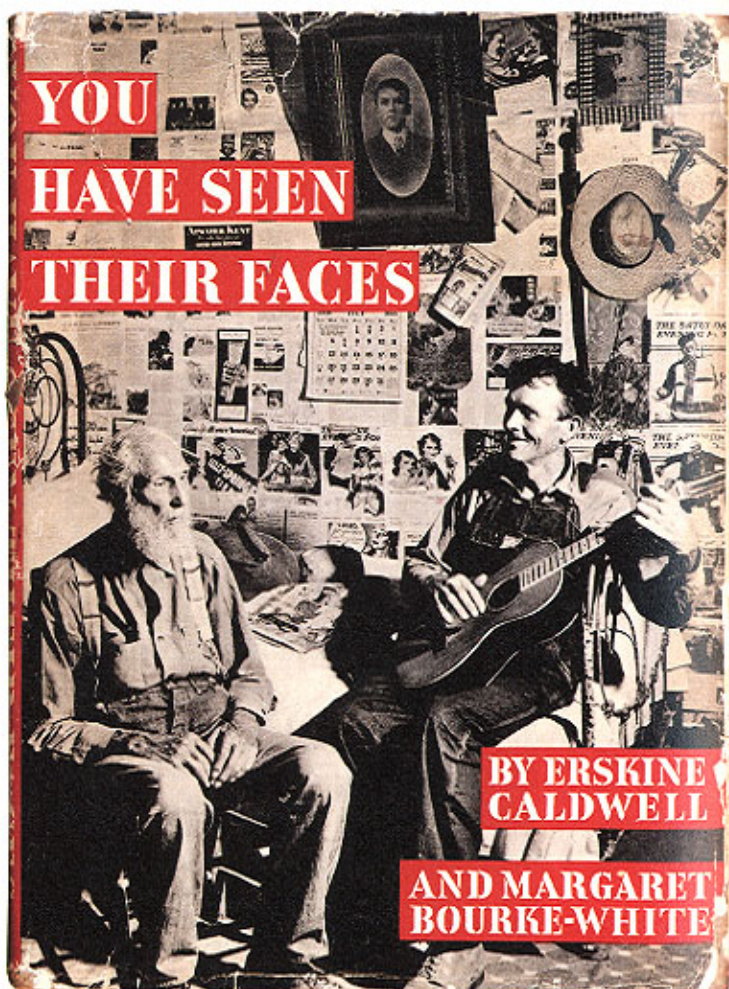
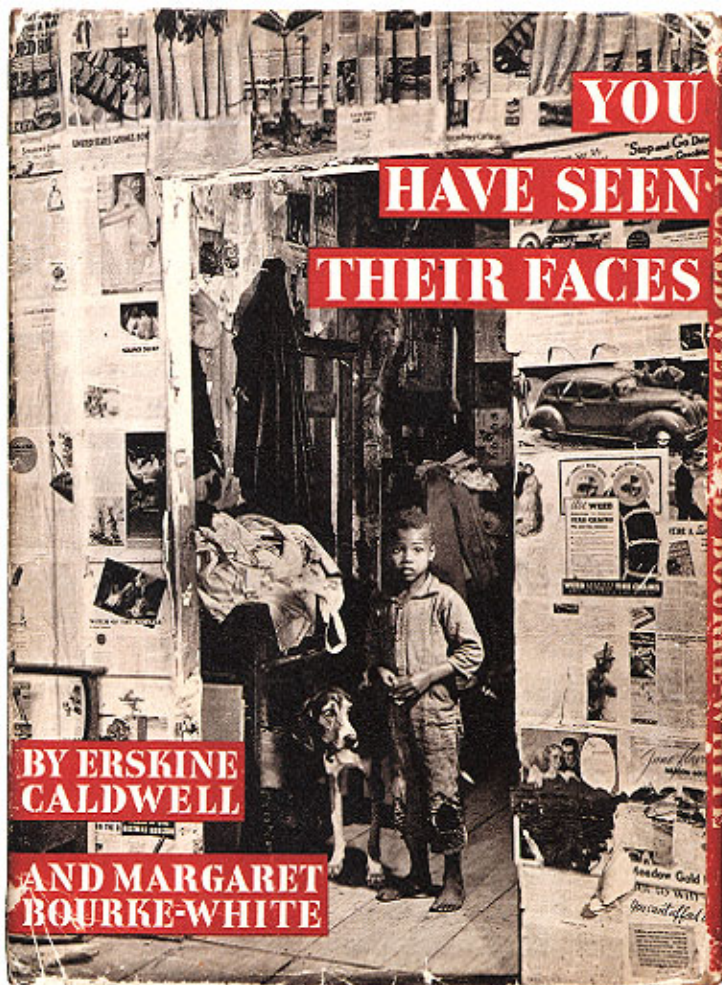
RESTORING THE FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL LIFE



RESTORING THE FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL LIFE



SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION





Elbow Creek, Arkansas

"My father doesn't hire any field hands, or sharecroppers. He makes a lot of cotton, about sixty bales a year. Me and my brother stay home from school to work for him."



Hood's Chapel, Georgia

"I reckon I was naturally born a black boy in the white man's country."

WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING



*There's no way
like the
American Way*



A black and white photograph showing the massive gun turrets of the USS Intrepid. The turrets are arranged in a line, receding into the distance. Each turret has a large, rounded gun barrel at the top. The structure is made of heavy metal plates with visible rivets. The sky is bright and cloudy. The word "LIFE" is printed in large, bold, white letters in the upper left corner.

LIFE

NOVEMBER 23, 1936

10 CENTS

To see life; to see the world, to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things – machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon . . . to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls . . . Things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and many children; to see and to take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed.

Thus to see, and to be shown, is now the will and the new expectancy of half mankind.

To see, and to show, is the mission now undertaken by LIFE.



Tactic in visual rhetoric:

**Part stands in for whole:
"synecdoche"**





Vincent van Gogh, *Les Souliers (Boots with laces)*, 1886



Walker Evans, Sharecropper's work shoes (George Gudger's)
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1960 edition)

Let us
now
Praise
Famous
Men

JAMES AGEE AND
WALKER EVANS

“It seems to me curious, not to say obscene and thoroughly terrifying,” he was later to write, “. . . to pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings . . . for the purpose of parading the nakedness, disadvantage and humiliation of these lives before another group of human beings, in the name of science, of ‘honest journalism.’” But however terrifying it might have been, prying is exactly what they did.



I wasn't very conscious of it then, but I know that Flaubert's esthetic is absolutely mine. Flaubert's method I think I incorporated almost unconsciously, but anyway used in two ways: his realism and naturalism both, and his objectivity of treatment; the non-appearance of author, the non-subjectivity. That is literally applicable to the way I want to use a camera and do. But spiritually, however, it is Baudelaire who is the influence on me.

The tenant farmers in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* not only did not feel at ease with Evans, they actively disliked him. Years later, Margaret Ricketts would remember that he “didn’t talk with them. He didn’t even talk down to them.” She would complain about “his indifference to them as people and his obvious loathing for the way they lived.”



In his first section, on the Burroughses, Evans approached his subject from a distance, as if slowly tracking in with a movie camera, beginning with the buildings — the tool shed, the chicken house, and the main house from the rear. Moving in slowly, the photographs reveal figures on the porch. Then the details — the washstand, the view through the porch door into the kitchen, the bed, the fireplace. Finally Evans introduced his characters, one by one: Floyd with a quizzical frown, Allie Mae gazing squarely into the camera, Lucille in a straw hat, Floyd Jr., Charles, and Squeakie, the baby, napping under an empty flour sack. The chapter ends with a still life of Floyd's field-weary shoes.



It is my belief that such houses as these approximate, or at times by chance achieve, an extraordinary 'beauty.' In part because this is ordinarily neglected or even misrepresented in favor of their shortcomings as shelters; and in part because their esthetic success seems to me even more important than their functional failure; and finally out of the uncontrollable effort to be faithful to my personal predilections, I have neglected function in favor of esthetics. I will try after a little to rectify this (not by denial); but at present, a few more remarks on the 'beauty' itself, and on the moral problems involved in evaluating it.

The houses are built in the 'stinginess,' carelessness, and traditions of an unpersonal agency; they are of the order of 'company' houses. They are furnished, decorated and used in the starved needs, traditions and naiveties of profoundly simple individuals. Thus there are conveyed here two kinds of classicism, essentially different yet related and

During the Christmas season of 1943 he singled out *The Bombed Buildings*, a recently published book containing 270 photographs of war-torn public buildings in London. The book was not so much a protest as an appreciation of the particular aesthetic of the ruined state. Evans called it “a handsome record of destruction” and added his conviction that “many of these charred, strewn, gaping images, signed by such names as Wren, Adam, Nash, Soane, and Stuart, make a moving reaffirmation of their dignity and style. Ruin sometimes adds beauty as well as pathos.”















John Szarkowski: Evans's photos give us straight, Puritanical stare; he spurned artifice.

Evans: "You don't touch a thing. You manipulate it if you like when you frame a picture, one foot one way or one foot another. But you are not sticking anything in."

Recent scholarship comparing Agee's descriptions with Evans's photos shows he DID move objects around to make the sharecropper's home cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing in its simplicity.

Mrs. Floyd Burroughs: "Oh I do *hate* this house so *bad!* Seems like they ain't nothing in the whole world I can do to make it pretty."

The tenants, after all, were never given copies of the book dedicated to them "in gratefulness and love"; and Evans never even printed the family portrait that George Gudger carefully posed, and would have been delighted to have. Even the assumption of the genre itself belies the equality of address. As part of an effort on the part of privileged, socially conscious members of society to represent to other members of that society the plight of the underprivileged, social documentary operated under the assumption that the voice of the oppressed could not effect necessary changes in society, and must be supplemented by more articulate voices. Agee and Evans preempt the voices of the tenants.





