

REGIONAL TRIENNIAL

The Camera Always Lies by Beth E. Wilson

INTRODUCTION QUOTE

THE TRUE MODERN PRIMITIVISM IS NOT TO REGARD THE IMAGE AS A REAL THING; PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES ARE HARDLY THAT REAL. INSTEAD, REALITY HAS COME TO SEEM MORE AND MORE LIKE WHAT WE ARE SHOWN BY CAMERAS.

SUSAN SONTAG, ON PHOTOGRAPHY

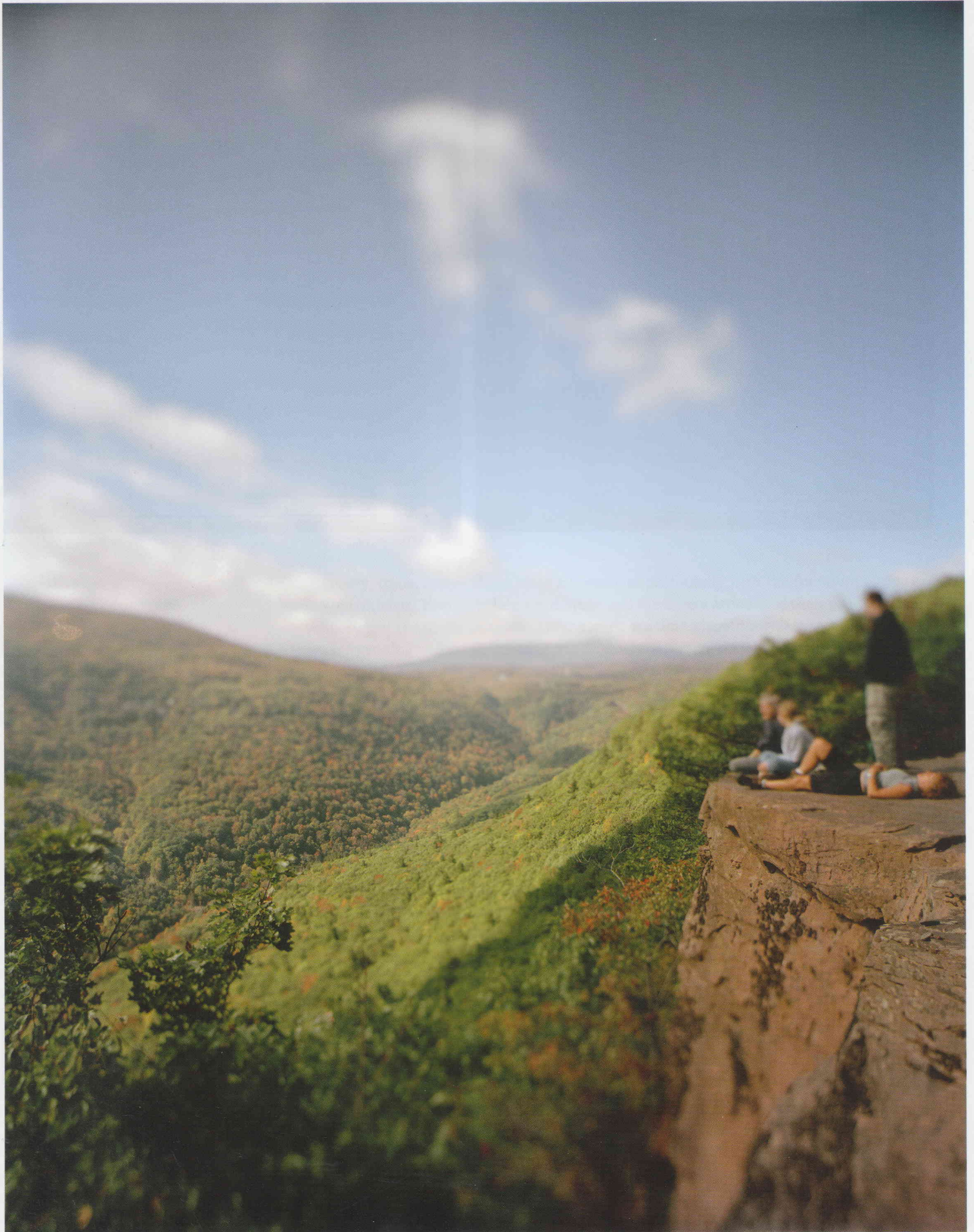
THE NEW ROMANTICS (IMAGE CREDIT FOR OPPOSITE PAGE)

SUSAN WIDES, KAATERSKILL 10.7.07 (THE CLOVE AFTER GIFFORD), 2007, C-PRINT, 40 X 50", COURTESY KIM FOSTER GALLERY, NYC

The Camera Always Lies takes as its starting point a contrary idea: that despite its apparent directness, photography (like all forms of representation) collapses reality in ways that inevitably shape our experience of the world as it is perceived through that medium — and beyond it, as well. Perhaps the verb ‘lies’ is a bit extreme. I will admit to using it in the title as something of a provocation, calling into question what might be considered the assumed role of photography as a producer of objective documents. This is not a question that has only recently arisen with the emergence of the digital format — from its very inception, the camera has functioned to make a picture of the world, which is something very different from the total (re)creation of one. A “mirror with a memory,” the photographic image insinuates itself between us and the place and time in which it was made, a technology (and a displacement) that enables the wide array of strategies explored by the artists featured in this text.