+walker evans +sherrie levine

hermann zschiegner

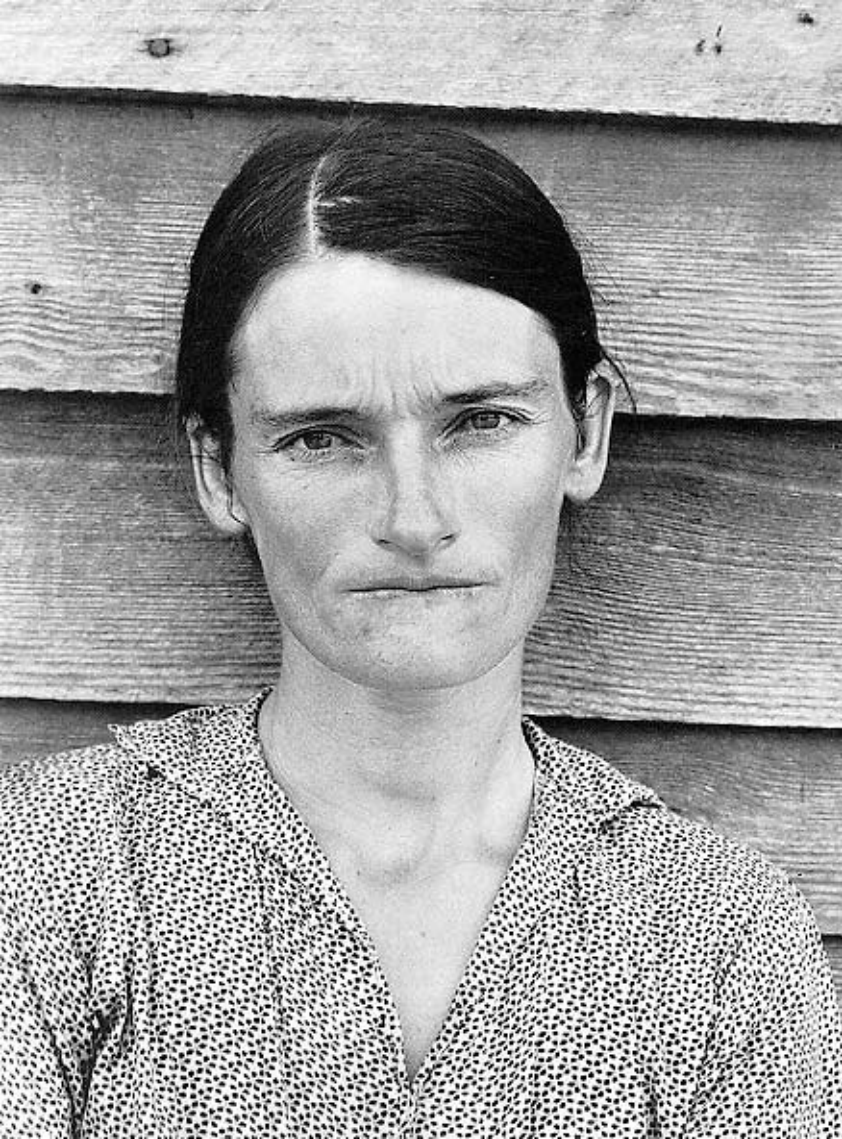
Hermann Zschiegner
+walker evans +sherrie levine

On July 24th 2008 I did a Google image search using *+walker evans +sherrie levine* as my search parameter. This book is a collection of all twenty-six images of Allie Mae Burroughs, the most famous of the Evans photos of the Burroughs family that I could find on that day.

They are positioned to match the original print with any whitespace around the image representing the cropped area of the reproduced picture.

File size, pixel aspect ratio and URL of all images are included as a frame of reference. It is only in reading the file names that we can identify if the reproduced image is a Levine or an Evans.

New York, July 2008





The FSA Document focused on rural poverty and on natural disasters for the cause of The Great Depression.

John Gutmann's photos of Depression Era urban environments shows another story.





WORK - TALK - SUPPORT
HAM AND EGGS
 WE'RE DAMNED - *THIRD OF BALANCE*
30 A WEEK FOR LIFE
ET RIDGE TAVEL - TINS - YOUTH
 A STATE BANK 107 BANNER STATE - KYAG 6

MISSION PRODUCTS CO
 DRINK
Coca-Cola

SAID ROOSEVELT HE WOULD DRIVE MONEY CHANGERS
 OUT OF TEMPLE NOV 7 IS THE IR
ROOM! WHAT HAS OLD MONEY BAGS OFFER?
 NOTHING BUT FLAK WAR LIES HUNGER DESTROY
 FOODS IN A LAND OF FLENNY IS THIS AMERICA?
 HUCTATOR BANKS HAS TRUCKED THIS STATE!!!
 5 MILLION IN THE RED 200,000 A DAY RELIUT LOAD
 WHO PAYS? WE SAID BANKS GET INTEREST YOU
 KISS THE WISE VOTE FOR WATSON 2ND DISTRICT
 USTA KYA 61-630 - KSN 8.30 9 TUES-WED-THUR-FRI-PA

WINES & LIQUORS

MISSION PRODUCTS CO
 WINES - LIQUORS

vegetables
 WELCOME

3
 2
 1
 0
 1
 2
 3

10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20

DON'T ARGUE WITH A FOOL IT PUTS YOU DOWN TO HIS LEVEL

YES YES - NOV 7
 RETIREMENT
 WARRANTS

WONT BITE YOU WE'LL GIVE HIM WARRANTS
 RETIREMENT
 WARRANTS

HOW THESE MONEY COOTES HOWL
 THE BIGGER THE LIAR THE BIGGER THE HIRE!

YES COLUMBUS
 DID DISCOVER AMERICA!
 WE HAVE DISCOVERED
 THE INTERNATIONAL
 BANKERS HAVE
 TAKEN IT AWAY FROM
 US SAYS I HAVE A DATE
 NOV 7 THIS IS GO

**THE BIG DOG THATS BARKING LOUD NOW
 WONT BITE YOU WE'LL GIVE HIM WARRANTS**
SOUP NOV 7
 ON NOV 7
 HONOR THY
 FATHER AND
 THY MOTHER
 THEN HE'LL BE A
 GOOD LITTLE DOGGIE!

**YES ON NOV 7
 FOR MORE JOBS**

05 DIRTY MUD BATTERIES OF THE
 CONSTITUTED DIRTY
LIES ARE FALLING THICK AND FAST!

THE TRUTH MARCHES ON



Nedick's

ARMY & NAVY
SALE STORE
SEAMENS OUTFITS
HORN, CLOTHES & SHOES

BARBER SHOP

I.S.U.
Brothers!
STRIKE

DONT BE CALLED
A SCAB.

We'll never be able to live if they...

We Are
SUPPORTING
Our
WEST COAST
BROTHERS



'C.W.A.'
PROJECT SF. 17

TILDEN SALES
BUILDING

TILDEN
SALES

D-A

364 HALF M





Der Arbeiter- Fotograf

Berlin, Mai 1926

15 Jahressog. Nr. 3 - Preis 30 Pf.



Edwin Hoernle argues in 1930 in *Der Arbeiter Fotograf*:

If the bourgeoisie depicts proletarians and their world of suffering, it is only to provide a contrast, a dark background to set off the glories of bourgeois 'culture', 'humanity', 'arts and science' and so forth, so that sensitive folk can enjoy a feeling of sympathy and 'compassion' or else take pride in the consciousness of their own superiority. Our photographers must tear down this facade. We must proclaim proletarian reality in all its disgusting ugliness, with the indictment of society and its demand for revenge. We will have no veils, no retouching, no aestheticism; we must present things as they are, in a hard merciless light.²²

Leben eines Jungproletarie

Chronik in 15 Bildern



Bild 1: In dieser riesigen Stadtflügelecke des Ostens ist eine Dreiviertelstunde aller möglichen Krankheiten, wurde der Knabe geboren, dessen Leben hier sich bilden sollte. In Schmutz und Not erblickte er das Licht einer Welt, die so schön sein könnte für alle Menschen.

Bild 2: So sah die „vergessene“ Jugend Arbeiterkinder aus. Die Mütter sind wenige, die es mit der Furchenarbeit nicht schaffen können.

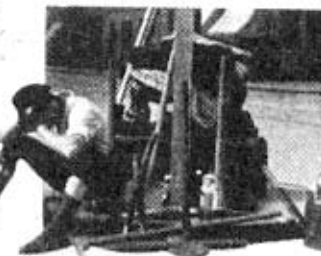


Bild 3: Aber schon nach 4 Wochen ist er arbeitslos. Seine Kraft wird durch die Hungergezeiten...

Bild 4: Aus der Schule erlassen, hatte der Junge keine Zeit und Gelegenheit zu lernen, er mußte sofort arbeiten, um ein Bißchen zu verdienen, und fand für ein paar Pfennige Tagelöhner Arbeit als Hausputzer.



Bild 11: Die Stoppuhr kontrolliert die Arbeitszeit auf die Sekunde. Morgens und abends muß der stille, unerschütterliche Wächter des Kapitals parat sein. Eine Minute Vergütung bedeutet Lohnabzug, Quälerei, Herabsetzung der Existenz, Entlassung. O, wie der müde Rusack diese Uhr haßt!

Bild 12: Aber in Hamburg ist der junge Arbeiter mit anderen Jagdglücklichen zusammengelassen. Die mit seine bisherigen bitteren Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse haben ihm den Weg zu der Organisation gewiesen, die bereit und entschlossen ist, den Kampf um eine bessere Welt gegen die kapitalistische „Ordnung“ zu führen.

Bild 13: Die wichtigsten Versammlungen im Werke nahmen auf die Gesetze des Arbeiters keinerlei Rücksicht, machte sich mit der ganzen Belegschaft in einem schmutzigen Elms...



schmutzigen Ecke „zusammen“. Auf dem über Gesundheit wurde der Teilnehmerin vergrößert.



Bild 14: Eingetragene in die Kadettenproletarischen Jugendkämpfer ist jetzt auch der Weg allein durch Welt fremde Arbeitswege ein zirkuläres und vom großen Aufgabe dieses Leben. Es ist beginnt die Geburts einer neuen Zeit, die klassenlos, sozialistisch ist.



Bild 15: In den wenigen Papirtüchern sind er in den Büchern der großen Lehren, Theorien, sind Kämpfer, Begeisterung und Mut erfüllt den...





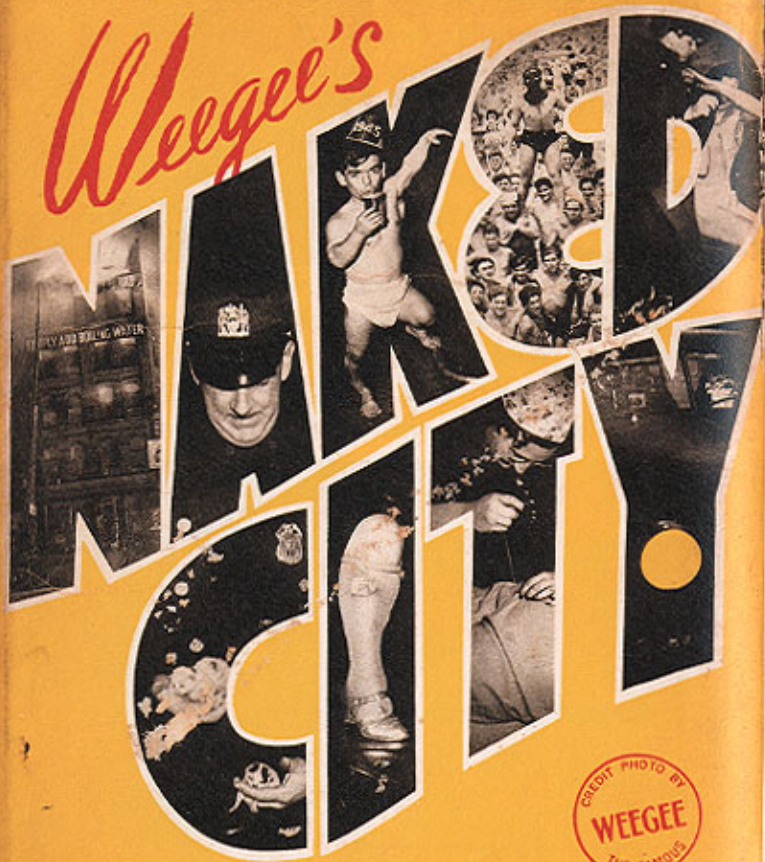
Outsider vs. Insider in Documentary

**Ansel Adams vs. Toyo Miyatake
on Japanese internment during WWII**

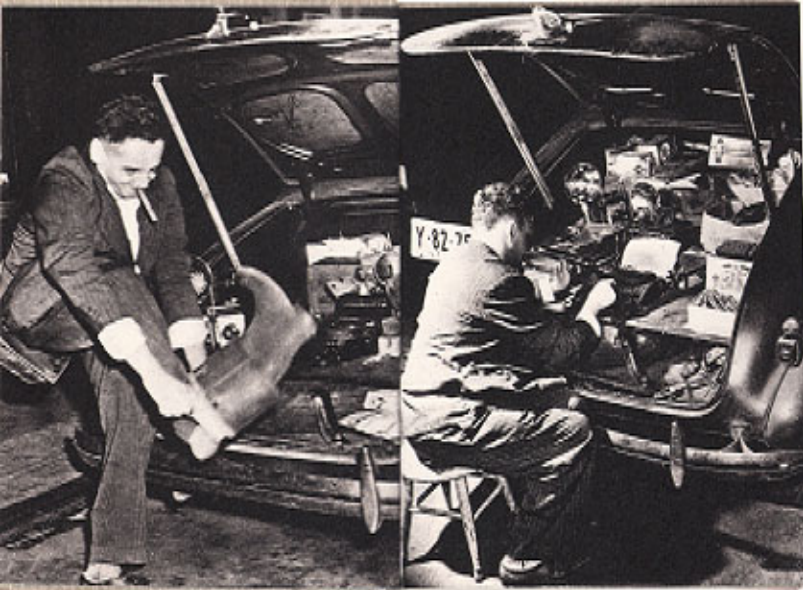




Weegee's



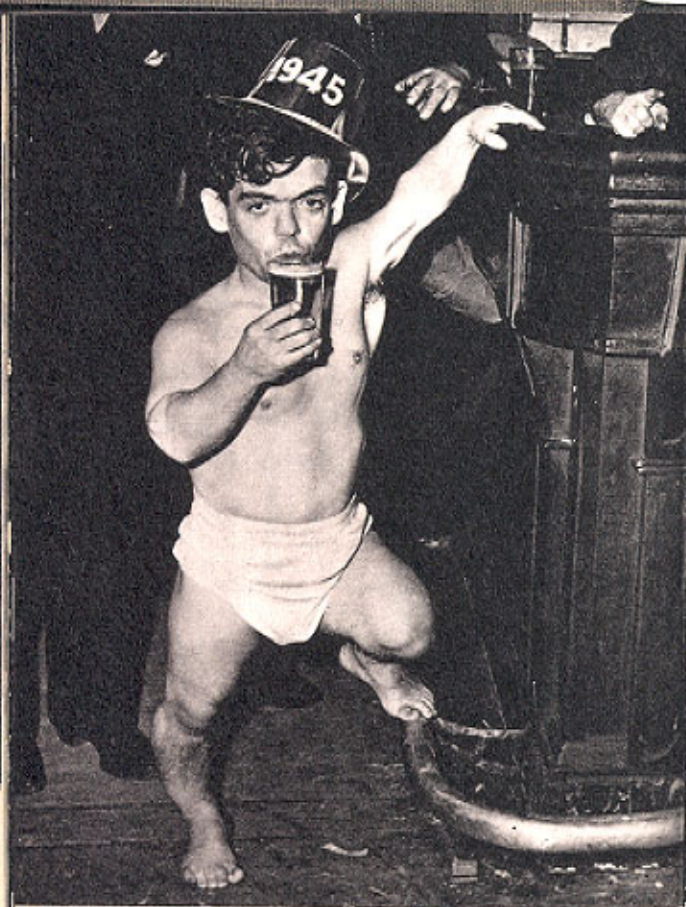
"Through his sense of timing, Weegee turns the commonplaces of a great city into extraordinary psychological documents."—Nancy Newhall, Acting Curator of Photography, Museum of Modern Art



Naked City

BY WEEGEE

sensational qualities, conspicuously lack skill. Bruce Downes, publisher and editor of *Popular Photography*, could even write in the introduction to *Weegee on Weegee* (1962) that he “accumulated an impressive collection of pictures, the photographic quality of which was uniformly poor.”



Shorty, the Bowery cherub, welcomed the New Year. . . .



Sophisticated Lady

W. Eugene Smith

The new photo reporter, the creative editor and the new cameras were three basic elements of modern photojournalism. The fourth, which gave the first three their condition *sine qua non* was an economic one: the competition between the growing numbers of illustrated magazines for more readers and therefore higher profit from higher advertising rates. This again meant a competing market for interesting photo reports.



Spanish Village

IT LIVES IN ANCIENT POVERTY AND FAITH

The village of Dolores, a place of about 2,000 poor people, sits on the high, dry, western Spanish tableland called Estremadura, about halfway between Madrid and the border of Portugal. Its name means "dismal," which it no longer is, and its origins are obscure, though they may go back 10 or 12 hundred years to Spain's Moorish period. In any event it is very old and Last Photographer Eugene Smith, wandering off the main road into the village, found that its ways had advanced little since medieval times.

Many Doloreans have never seen a railroad because the nearest one is 25 miles away. The Madrid-to-Lisbon highway passes Dolores seven miles to the north, so almost the only means of transport are a handful of mules and an old station wagon, for hire at prices few villages can afford. Mail comes in by burro. The nearest telephone is 12 1/2 miles away in another town. Dolores's water comes still contained in the sort of aqueduct and open wells from which Spaniards have drawn their water for centuries. Except for the local black and portable tin barbed there is no trace of any modern civilization, and the streets



ON THE COURSE
As indicated the view from above on the street scene. In the distance is Valley of Dolores in Spain.

smell strongly of the villagers' donkeys and pigs. There are a few signs of the modernization of the 20th Century in Dolores. In the city hall, which is run by political subdivisions of the provincial government, are typewriter ribbons. A handful of oil lamps, including the major, own their own small radio sets. About half of the 300 homes of the village are dimly lighted after dark by weak electric light bulbs which dimly illuminate an ancient cobble, laid a short while ago, which shows some letters, even those, like among the sparkling of brick steps near the main square. But the village seems to stand almost as if always by the high, barren mountains of the 16th Century church, the center of activity in Catholic Dolores. And the lives of the village are dominated as always by the same old rural problems of subsistence. For Dolores, barren of history, undrained by nature, reduced by wars, lives in poverty or a poverty shared by nearly all and sustained only by the seasonal work of the soil, and the folk that survive must Doloresians from the time of First Communism (perhaps might need the whole blood type, 190-194 that marks one's last

PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Published April 1, 1954 by the U.S. Government Printing Office
For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C.

PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



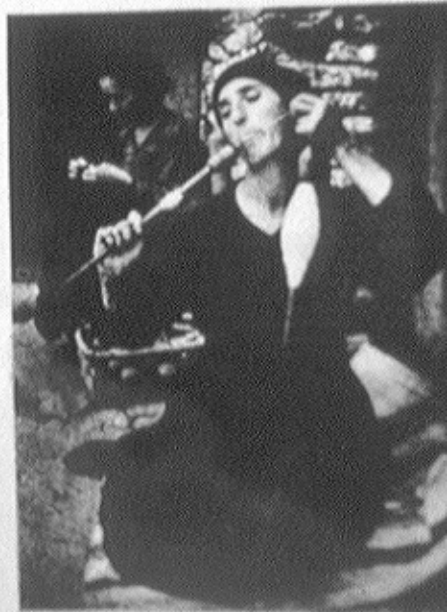
GUARDIA CIVIL

These men were members of Franco's army. They are not communists, nor have they joined the "leftists," which also have been guilty.



A CHRISTMAS

With an unglorious end to the war, the people of Spain are now in a state of chaos. The Red Army has taken control of the country.



THE MUSICAL WOMAN

A woman in a dark dress is playing a long, thin wind instrument. She is looking down at the instrument.



VILLAGE BURNED

Only a few people remain in the village. The rest have been killed or taken to the mountains. The village was burned down by the Red Army.



FAMILY BURNED

The family of the man in the photo was killed. The man is now in a state of distress. The family was burned down by the Red Army.





Bruce Davidson's
East 101st Street
(late 1960s)

**A white outsider in Spanish Harlem
versus Roy DeCarava, an African-American
in Harlem.**



Until we see photographs of black experience made by black photographers, "all photographs of non-whites made by whites . . . will be suspect, for we ourselves, as audience, will continue to lack the knowledge and understanding necessary to gauge their true merits and flaws. Thus we are not only deprived of the view from one side, but are in fact being cheated out of both."

Photojournalism that universalized its subject through generalization or that undermined the immediacy of its subject through aestheticization, Coleman deemed a failure. These were precisely the shortcomings he saw in Danny Lyon's book on Texas prison life, *Conversations with the Dead* (1971), and Bruce Davidson's *East 100th Street*. Lyon never confronted the issues of brutality, homosexuality, and racial segregation in prison and thereby failed to come to grips with the reality of his subject.

Roy DeCarava, whose art expresses a specifically black awareness and whom Coleman considered to be one of the premier photographers of the time. That DeCarava was not on the cutting edge of formal invention—a reason for Szarkowski to discount him as old-fashioned—was irrelevant to Coleman; DeCarava had something important to show us.

THE SWEET FLYPAPER OF LIFE

Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes

When the bicycle of the Lord bearing His messenger with a telegram for Sister Mary Bradley saying "Come home" arrived at 113 West 134th Street, New York City, Sister Bradley said, "Boy, take that wire right on back to St. Peter because I am not prepared to go. I might be a little sick, but as yet I ain't no ways tired." And she would not even sign for the message—since she had read it first, while claiming she could not find

(continued on page 3)



**Gordon Parks: Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks
(November 30, 1912 – March 7, 2006)**

**was a groundbreaking
American photographer,
musician, poet, novelist,
journalist, activist and film
director. He is best remembered
for his photo essays for *Life*
magazine and as the director
of the 1971 film *Shaft*.**



In the spring of 1952 Ralph Ellison published his novel *Invisible Man*, a revelatory account of what it was to be black in postwar America. Ellison's good friend, Life magazine photographer Gordon Parks, was so impressed by the book he decided to create images illustrating some of its key moments. Ellison himself helped out and Life published four of the results on August 25.

TELLING OF FEELINGS



A MAN BECOMES INVISIBLE

Photographer re-creates the emotional crisis of a powerful new novel

an emotional man, perhaps someone who is...
...of the world. It is the moment when...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...

a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...

gives...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...

INVISIBLE MAN

RENDER...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...



...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...

...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...
...the world is not just a place, but a...



The opening photograph, of a young man emerging from (or perhaps disappearing into) a manhole, is a striking if ambiguous symbol of black experience. The final image—published only once—was an elaborately staged scene from *Invisible Man's* prologue. It shows the book's narrator holed up in a windowless cellar into which he fell during a riot. He is drinking sloe gin and listening to jazz records, surrounded by lightbulbs he has connected illegally in order to banish the darkness. This is the place from which the narrator recounts his story.