While this selection focuses on artists working within New York’s Hudson Valley/Catskill Region, it should immediately become clear that there is no longer such a thing as a purely regional set of photographic and/or aesthetic concerns. In some instances, the photographers are working with subjects that directly relate to the area and/or its history, in others they turn the lens on phenomena that are far from home. Given today’s extremely efficient, globalized networks of information and transportation, it would be futile to attempt to identify a particular Hudson Valley/Catskill Region aesthetic issue, or (in the archaic sense) a stylistic school within the region. Despite the wide variety of aesthetics and approaches included in the show, however, all of the artists selected for CPW’s second installment of its Regional Triennial are united in the sense that nothing seen here is as it initially appears.

The works gathered for *The Camera Always Lies* are divided into four categories; *Abstraction*, *The New Romantics*, *The Anti-Romantics*, and *The Attractions of Cinema*, which are designed to recognize and to advance a conversation between the works featured and the selected artists on themes that reflect various aspects of the larger concept. In some cases the same artists and/or bodies of work blur the boundaries of these prescribed themes, further emphasizing the elusiveness of established borders and boundaries within contemporary practices. The work in the *Abstraction* section presses the limits of the medium in departing from the often-assumed literalness of photographic representation, by pursuing seem-





ingly pure, Platonic form. *The New Romantics* engage projections of desire and fantasy, tapping into the intertwined appeals of history and beauty; the *Anti-Romantics* expose the flip-side of the coin, puncturing the consumer/commodity bubble that relies so heavily on photography for its persuasiveness. And finally, *The Attractions of Cinema*, addresses the intersections of time, place, and perspective, with works that bear various conceptual relationships to the moving image.

ABSTRACTION

How is it possible for a photograph or a video — normally understood as a direct transcription of light as it bounces from (or is occluded by) a particular object to render something like a 'pure' abstraction? And in a related question, what becomes of reality when we focus on it in such an aestheticized manner? In the work of both Ion Zupcu and Jaanika Peerna, we're no longer quite sure what it is that we're looking at as familiar objects and subjects are transformed per radical cropping and/or shift in scale. As a result, the image becomes most fully a new sort of entity, with a life of its own, radically reconstructed as art.

ABSTRACTION QUOTE

NEW CREATIVE EXPERIMENTS ARE AN ENDURING NECESSITY... THEY ARE VALUABLE ONLY WHEN THEY PRODUCE NEW, PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN RELATIONSHIPS.

LAZSLO MOHOLY-NAGY,
PAINTING PHOTOGRAPHY FILM

Ion Zupcu has found a path into that philosophical thicket. Part Bauhaus-inspired Vorkurs study, part virtuoso improvisation with the purest ingredients of photography, Zupcu's work dynamically transforms tiny bits of cut and folded paper (and more recently, small wooden cubes) into expressive objects in their own right. None of his 'models' are larger than an inch in any dimension; in his studio, he carefully stage-manages and manipulates these subjects to create beautifully balanced images of light and shadow, framed within the perfectly square format of his Hasselblad camera, and subject to the specific limitations/characteristics of his lens. He plays with depth of field as a painter would with the size and density of a brush-stroke, immaculately printing the resulting negatives with all the depth and presence that traditional gelatin silver can offer. The finished prints are enlarged to many times the size of the original paper models, creating an entirely new sort of photographic object: one that is both entirely dependent on this original source, yet that expands in scale to become an almost uncanny physical presence of its own on a wall. The prints threaten to become a literal rupture in the shadowed space that it represents (reminiscent of Lucio Fontana's *concetto spaziale*, in which he slashed through the canvas to reveal the lie behind painting), as it depends upon the metaphorical break between photography and the reality that it seems to effortlessly document.

Jaanika Peerna's video *Pink Tensions* adds the dimension of explicit time to the equation. Rippling gently, the surface of the water seems to breathe life, ever so gently, into the rigorously abstracted image.

THE NEW ROMANTICS

Beauty, truth, art — these ideas all resonate profoundly with the founding notions of Romanticism. Keats, Shelley, Lord Byron and the others articulated their profound belief in originality and the uniqueness of the spirit at a time when (mass) factory production and a burgeoning middle class had begun eroding traditional social relationships in earnest.

Photography was born in this same historical moment, of the very technological and scientific advances that Romanticism was attempting to resist. Charles Baudelaire — a great supporter of Delacroix's painting — in his famous drubbing of photography in his review of the Salon of 1859, claimed that the medium itself cheapened the very conception of reality. And so there is more than a bit of irony to find, a century and a half later, contemporary photographers, as in the case of Dugdale, Sweeney, and Wides, who embrace elements of the Romantic aesthetic, simultaneously summoning these ghosts of the 19th century, but inevitably filtering them through the consciousness and experience of the late 20th and 21st centuries.