A girl named Tron,
a village called Andien
in a war now teetering on

THE EDGE OF PEACE

Photographed by
LARRY BURROWS

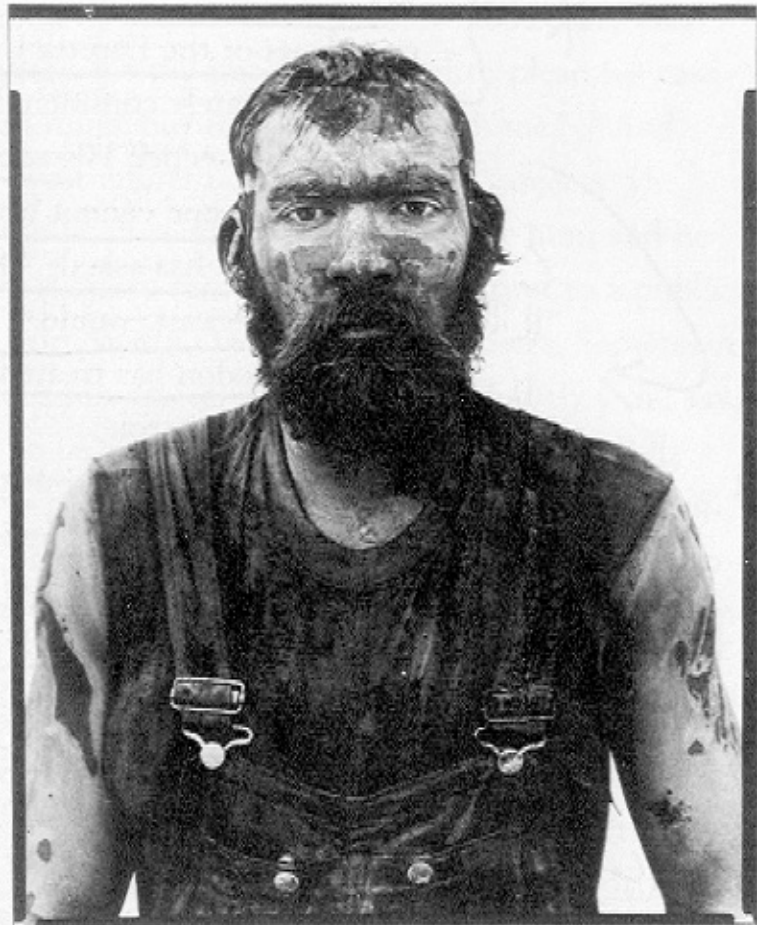
Text by
DON MOSER

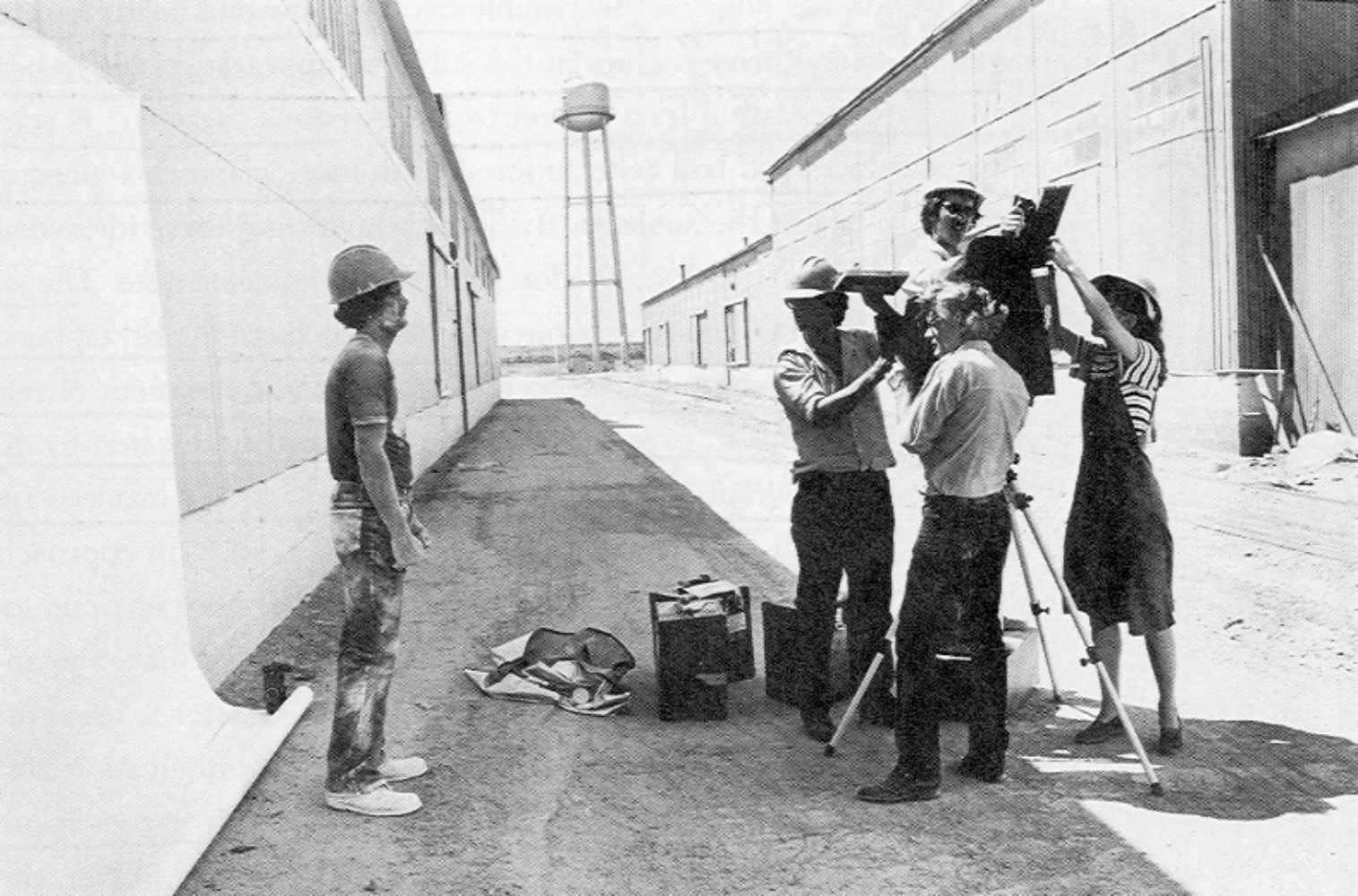


ographer Larry Burrows with
12-year-old Nguyen Thi
Ding a new leg (above) to
the use shattered in war.
ward her to her village

while she went through the
deal of learning to use it (left).
The girl's luxury impressed him
deeply. Burrows' photographs are
captioned with his own words.

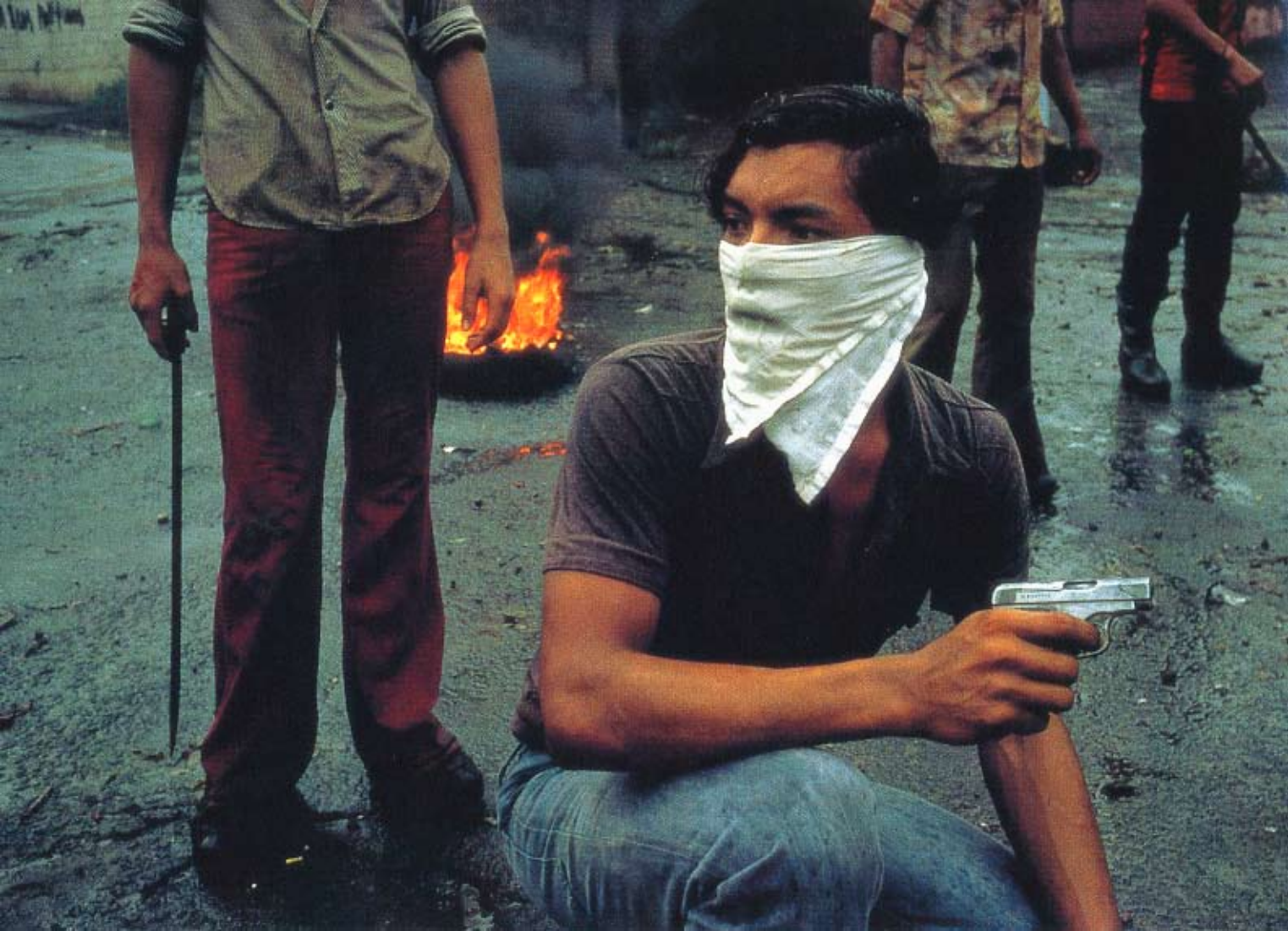
IN THE AMERICAN WEST
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON











"New Documentary"

(Abigail Solomon-Godeau)

Both Marxist-Realist approaches and Post-modernist conventionalist strategies are hostile to traditional documentary's sentimental humanism, the ease with which it can be appropriated by reactionary media; it has lost its ability to show the forces at work in our society; it has become part of the dominant media that itself needs to be "deconstructed" by a new type of documentary.

The illustrated papers met with early criticism; Siegfried Krauer in an article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 10 October 1927, wrote:

In illustrated magazines, the public sees the world whose reality illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving. . . There never was an era which was so ill-informed about itself. The device of the illustrated magazine in the hands of the ruling society has become one of the most powerful means of striking against the spread of knowledge. The successful implementation of this strike is helped by the jumbled arrangement of the pictures. The arbitrary way in which they have been placed side by side systematically precludes the connection which stimulates consciousness. The picture idea ousts the real idea; the photographic snowstorm reveals the indifference to what the photographed objects were meant to convey.

Similar sentiment was echoed by Bertolt Brecht in 1931:

The tremendous development of photojournalism has contributed practically nothing to the revelation of the truth about the conditions in this world. On the contrary, photography, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, has become a terrible weapon against the truth. The vast amount of pictured material that is being disgorged daily by the press and that seems to have the character of truth serves in reality only to obscure the facts. The camera is just as capable of lying as the typewriter.

Most photojournalists repeated a formula that stood for objective reporting, consisting of images of the victims of oppression or images of confrontation, for example, demonstrations in the streets. Such imagery, thought Coleman, aroused sympathy for victims or rigidified one's anger at political opponents but did not lead to action or suggest solutions to problems.