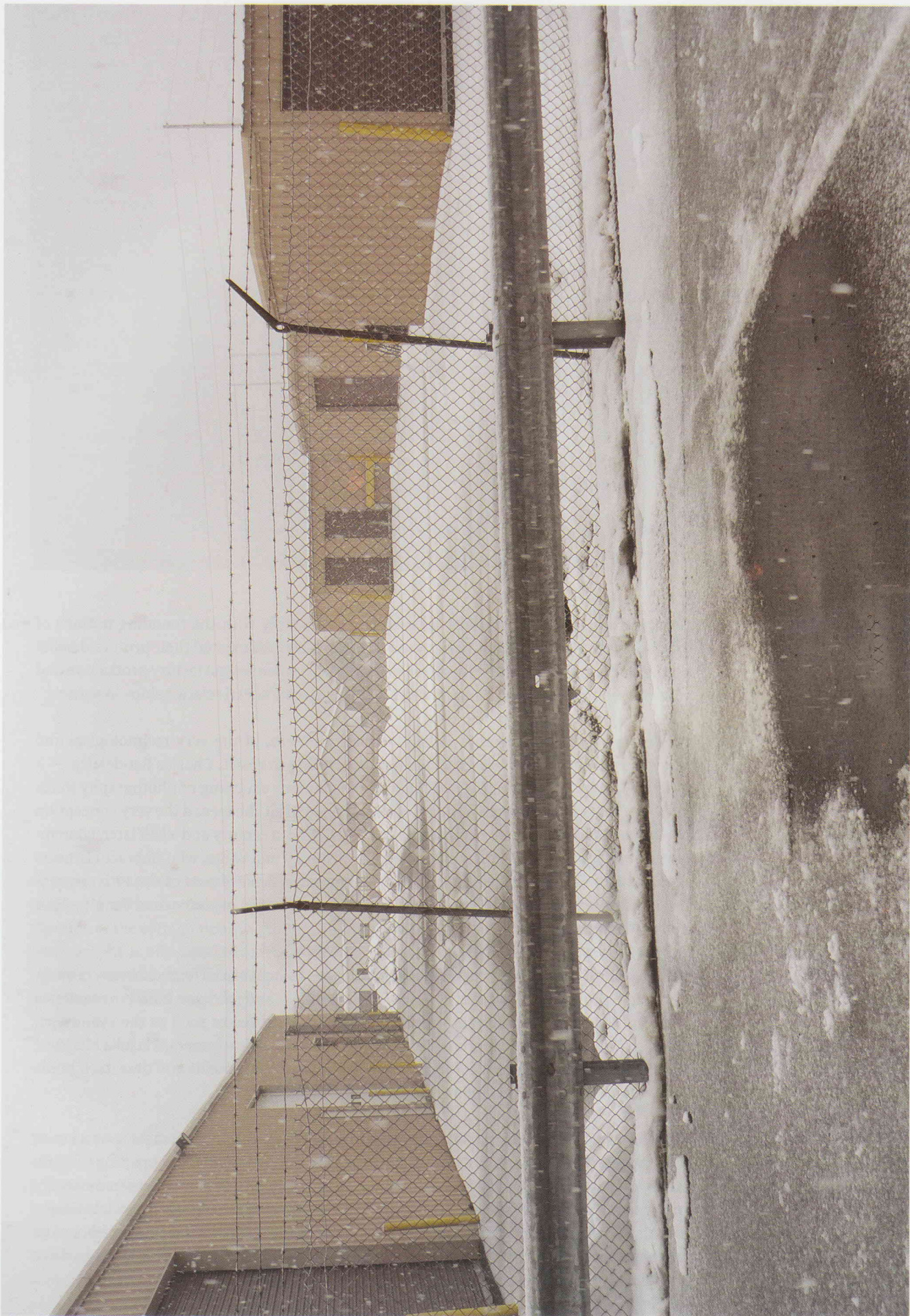
John Dugdale is something of a temporal nomad, a man without a fixed foothold in any century. His longing for a (comparatively) slower pace of life — and of vision itself — manifests itself in his predilection for antiquated photographic processes such as the cyanotype, albumen prints, and long exposures through his large format view camera, à la Julia Margaret Cameron. And yet the inexorable bond between photographic media and time itself binds this work to the current moment.

Kathleen Sweeney's video *Waves* layers images of the eponymous water crashing on a beach with footage of two mysteriously floating young girls. The waves seem to be pulling the girls out to sea, which, for Sweeney, is a beautiful and apt metaphor for the ways that contemporary society constructs and consumes the lives of young women. Embedding the social critique in images that are at once seductive and troubling only strengthens the point she hopes to make — that many of the roles offered to young women today, while just as alluring, offer a similarly bleak future.

THE NEW ROMANTICS QUOTE

BEAUTY IS TRUTH, TRUTH BEAUTY, — THAT IS ALL YE KNOW ON EARTH, AND ALL YE NEED TO KNOW.

JOHN KEATS, "ODE ON A GRECIAN URN"



THE ANTI- ROMANTICS
SAM SEBREN, SELF STORAGE, 2008, C-PRINT, 24 X 36"

THE ANTI- ROMANTICS
ROB PENNER, UNTITLED, 2007, ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINT, 13 X 19"





THE ATTRactions OF CINEMA
JULIANNE SWARTZ, PLACEMENT (FAMILY), 2007, C-PRINT, 14 X 18",
COURTESY MIXED GREENS GALLERY, NYC



THE ATTRactions OF CINEMA
JULIANNE SWARTZ, PLACEMENT (BLUE SKY), 2007, C-PRINT, 14 X 20
1/2", COURTESY MIXED GREENS GALLERY, NYC

Susan Wides is the most specific of these 'New Romantics' in her address of a 19th century precedent. Her *Kaaterskill* series addresses directly the legacy of the Hudson River School painters, who transformed what was in actuality an already blighted industrial landscape into a sublime vision. Wides revisits locations made famous in paintings by Frederick Church, Asher B. Durand, Sanford R. Gifford, and others, manipulating the lens and film back of her 4x5 camera to replicate the way the eye darts from place to place across a landscape, focusing in on certain details while ignoring others. Unlike her 19th century predecessors, she does not edit out inconveniently contemporary details — and given the specificity of the camera's all-devouring gaze, one occasionally encounters a latter-day hiker, a rusted car, or other stark reminders of the reality of our own time in the pictures.