Roland Barthes (7/1969):

But here

again what we are given to look at, even though it is given us straight and in no way composed by framing or contrasting elements together, its still too worked: the fixing of just that unique instant rather than another seems gratuitous, too wilful, the result of a cumbersome voluntary insistence on using a particular pictorial language, and the pictures that succeed in this way have no effect on us at all; our interest lasts no longer than an instantaneous reading of them – they don't reverberate, they don't disturb us, our response narrows down too soon on a pure *sign*; the perfect legibility of what is given us to look at, *its reduction to form*, relieves us of the need to take deep within us the scandal of the image – once reduced to the state of pure language, photography can no longer scramble our prejudices.

the realm of shock photography, which Barthes correctly characterized as photographs that cannot really wound us because the photographer had already thought for us and shuddered for us, leaving us with little to do but show a polite and concerned interest or indignation?

The liberal documentary, in which members of the ascendant classes are implored to have pity on and to rescue members of the oppressed, now belongs to the past.

In the liberal documentary, poverty and oppression are almost invariably equated with misfortunes cause by natural disasters; causality is vague, blame is not assigned, fate cannot be overcome... Like photos of children in pleas for donations to international charity organizations, liberal documentary implores us to look in the face of deprivation and to weep (and maybe to send money...).

Documentary testifies, finally, to the bravery or (dare we name it?) the manipulateness and savvy of the photographer, who entered a situation of physical danger, social restrictedness, human decay, or combinations of these and saved us the trouble. Or who, like the astronauts, entertained us by showing us the places we never hope to go. War photography, slum photography, “subculture” or cult photography, photography of the foreign poor, photography of “deviance,” photography from the past—W. Eugene Smith, David Douglas Duncan, Larry Burrows, Diane Arbus, Larry Clark, Danny Lyon, Bruce Davidson, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Walker Evans, Robert Capa, Don McCullin, Susan Meiselas . . . these are merely the most currently luminous of documentarian stars.

Sekula's points are relevant in the present context because he exposes as politically dangerous the “celebration of abstract humanity [which] becomes . . . the celebration of the dignity of the passive victim.”

rience those same feelings under similar circumstances in actual life; it will lay in the souls of men the rails along which the actions of those whom art thus educates will naturally pass. And universal art, by uniting the most different people in one common feeling by destroying separation, will educate people to union and will show them, not by reason but by life itself, the joy of universal union reaching beyond the bounds set by life. . . . The task of Christian art is to establish brotherly union among men. (*What Is Art?*, London, 1959, p. 288.)

Hine is an artist in the tradition of Millet and Tolstoy, a realist mystic. His realism corresponds to the status of the photograph as report, his mysticism corresponds to its status as spiritual expression. What these two connotative levels suggest is an artist who partakes of two roles. The first role, which determines the empirical value of the photograph as report, is that of *witness*. The second role, through which the photograph is invested with spiritual significance, is that of *seer*, and entails the notion of expressive genius. It is at this second level that Hine can be appropriated by bourgeois esthetic discourse, and invented as a significant "primitive" figure in the history of photography.

III

I would like to conclude with a rather schematic summary. All photographic communication seems to take place within the conditions of a kind of binary folklore. That is, there is a "symbolist" folk-myth and a "realist" folk-myth. The misleading but popular form of this opposition is "art photography" vs. "documentary photography." Every photograph tends, at any given moment of reading in any given context, toward one of these two poles of meaning. The oppositions between these two poles are as follows: photographer as seer vs. photographer as witness, photography as expression vs. photography as reportage, theories of imagination (and inner truth) vs. theories of empirical truth, affective value vs. informative value, and finally, metaphoric signification vs. metonymic signification.

It would be a mistake to identify liberal and "concerned" documentary entirely with realism. As we have seen in the case of Hine, even the most deadpan reporter's career is embroiled in an expressionist structure. From Hine to W. Eugene Smith stretches a continuous tradition of expressionism in the realm of "fact." All photography that even approaches the status of high art contains the mystical possibility

of genius. The representation drops away and only the valorized figure of the artist remains. The passage of the photograph from report to metaphor (and of photographer from reporter to genius) in the service of liberalism is celebrated in one of the more bizarre pieces of photography ever written. This is the enemy:

[Strand] believes in human values, in social ideals, in decency and in truth. These are not clichés to him. That is why his people, whether Bowery derelict, Mexican peon, New England farmer, Italian peasant, French artisan, Breton or Hebrides fisherman, Egyptian fellahin, the village idiot, or the great Picasso, are all touched by the same heroic quality—humanity. To a great extent this is a reflection of Strand's personal sympathy and respect for his subjects. But it is just as much the result for his acuteness of perception which finds in the person a core of human virtue and his unerring sense of photographic values that transmits that quality to us. It is all part of an artistic process in which the conception of form, the just balance of mass and space and pattern to frame, the richness of texture and detail transform a moment of intuition into an immutable monument. (Milton Brown in *Paul Strand: A Retrospective Monograph, The Years 1915-1968*, Millerton, N.Y., 1971, p. 370.)

The celebration of abstract humanity becomes, in any given political situation, the celebration of the dignity of the passive victim. This is the final outcome of the appropriation of the photographic image for liberal political ends; the oppressed are granted a bogus Subjecthood when such status can be secured only from within, on their own terms.

We really don't know very much about what happens when people look at photographs. We assume things. Theorists assume a great deal, and they often raise questions that are legitimate and valuable, but their analysis is not often based on real research. . . . I think it is an area about which we know very little, certainly not enough to make the kinds of assumptions we're dealing with here.

There was a time, at the end of the 1980s, when the critique of documentary photography based on the “aestheticization of suffering” was so influential that it became virtually impossible to defend documentary practice. Any such defense was regarded as at best naïve and at worst ideologically suspect.

Then came 9/11. I have argued elsewhere that the attack on the Twin Towers, the most photographed event in history, effectively reset the clock on documentary images, clearing away years of accumulated censure.¹ The affective unreality of the event cried out for representation, and most people experienced it as an image. Photography’s special capacity as a medium of mourning brought us close to it again, and made us realize how much we need public, shared images to make sense of such events.

The trenchant critiques of documentary photography by Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, and others were necessary corrections at the time to a great deal of muddled mystification about the nature of photographic representation, and about the real effects of public images. But over time these critiques became intellectually enshrined as definitive, and later writers and artists began to treat them as unassailable truths rather than as timely interventions.

The modernist respect for purely visual meaning has been rejected for a belief that meaning can exist only in language or in structures derived from language. The primacy of originality has been rejected through an attack on the very possibility of originality; the respect for subjective expression has been undermined with a theory of subjectivity as a social construct. The modernist belief in universality has been replaced by an emphasis on the historically specific.

There are moments at which the orthodoxies that govern the way we interpret the photographic image appear to undergo a profound sea change, when we recognise that the frameworks that are sustaining certain practices, and the readings of those practices, are inadequate to the images that are being made and to the demands they are making of us. One of the most significant of these moments took place in the 1970s, when the impact of structuralist, Marxist and psychoanalytic theories on photographic practice, complicated and politicised the relationship between image, social reality and the subject, revealing the space of photographic production as effectively a site of ideological production, thereby disrupting the fragile coherence of the conceptual framework that sustained the notion of the fine art photograph.

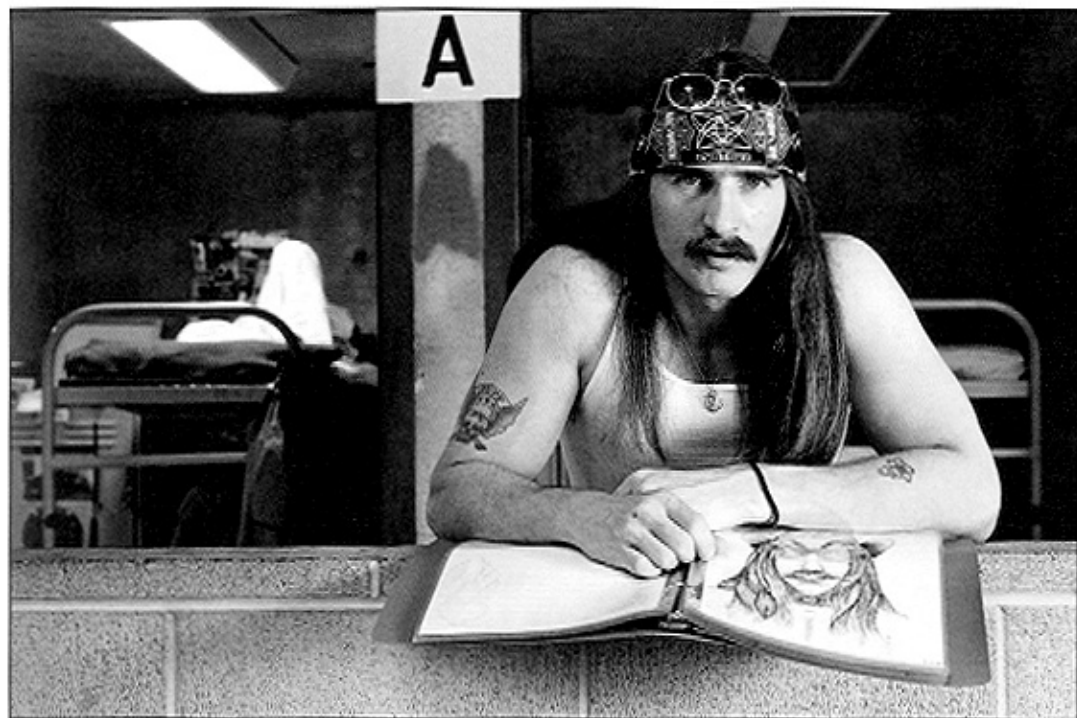
There is no single language of photography, but a plurality of codes which are combined within the image. (Eco's text, 'Critique of the image' is especially helpful in this respect.) This becomes more complex when considering a 'mixed' system, as in reportage. Here we must examine all the codes inherent in the photographic signification and then those of the journal itself, to discover how they integrate and work with each other:

Each photograph signifies on the basis of these codes, the number and type of which varies from one image to another. Some of these are (at least to first analysis) peculiar to photography (e.g. the various codes built around 'focus' and 'blur'), others are clearly not (e.g. the 'kinesic' codes of bodily gesture). Further, importantly, it was shown that the putatively autonomous 'language of photography' is never free from the determinants of language itself.

Trad. vs. New Documentary

Danny Lyons's *Conversations with the Dead* (1971)
versus
Morrie Camhi's *The Prison Experience* (1988)





I came to prison short haired, clean shaven, baseball, apple pie and Chevrolet. I've seen more games, scams, rip-offs, cons and brutal beatings in the past four years than I'll probably ever see again in life. I now try to avoid most people (except a select few, of course) and do my own number. I like to draw because it's a kind of escape for me. I can put heart and soul into a drawing or some type of craft and I seem to "leave" my surroundings of noise, hatred and ignorance. I've learned that when you make a new friend in prison, don't become too attached to him because he may not be around tomorrow. The mere words, "hatred and prejudice," just don't have the impact that the "meanings" do. It's unbelievable. It's real!