THE ANTI-ROMANTICS

Photography serves as the pre-eminent medium for communications in and the articulation of mass society. The ubiquitous presence of photography in commercial applications (especially advertising and graphic design) makes it an especially tempting target for the photographers in this section. Rather than embrace the pleasures of Romantic form, Joan Barker, Rob Penner, and Sam Sebreu actively seek to deconstruct the normative circuits of desire, as propagated in what the writer Roland Barthes cited as the new bourgeois mythologies — undercutting and/or revealing the seamier side of the (photographic) fetishes generated by commodity culture.

On a trip to Belize Joan Barker noticed a large construction site, a development of new condos on the beach. Surrounding the site was a chain link fence (replete with barbed wire on top), that had been draped with huge plastic scrim, advertising the development, which included enormously enlarged photographs of typically appealing tourist images: chairs on the beach, a diver silhouetted against deep blue water, and others. This use of photography to create a real estate fantasy world, even as the very development itself encroaches on the natural environment (the very reason people enjoy vacationing there to begin with) is re-contextualized — or is it re-re-contextualized? Her photographs of the photographs call attention to the construction of this vision of desire by (in presenting the work in exhibitions) piecing the pictures together in an overt grid of semi-glossy, plastic photographic paper pinned directly to the wall.

Sam Sebreu's deliberately low-res video draws attention to the conventionalized way that many people encounter photography and video everyday. Using a 'disposable' video camera purchased from a local drugstore, he shot video of what must be considered some of the least picturesque scenes imaginable in New York's Columbia and Greene counties — self-storage sheds, tacky roadside advertising, and other choice examples of visual pollution left behind by consumer society. When the camera is returned for processing, Rite Aid helpfully creates a mini-movie by randomly editing together scenes from the tape, compiling a 'Best Moments' video, complete with cheesy, middle of the road music. The contrast between the imagery and the lowest common denominator quality of the Rite Aid packaging of it serves as a stark rebuke of the complicity between photographic media and the throw-away consumer world we live in.

In a related vein, Rob Penner's series *Remains of the Day* is evidence of his fascination with the garbage being left behind on a construction site near his home. Stopping by at the end of the day, he photographed individual bits of the detritus (leftover lunch containers, soft drink cans, cigarette packets, and so on), later processing them in Photoshop to throw them into an exaggerated, almost cinematic lighting. Like a celebrity unsuspectingly caught in the flare of a paparazzo's flash, the glamour of these consumed packages quickly fades with the realization that we are looking at the end point of the cycle — at garbage.



THE ATTRactions OF CINEMA QUOTE

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FILM LIE NOT ONLY IN THE MANNER IN WHICH MAN PRESENTS HIMSELF TO MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT BUT ALSO IN THE MANNER IN WHICH, BY MEANS OF THIS APPARATUS, MAN CAN REPRESENT HIS ENVIRONMENT...THE CAMERA INTRODUCES US TO UNCONSCIOUS OPTICS AS DOES PSYCHOANALYSIS TO UNCONSCIOUS IMPULSES.

WALTER BENJAMIN,

THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

THE ATTRactions OF CINEMA

Still photography begat cinema. It can also be argued that in return, motion pictures revolutionized the way we encounter still photographic images. The ubiquity of the moving image seen every day via movies, television, and YouTube has reshaped the horizon against which photography itself is understood. One of the more intriguing effects of cinema has been the folding of the subjective into the objective, and vice versa — what film theorists have called ‘suture,’ meaning the way we seem to stitch ourselves into the story being presented. Peerna, Penner, Swartz, and Wides have found ways to foreground the cinematic influences of what Susan Sontag once called ‘the ecosystem of images,’ and in the process bring to light the complexities and complicities of contemporary subjectivity.

Jaanika Peerna’s *Shoreline 2008* is a single-channel video made up of a single, extended shot of the urban river of life, as seen reflected in the highly polished hood of a car parked along Fifth Avenue. Peerna flips the image, creating a momentarily disorienting experience of the reflection, and at a certain point shifts gears and runs the recording backwards, creating a little eddy in time.

Julianne Swartz does not identify herself primarily as a photographer and has produced not only photographs but also sculptural works that invoke the original technological source of the medium, the camera obscura. Placement plays with displacements of light, setting up situations where the world reflects back on itself, a recursive play with that old idea of the ‘mirror with a memory.’ Like mirrors themselves, her images interweave the seemingly opposite poles of objective and subjective, inviting us to comprehend simultaneously both the gulf and the connection between the two, as it is sculpted in space and time by light.

Rob Penner’s *Vantage Point* series plays on the ambiguous, twinned position of the photographer/viewer. These seemingly random images of people in a park-like setting, viewed from on high, at first blush look like frames from a movie. Looking at them individually, the God’s eye view they present eventually turns troubling — who am I, as I watch these people? A peeping tom? A sniper? The possible readings of these images seem to multiply exponentially, the longer you look at them.

The Mannahatta series by Susan Wides takes in sweepingly cinematic views of the city, inspired in part by Paul Strand’s famous film, *Manhatta* (1921), a silent film showing the day-to-day life of New York City. Again the views are from up high, and, as in her Kaaterskill landscapes, she manipulates the film plane of the camera to pull sections of the image in and out of focus. At first glance, this manipulation creates the impression of looking at a detailed model set, a feeling that is only partly shaken on closer observation. *Mannahatta* raises the question: at what point does the cinematic framing of experience eclipse our belief in perception itself?

By bending perception through the selective deployment of strategies such as framing, focus, and shifts in scale or perspective, the viewer is challenged to make sense of the results. It is my hope that these ‘lies,’ taken together, will help to reveal a larger truth about who and what we are now, in a world that is so fundamentally altered and constructed by the photographic image.

The Camera Always Lies, CPW’s 2008 Regional Triennial of the Photographic Arts was originally presented as an exhibition curated by Beth E. Wilson at the Center for Photography at Woodstock from June 14 – August 17, 2008.

The Camera Always Lies : Photographers' Discussion

The editors of PQ invited curator **BETH E. WILSON** to conduct a roundtable discussion with the artists featured in *The Camera Always Lies*. This dialog conducted through emails and held in May 2008 served as a forum for these nine artists to address both the concept of the photographic 'lie' but also their own work as seen in the context of *The Camera Always Lies*.

As I wrote in the preceding article, the camera 'always lies', but maybe it's worth wondering whether it's possible for the camera to speak truthfully in the first place. What's the relationship between photography and truth, as you see it?

JOAN BARKER

To say that the camera or photography always lies may be a little unfair. Images produced through the lens certainly represent the subjective perception of the photographer, so though the image may not be a lie per se, it clearly represents only a single perspective. Cropping, printing, editing, juxtaposition and presentation also transform the image. The 'lie,' then, of this recorded observation continues, as each viewer's response and interpretation is influenced by his or her own ideas.

JULIANNE SWARTZ

The camera leaves room for a constructed, subjective 'truth.' I see photography as entirely subjective, the subject and circumstances around the subject are composed, and context is everything.

JOHN DUGDALE

Since everybody sees everything completely differently anyway, there's nothing less truthful than a photograph of somebody. Two people can look at the same person and see somebody different, you can look at the same flower, and it looks different. So there is no

'truthful' or 'untruthful,' there are so many variables to every situation, filtered through human experience and mind. How could it be any less or more of a lie?

SUSAN WIDES

How could it be [purely objective]? A chemical in the retina converts light into electrical impulses that the brain interprets as vision. And the partiality of photography is built into the mechanics of the camera, the lens, the light sensitive material.

When an assistant on one of my shoots sees the contact sheets, they are always surprised — as the site doesn't look anything like what they had seen there. I love to transmit the experience of seeing what I see in my mind's eye, but which may not be perceived by the naked eye.

KATHLEEN SWEENEY

Ever since the invention of photography and film viewers have been grappling with its inherent *trompe l'oeil*, its trickery. It is no accident that one of the early masters of French cinema, George Méliès, started out as a magician. The art of rendering the natural world onto a photographic page, a cinema screen or a pixilated LCD surface emerges always as a form of magical mastery, a series of inventive steps toward an illusion of reproduced reality that we continually navigate as consumers of visual fantasy. That a two-dimensional medium can draw in our attention and engagement at a level akin to hypnosis means this lying art form captivates another form of our collective imagination beyond so-called day-to-day reality. It lies, and we love to comply in suspended disbelief.

Why do you think we (as a culture) have such high expectations of photographic media? No one would think of putting questions to a painting or drawing in the way that we do to photography. Why do you think people seem so ready to suspend their disbelief in the presence of a photographic image?