In his emphasis on the specific, Coleman is consistent with that strain of postmodernist criticism inspired by Marxism, but his position is not entirely congruent with postmodernism. Many postmodernist critics, in their effort to articulate the political implications of images, find it necessary to equate the specific with language. Only that which can be said is precise enough. Photographs by themselves, without the interpretation of words, are too ambiguous to explain a specific political circumstance. These critics are uninterested in the purely visual or the preverbal meanings of pictures. Coleman did not go this far.

Marxist-Realism

Rooted in Marx's model of society as:

Superstructure/Economic base

where the economic level determines what emerges on the cultural (super-structural) level. So critical intervention is best aimed at material, economic issues.



Allan Sekula

Fred Lonidier

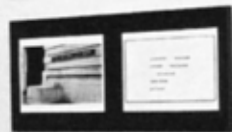
Phil Steinmetz

Martha Rosler

The San Diego Group, 1976

Martha Rosler

*The Bowery in two
inadequate descriptive
systems*





stewed

boiled

potted

corned

pickled

preserved

canned

fried to the hat

According to Owens, the artist 'refused' to picture those 'twice victimised: first by society, and then by the photographer who presumes the right to speak on their behalf'. Rosler is said to reject the tradition of victim photography in which 'the photographer inevitably functions as an agent of the system of power that silenced these people in the first place'.¹⁹ Thomas Crow noted that this work was a 'milestone' of Conceptual art:

The Bowery juxtaposed a series of strictly depopulated photographs of derelict storefronts with a running list of American slang expressions for drunks and drunkenness, from familiar to arcane, from whimsical to despairingly bleak. The anti-expressive intensity in the combination of text and photograph defies both ordinary pathos and critical paraphrase.

drunk

derelict

bum



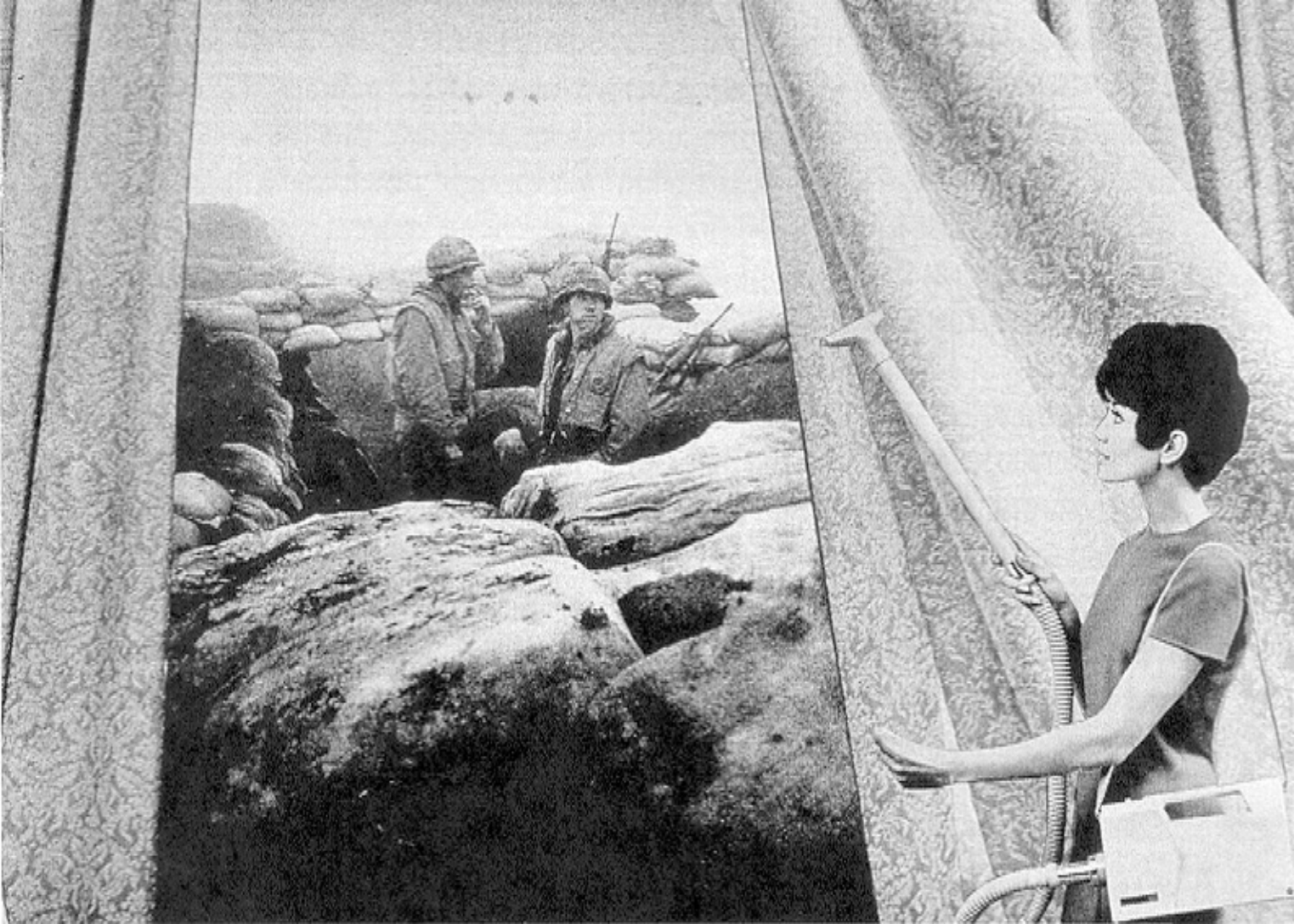
dead soldiers

dead marines



The photographs confront the shops squarely, and they supply familiar urban reports. They are not reality newly viewed. They are not reports from a frontier, messages from a voyage of discovery or self-discovery. There is nothing new attempted in a photographic style that was constructed in the thirties when the message itself was newly understood, differently embedded. I am quoting words and images both.





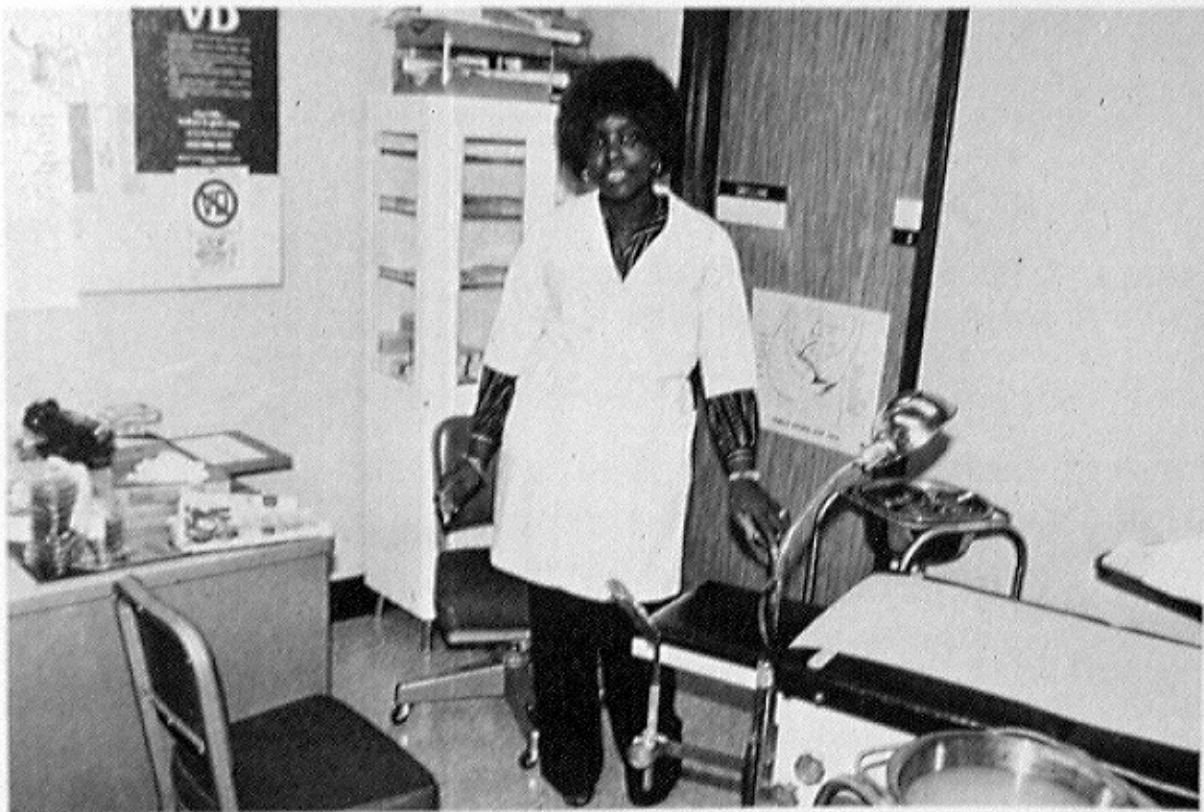
Although Rosler's technique aligns her with the historical avant-garde tradition of appropriation and montage, her placing of journalistic images taken from the contemporary war theater within ordered domestic interiors creates not only a clash of images but a critical confusion between the static, ideal tableau of commercial pictorial photography and the instantaneity and unpredictability of the documentary's "jittery flow of events." (Rosler, 1981) In the assumed domestic sanctuary of the middle-class home, we are confronted with our own complicity in the bourgeois aspirations that lay at the heart of the war. The shocking juxtapositions in *Bringing the War Home* strip away and call into question the conventions of traditional documentary photography.

Questions Raised by Marxist-Realist Photographer Fred Lonidier:

- 1) Should the artist work in collaboration with his/her subjects?
- 2) Might not artists train workers, etc. on how to make their own images to represent themselves and their issues?
- 3) Should artists exhibit in labor union halls and other venues outside the art world?
- 4) Should artists compete with the mass media's sophisticated technology or remain "low tech"?


Londier gives various subjects as possible topics for activist photographers:

- 1) Address issue of declining real income of workers.**
- 2) Focus on attacks on labor unions.**
- 3) Investigate problems of undocumented labor.**
- 4) Address attacks on social services, welfare, etc.**
- 5) Consciousness raising over labor history.**

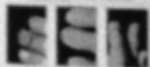


BETTY JOHNSON, NURSING ATTENDANT, SEIU 434

I don't feel really good patient care with Family Planning...And there it's like a rush-through thing too. You're rushing but you got to put in an IUD, you gotta fit for diaphragm...and you feel pressured in those things because you



THE HEALTH AND SAFETY GAME:
FICTIONS BASED ON FACT
FRED LONIDIER, A.F.T. LOCAL 2034





OFFICE WORKER'S NERVES

"She didn't give me the forms because she didn't want her record to look bad. It was for her own future promotion."

A photograph of a man in a hospital bed reading a newspaper. A hand in a white glove is stitching the image together with a needle and thread. The thread runs diagonally across the man's chest and the newspaper. The background shows a hospital room with a window and a radiator.