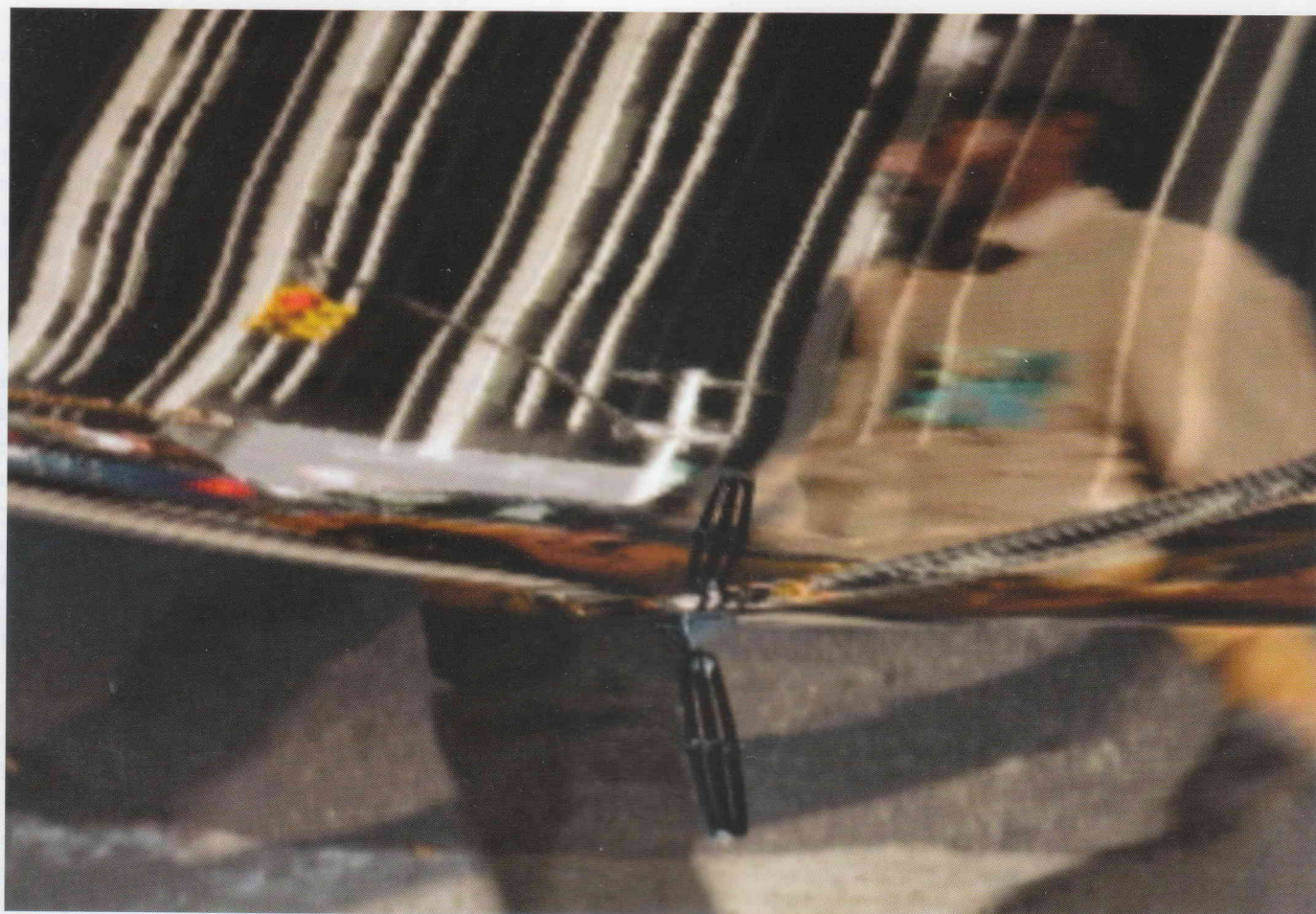
JOHN DUGDALE

I look to history for the answer to these questions. When the daguerreotype came out, it was called a 'mirror of life'. I think that one of the miracles at the time for people was to see an exact likeness of themselves on this little mirrored jewel that they're holding in a case. Maybe over the years, photography has been understood as this perfect representation. I think that people expect extreme clarity and perfect representation in a photograph because of the way it started. Painting is filtered through somebody's eye and hand, right through their body onto the canvas. A photograph is meant to be a mirror, in most people's understanding.

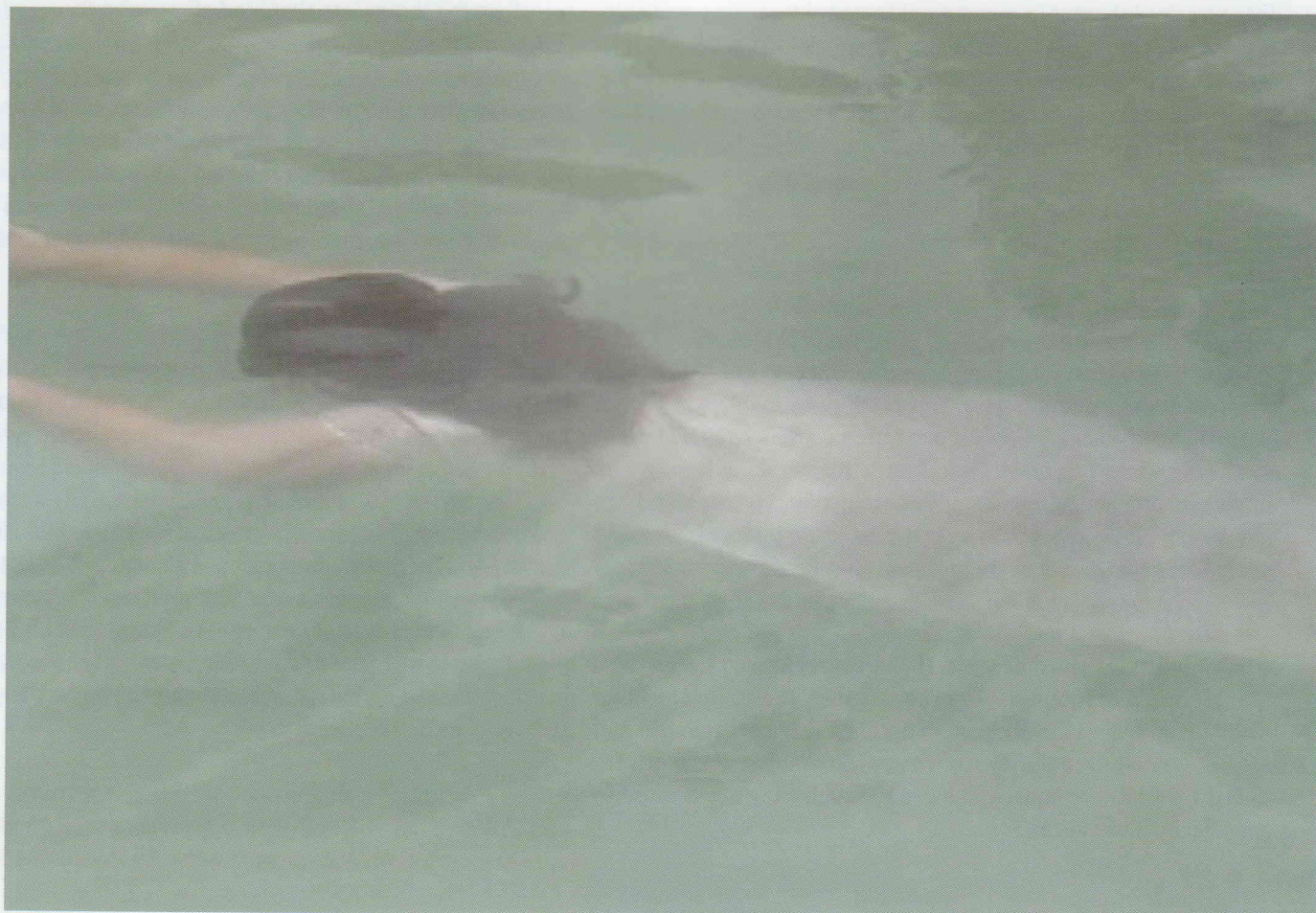
ROB PENNER

It speaks to the concept that in photography we 'take' a picture while a painter 'makes' a painting. The difference between the two is where I believe the controversy is. We take a photo with a device that is familiar and prevalent to society in general. There is a sense that it's easy and anyone can do it. On the other hand, making a painting or a sculpture or the like, requires a trained or inherent talent. The familiarity with cameras and photography in the consumer

THE ATTRACTIONS OF CINEMA
JAANIKA PEERNA, STILL FROM SHORELINE, 2008, DVD / VIDEO



THE NEW ROMANTICS
KATHLEEN SWEENEY, STILL FROM WAVES, 2005, DVD / VIDEO



world has, in my opinion, diminished the essence of the photograph as art to the average viewer. Familiarity breeds contempt.

Photographs in their essential form are evidence of a moment. The image is what's left behind after the moment transpires. It can never be reproduced in its truest sense.

JAANIKA PEERNA

What is special about photography is that the magic of the particular light at the moment the photographic image is captured. The image becomes uniquely concrete through the play of the light in the situation. There are many ways to frame, edit and change the image, but the essence of the moment when and where the image was taken still remains.

ION ZUPCU

To a certain extent, I think photography is the art form that is closest to reality. The subject, in my case, is what it is — a small strip of black paper that exists, and can be seen in the image. It begins as an 'objective' image, but then I start composing/staging, choosing the lighting, angle, and many other tricks.

JOAN BARKER

Photographs are sometimes used in forensics to document reality. Consequently, many people expect photography to tell some sort of objective truth. This may be part of an historical perception that just because a mechanical device was used to record the image, the photographer's emotions and thoughts were not part of the process. But just as an eyewitness's testimony may be distorted due to the inaccuracies inherent in memory, photography can be unreliable. The camera's eye is physically limited. In spite of this acknowledged lack of accuracy, we continue to rely on both.

Is there a measurable difference between images found 'in the wild' — reflections in water or in windows, for example — and those that are photographically fixed? Is there a qualitative difference between these things that interests you?

JAANIKA PEERNA

To me this is a most intriguing question. Once an image is photographed or recorded, I can transport it. But if I could transport an original, 'wild' image, I would much rather do that. Even if I look at a reflection in water or in glass, I am already taking it out of its original context by calling attention to it. I point towards it and say, "look at this." I control the way it is viewed. So images in the wild are more open. Once they are captured, they become more defined.

ROB PENNER

In my mind, there's no difference. I believe that all images, regardless of their origin or intention, have equal value. That said, I feel that 'wild' images, as you call them, maintain a more organic feel and require less intervention by the artist/photographer. Fixed or produced images have equal value even though they are created to specifically illustrate an idea.

SUSAN WIDES

I like to keep the viewer aware of the lens as its view reflects the way we experience memory, history and oneself. The altered image [seen in my work] offers an accurate view of the reality of our world today. I use the urban and natural landscape as a palette from which I derive images and recompose them to reflect on the significance of images themselves. I invite the viewer to join me at the moment of discovery when perception suddenly changes and the recognizable and familiar image is reimagined.

JOHN DUGDALE

A long time ago I stopped encountering 'stuff' in the world. [Fifteen years ago, Dugdale lost most of his sight from an AIDS related stroke. — BEW] Things that are fixed in my mind, what makes them appear are words, or relationships. When people hear that I have a visual impairment, they say "how can you be a photographer?" Because the first thing that people think about in general when you say that you are a photographer, is not about setting up tableaux in the studio, they think about walking around outside and catching something beautiful. That's clearly not what I am able to do, nor did I ever really want to do that. People automatically assume that you go outside and look for things, rather than looking inside, and then making them. I use the camera like a canvas, to create the stuff that inspires me, looking at subjects like my mother (who's like a novel), or at flowers. People say that daffodils don't really smell, but I'm not sure what they're smelling, because to me they smell like fresh air. I can still see them in a blur with my eye, but when I sniff the thing, or I hold it, it becomes much more real. The photographs are my way of transforming things into that kind of experience.