HEALTH CUTS CAN KILL

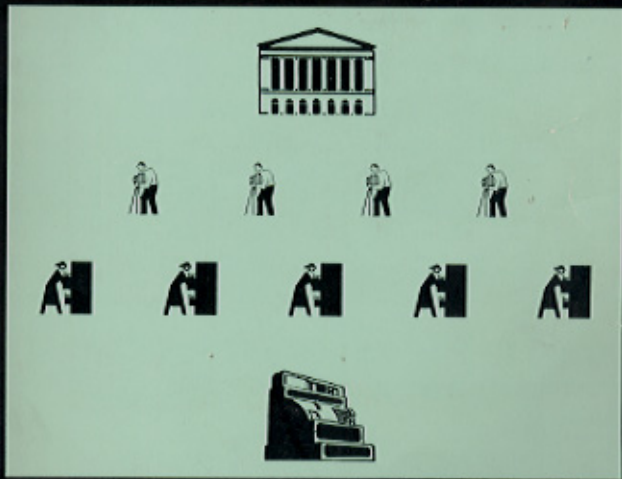
**THEIR ECONOMIES
OR YOUR HEALTH**

**SAY NO
TO HOSPITAL
CLOSURES**

KEEP BETHNAL GREEN HOSPITAL OPEN

PHOTOGRAPHY AGAINST THE GRAIN

Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983



Allan Sekula

” Documentary photography, says Sekula, has “contributed much to spectacle, to retinal excitation, to voyeurism, to terror, envy and nostalgia, and only a little to the critical understanding of the social world.”

Allan Sekula

Another theorist and critic who responded to many of the same ideas as Sontag, but with somewhat less pessimism, is Allan Sekula. Sekula agrees with Sontag that photographs acquire meaning as part of a discourse. Taken as purely visual objects, they have only the potential for meaning, but in association with a text (not necessarily a written text, but a set of "linguistic propositions"), photographs do become meaningful. But Sekula says, in much the same manner as Sontag, "Any given photograph is conceivably open to appropriation by a range of 'texts,' each new discourse situation generating its own set of messages." Unlike Sontag, however, Sekula thinks it is possible to anchor a photograph in history, to define the original historical context in which the photograph was made, and thereby attach to it a meaning that arises from the intentions with which it was made.

As an alternative to the aesthetic discourse in photography, Sekula
describes an art with its own built-in, self-conscious, social discourse. Artists
involved in this kind of work refuse to treat photographs as privileged
objects, treating them instead as “common cultural artifacts.”



premature disfavor

so this is what brecht meant by culinary opera she thought food and service designed to transport the customer into an imaginary world the menu with its encyclopedia illustrations of tonique musical instruments the illuminated plastic beer display with its crowd of men in boater hats admiring an antique automobile a geographical and historical collage

she was beginning to understand the boss's act.

3.

a political novel in which workers were denied the privilege of psychological treatment



some of the workers wondered what a brechtian restaurant would be. one of the cooks had read a story in the *Los angeles times* about the destruction of "fine chinese cookery" during the cultural revolution. the revolutionary cooks and waiters of pking had reorganized the restaurants to feed working people cheap and nutritious meals. banishing the elevated fare that harked back to the rule of the feudal classes and which threatened to become a cultural bulwark of a new class of technocrats and managers. this cook was challenged by the others. this isn't china they said we don't serve elevated fare we serve pretentious fat food the cook persisted. hadn't they noticed the way well-off left-liberals behaved when dining in a restaurant? a waitress familiar with the university clientele agreed that there was indeed a difference between the intellectuals' words and actions as though one could be a critic in thought alone. but no one was sure how to apply these insights to the present situation.

given their circumstances even a corrupt labor union was better than nothing.

the union asked for a list of grievances.

management spied on workers.

management suspended a waitress for taking a bite of a sandwich when she was on duty but the restaurant was empty

management lurked outside a window in the dark for an hour waiting for a cook to make a mistake eventually firing him for using too many mushrooms.

management demanded unpaid overtime.

management accused employees of using company bandages to



CARNIGIE
A 440
UNFAIR
TO LOCAL
JIT ER. SO
LOCALS
NO CLOUTNEY



One of my students was a welder. He had worked in a large shipyard in Los Angeles harbor, but the danger, low pay, and periodic layoffs drove him to a better-paying job as a welder at Disneyland. Now, instead of welding navy ships and oil tankers, he helps build the hidden machineries of an amusement park. He works the night shift, since all construction and repair work is done when the park is closed. So he goes off to work after class. He tells me of the disdain directed at Disneyland's manual workers by the middle-class college students who serve as guides and performers. He tells me of welding at night, as the fog rolls in from the ocean, filling the streets of Fantasyland, and obscuring the artificial peak of the Matterhorn.



*Making up
the difference*

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

"...to remove barriers for women and overcome past and present discrimination in the workplace. In other words, to make up the difference by improving the economic status of women."

FORGETTING THE DAY'S
PROBLEMS.
SEEING THEMSELVES AS
THE BOSS SEES THEM.



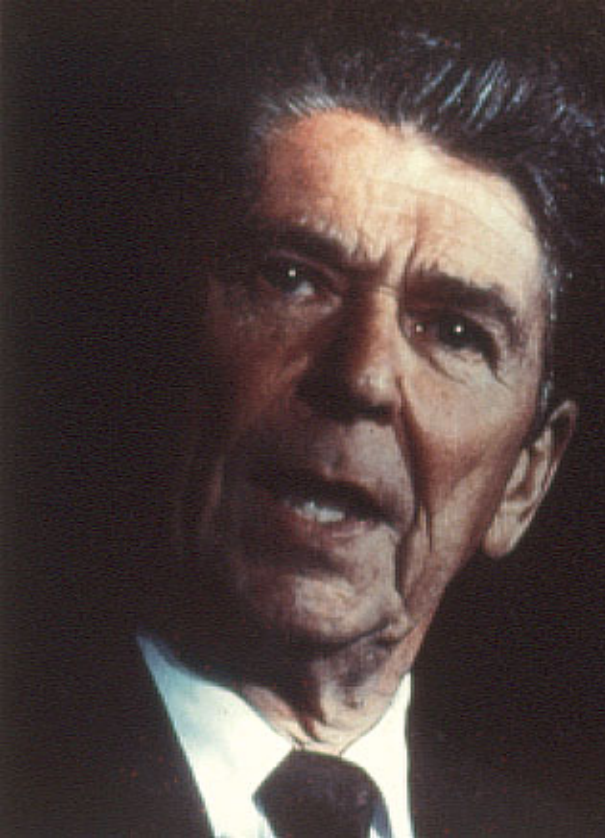
What does
possession
mean to you?



7% of our population
own 84% of our wealth



Newspapers are
no longer ironed.
Coins no longer boiled
So far have
Standards
fallen.

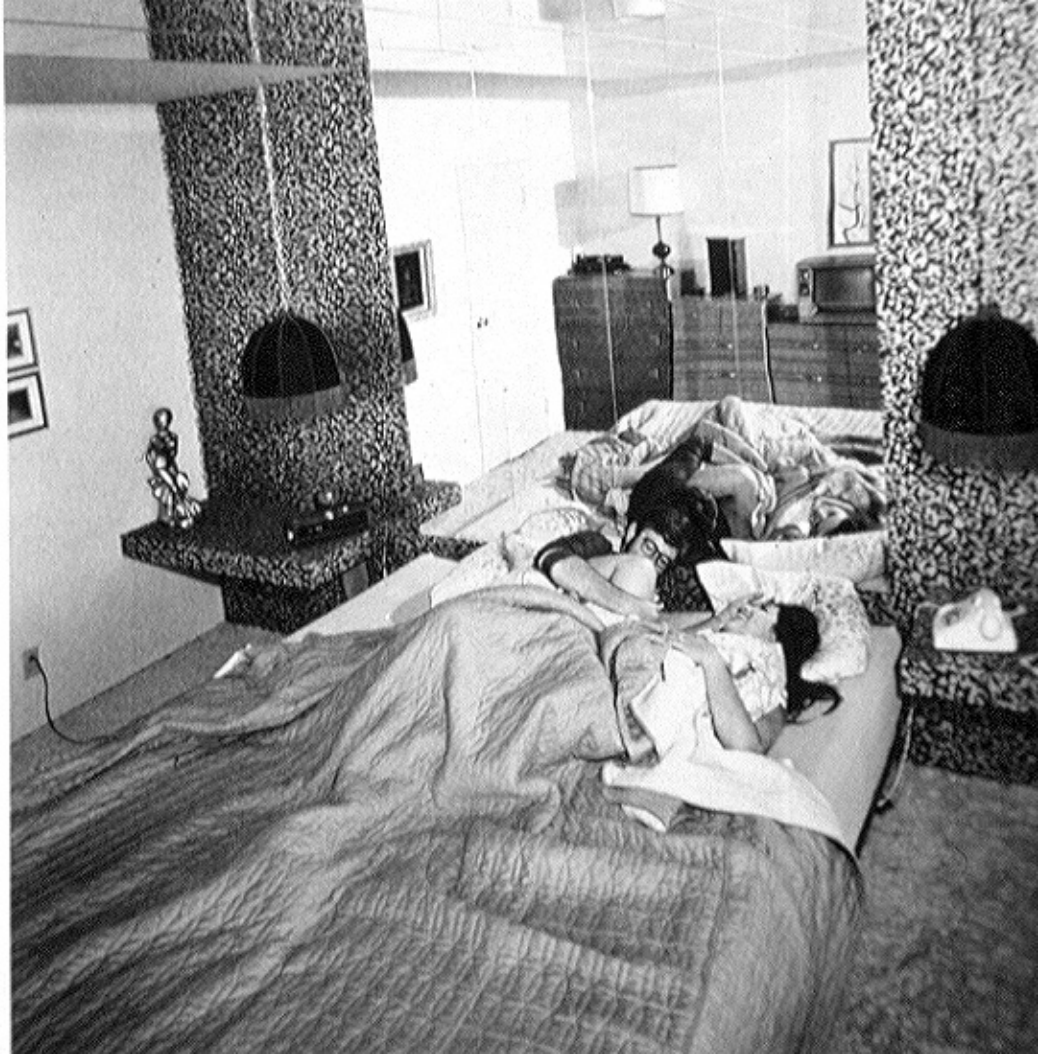


**You want some advice?
We got \$800,000 to fix
up our place, all tax-
exempt. And many of
Nancy's designer clothes
are donated.**

Try charity!



It's a great pleasure to watch yourself make love in the six dozen mirrors that line the ceilings and walls. I've spent a tremendous amount of thought and planning to get the total effect of the bedroom. It's fascinating to watch our friends' reactions to seeing the luxury and sensuousness of the room. Our bedroom is the most enjoyable room in the house.



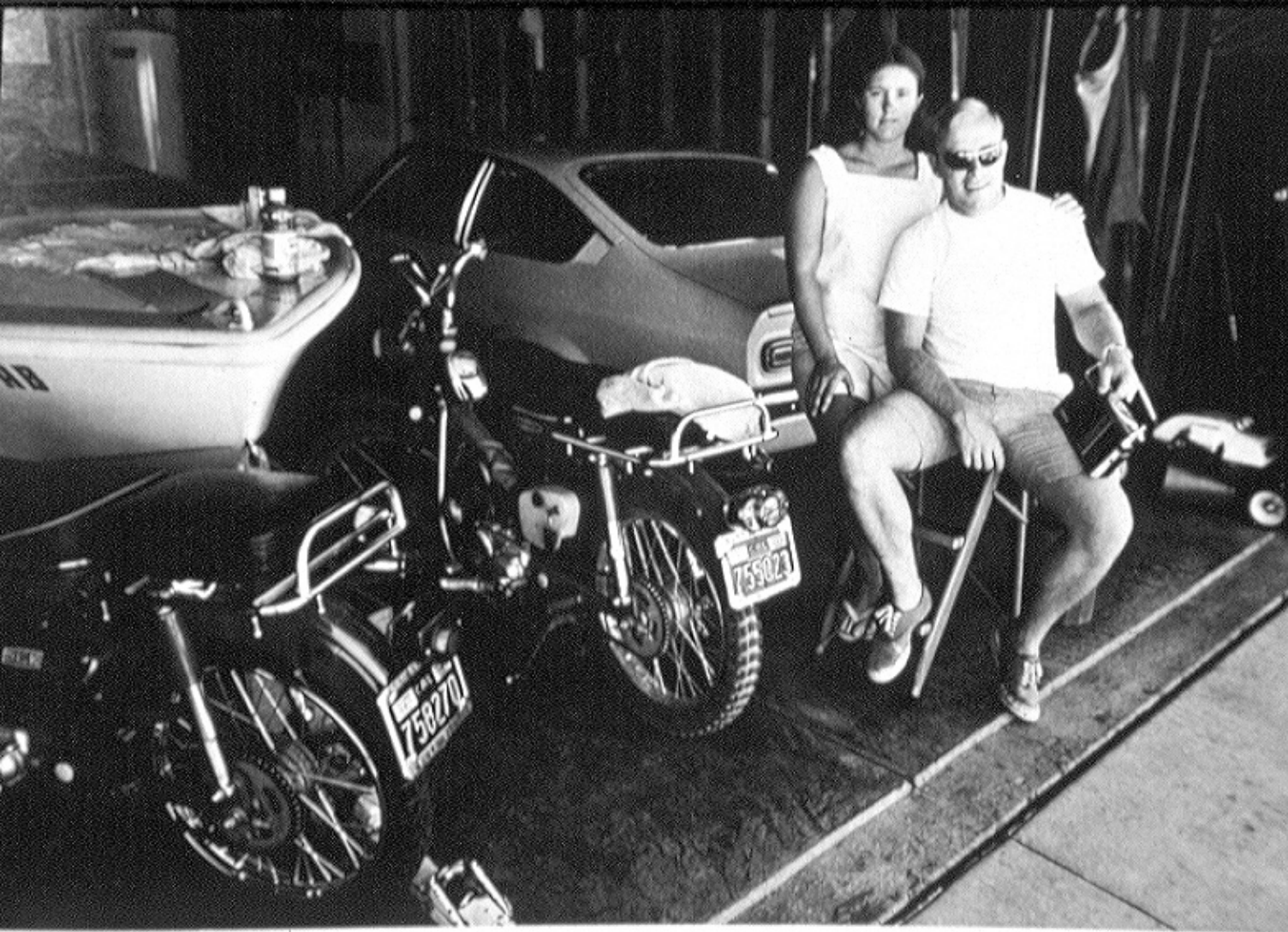


Together-ness really exists in our family. My daughter and I operate the lunch room at the Valley Inn. My sons work part-time with their dad,

hanging sheet-rock. And my eldest two sons work at the Gulf gas station on P St. We have 7 cars and 2 motorcycles in our family.



I don't feel that Richie playing with guns will have a negative effect on his personality. (He already wants to be a policeman). His childhood gun-playing won't make him into a cop-shooter. By playing with guns he learns to socialize with other children. I find the neighbors who are offended by Richie's gun, either the father hunts or their kids are the first to take Richie's gun and go off and play with it.



We enjoy having these things.



I AM A 29 YEAR OLD FEMALE WHO LOVES PLANTS AND ANIMALS WHO CAME TO SAN FRANCISCO FROM A QUIET TOWN IN OREGON 3 1/2 YEARS AGO. I DON'T LIKE IT HERE!

THE CITY HAS MADE ME DISLIKE MYSELF NOW I GET DEPRESSED EASILY, WHICH MAKES ME SLEEP ALOT AND WATCH ALOT OF HORROR MOVIES. I GUESS THE PICTURE SHOWS ME IN A SO-SO MOOD AND IN A SIMPLE WAY OF LIVING.
NO MONEY MEANS LIVING IN THE PITS:

Anne Williams

Postmodern Conventionalism

Social reality is viewed as a complex of texts, of a variety of competing discourses: the dominant discourse via the mass media, the minoritarian discourse via art, subaltern cultural forms (Rasta, etc.).

Intervention into this dominant discourse is via messing with the codes/conventions of that media discourse. Quotation, appropriation, pastiche, etc. used to perform this "internal critique."

Artists, not photographers, were aware of how Rauschenberg and Warhol had used photography and began to use it themselves to investigate the implications of conceptual art and to document their ephemeral or inaccessible works. Appropriation came out of this background, and not the photographic tradition that extends back through Frank, White, Adams, Weston, and Stieglitz. Traditional art photography, says Solomon-Godeau, remained virtually oblivious to the groundswell of postmodernist thought. As a result, the photographic mainstream hit a cul-de-sac of academicism and exhaustion. For her, appropriation is not a new development in the photographic tradition, but a critique of that tradition arising entirely outside it.

Appropriation is a recognition of the fact that all experience and even the subjective self are mediated by preexisting imagery, and it is meant to challenge the central modernist assumptions that artworks can be original and that they are the product of the independent and subjective vision of an artist.

By asserting that all imagery is quotation and, therefore, that meaning arises from quotation, from the relationship of one image to other images, and by taking an image from one context and using it in a different context where it acquires a different meaning, appropriation undermines the modernist assumption that the meaning of an image is inherent and asserts the contingency of meaning.

Louis Althusser's Influence on PoMo Conventionalism

Althusser discards Marx's Superstructure/Base model for a series of mutually interrelated material yet semi-autonomous, practices:

economic

political

ideological (cultural production)

theoretical

Thus economic isn't primary; cultural production becomes an important area to critically intervene.

Today what we are experiencing is the absorption of all virtual modes of expression into that of advertising. All original cultural forms, all determined languages are absorbed in advertising because it has no depth, it is instantaneous and instantaneously forgotten. Triumph of superficial form, of the smallest common denominator of all signification, degree zero of meaning, triumph of entropy over all possible tropes. The lowest form of energy of the sign. This unarticulated, instantaneous form, without a past, without a future, without the possibility of metamorphosis, has power over all the others. All current forms of activity tend toward advertising and most exhaust themselves therein. Not necessarily advertising itself, the kind that is produced as such—but the form of advertising, that of a simplified operational mode, vaguely seductive, vaguely consensual (all the modalities are confused therein, but in an attenuated, agitated mode).

Influence of V. N. Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

**Volosinov (pub. in 1973): "The domain of ideology
coincides with the domain of signs. . . .**

Whenever a sign is present, ideology is present too."















We don't need another hero

CAPRI

the
slimmest
slim!

CAPRI

80% TOLUENE, 20% POLYMER, 10% WATER





Your body

March on Washington

Sunday, April 9, 1989

is a

Support Legal Abortion

Birth Control

and Women's Rights

battleground

On April 26 the Supreme Court will hear a case which the Bush Administration hopes will overturn the Roe vs. Wade decision, which established basic abortion rights. Join thousands of women and men in Washington D.C. on April 9. We will show that the majority of Americans support a woman's right to choose.

In Washington: Assemble at the Ellipse between the Washington Monument and the White House at 10 am; Rally at the Capitol at 1:30 pm.

You substantiate our



h o r r o r



BLACK MAN WITH A WATERMELON 1



**LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR, THE BLACK WOMAN ASKED,
"MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO'S THE FINEST OF THEM ALL?"
THE MIRROR SAYS, "SNOW WHITE, YOU BLACK BITCH,
AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT!!!"**

Rephotography is a technique for stealing (pirating) already existing images, simulating rather than copying them, “managing” rather than quoting them—re-producing their effect and look as naturally as they had been produced when they first appeared. A resemblance more than a reproduction, a rephotograph is essentially an appropriation of what’s already real about an existing image and an attempt to add on or additionalize this reality onto something more real, a virtuoso real—a reality that has the chances of looking real, but a reality that doesn’t have any chances of being real.

Prince's camera also teases out gender stereotypes exploited by Madison Avenue advertising in a series of "portraits" culled from fashion advertisements. From 1977 to 1980 he created a number of multipart works involving several models striking similar poses.



liberate them from their contexts. Through careful cropping, he excises all existing ad copy, logos, or captions. He strips the images of any identifying markers, emancipating them from their signifying origins. In the process, Prince may also concentrate on just one detail of an image—a watch on a man's wrist, a gloved hand, the curl of a hairdo—enlarging it to the point of abstraction. By allowing things to slip out of focus or, on the contrary, bringing them into sharp, almost clinical relief, he ascribes a hallucinatory cast to his pictures. He further promotes this sense of disequilibrium by photographing color images in black and white, and conversely, black-and-white images in color, which gives them a distinct bluish or reddish tint. The “fashion” shots from 1982–84—elegant black-and-white pictures of masked and coiffed models shown in intense, claustrophobic close-up—verge on the unrecognizable.

Both a role model and sex symbol, the cowboy appeals to men and women alike. His hyped, exaggerated masculinity has also made him a gay icon, a fact no doubt embraced by Philip Morris, whose desired demographic knows no bounds: a smoker is a smoker regardless of gender, age, race, or sexual orientation. Lifted from the readily available archive of Marlboro Men, Prince's *Cowboy* series, begun in 1980, captures these multiple connotative levels. Prince makes the most of the lush, high-budget, art-directed aesthetic of the ad campaign. After eliminating the text and enlarging the image, he does little to these already gorgeous pictures. They stand on their own as relics of an imagined, individualistic culture. As art, the *Cowboys* refer as much to Frederic Remington's paintings of a mythologized American West as they do to the collective unconscious of the mass media, which includes both the Hollywood Western and Marlboro's appropriation of it. While Prince never moralizes, the photographs' origins in advertising designed to lure everyone and anyone to a life of addiction is ever present.





Gary Gross's photographs of Brooke Shields reside at the symbolic center of this timeline due to their dual role as soft-core pornography trafficked within popular culture, and as the origin for Richard Prince's *Spiritual America* (1983), in which the artist re-photographed a single image from the original 1975 series. It is crucial to consider simultaneously the roles of both the original Gross series and the Prince appropriation, as the two taken together create a critical conflation of how both popular and art images function in society, splicing together what had previously been perceived as high and low image types with profound implications for the reception of both. Prince's re-photographing of Gross's popular icon pierced the division between mass culture's commodification of youth, and art culture's investigation of youth. *Spiritual America* stakes claims on all representations of youth, no matter their cultural location, thus opening the doors between the gaze of art and the gaze of the masses.



My desires needed satisfaction . . . And satisfaction seems to come about by ingesting; perhaps “perceiving” the fiction her photograph imagined. I felt I was in partnership with the picture. There didn’t seem to be any interruption between what was imagined by the picture and what was imagined by me. It had an oppressive effect, a glowing hallucinatory energy. There was a libidinal intensification and relief from possession and jealousy. I became infused with this picture, almost as if I was being x-rayed. And this came about when I finally re-photographed the image. —Richard Prince on *Spiritual America*, c.1979 (http://richardprinceart.com/write_spiritual.html)





Levine's work can thus be seen to
present a problem-case for the 'picture'. To Crimp and other theorists of the
earlier moment such as Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Levine's photographic appro-
priations of original works by older, male, modernist photographers such as
Edward Weston seemed exemplary of a postmodern attack on such foundation-
stones of modernist aesthetics as originality, authenticity and individual crea-
tivity.