JOAN BARKER

Images in the wild flow, change and move on. I make photographs of a place and time because I am moved by the truth of that decisive moment. The photograph fails if I am not present in intuitive ways. If some elements of that moment of truth remain through the reproduction process, there is hope that the photograph will provoke thoughtful response.

JULIANNE SWARTZ

The fleetingness of the event in real time makes it both more and less vulnerable. I would say the camera allows me to alter a familiar reality to create a constructed, unfamiliar 'reality.'

SAM SEBREN

There is no substitute for nature, all of its beauty and violence included. And there is no improving upon nature by photographing it or painting it. I question separating ourselves from nature through art. It removes the actual experience by another level. However, depicting our increasing separation from nature through art may be educational. I highly recommend nature over 'art' any day. Even stormy, cloudy, freezing days.

How has your work been inflected/ informed by the mass media applications of photographic media? Does this larger cultural

'ecosystem' of images — Walter Benjamin's essay, 'Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' which we're now living with a vengeance — mean certain things are possible for you artistically, and others not?

ION ZUPCU

We definitely see more images today of other artists' work, which tend to be more or less known artists. This makes it easier to grow mentally as an artist these days — expanding the things we have to say after becoming aware of others people's work. The trends are shorter, more frequent, and more...spectacular. Of course, the other side of the coin is that we are growing more superficial, from seeing so many things.

SAM SEBREN

Lately I have been enjoying the ability to collaborate and communicate more easily with other artists via computers. Combinations of old analogue and new digital media are also very exciting. But every photographer I've talked to feels that nothing has replaced the gorgeously rich depth of silver gelatin prints made from film. It's sort of sad that people have replaced the idea of quality with speed. Is it good if everyone is taking pictures of everything with their cell phones instead of reacting to a government that is busy trying to take over the world and screwing up the global economy in the process? Should we even be wondering about theories in art right now? Most people are sleeping while the most disparate economic gap in the history of the world is steamrolling right through our homes and communities. This is the most important time for artists to help people understand this through poetic, poignant, clear work. Photography is a vital form of communication — lies, evidence, art, or otherwise, but we must be aware to keep in mind what is advertising, what is propaganda, and what is art. With the new technologies now, though, I see kids using everything they've got to make art in phenomenally new and creative ways. I see people able to make movies and show movies without any corporate control. I see people making their own rules, ignoring dogmas and definitions in these wildly uncertain and unlimited times. That is what excites me.

JOAN BARKER

I became fascinated with seeing the beach right next to the large advertising banners for condos on the beach; seeing large, cheaply produced photographic scenes displayed side by side, outdoors, in the very environment which is being offered for sale, and simultaneously destroyed by the development. Behind these reassuring, tourist-friendly scenes, the natural habitat and fragile ecosystems are being destroyed. Looking at my reassembled panels of plastic prints of all this, the viewer will be able to choose a truth: vacation home, destruction of the environment, real estate investment, or serene beach? So I'm using photography here to draw out the implications of that other, overtly commercial, use of the medium, in a way that opens it for the viewer to decide [what it all means].

KATHLEEN SWEENEY

Benjamin's assertion that the reproduced image lacks the "aura" of the original may have been true when paintings found their way into print, but the light-based media of film often locates the aura in the

simplest of forms by establishing that visual kinship. I don't always see like a camera, but once that shift occurs, I enter into another form of meditative intimacy with my surroundings. It's essentially an ability to frame, to construct an image in snapshot, to roll tape in my head... the ability to see like a camera allows access to a recognizable form of visual sublime that is very personalized in its capture.

JAANIKA PEERNA

When confronted with mass media imagery, I tend to think, "I can't get as flashy as that, I can't go so fast," so instead I slow things down, try to get under the skin of things, and dig into the depths of whatever I am filming. I hardly move the camera. I ask the viewer to spend about six minutes watching a moving image in which most of the changes are quite subtle, and there is no narrative. I point my video camera towards carefully chosen ordinary phenomena, such as water moving around a rock, or a reflection on a car, and record long takes without moving the camera in the hope that something essential about the object reveals itself. I'm not selling anything, I'm not telling a story. I want to draw you inward and also make you more alert.

JOHN DUGDALE

I'm actually shying away from that [mass media]. There's a very beloved picture of my mother and I, where she's holding me against her chest. It was printed in my first book. I went to Italy and showed that picture, and a woman wanted to know if it would be ok to use it to make billboards about Alzheimer's. It so took me aback, I had to think about it—I always want to help with anything I can, but in the end I said no. I couldn't imagine seeing that intimate picture of my mom blown up, by the highway all over Italy. It seemed to devalue the picture, not in a monetary way, but it took away the intimacy of it. I want to stay on the other side of the superfast cutting of images on TV in commercials and videos, and the omnipresent barrage of images. It makes me cringe to think of being a part of that.

So you're a conscientious objector?

JOHN DUGDALE

Yes, very much so. But I don't think that people cannot participate—you can't divorce your art from the current moment completely. I grew up on Bugs Bunny, the Munsters, and every other thing that was on TV then. Once that stuff gets into your mind, it's permanently in there, you can't erase it.

It's all really relative, though. People in the 19th century were excited to go 6 miles an hour on the railroad. You look at the work from then, and it's no wonder it's so quiet and peaceful [compared to today]. I am consciously trying to keep that alive. That's what I love about using all these old processes. It's about seeing more slowly.

ABSTRACTION / FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
 ION ZUPCU, MARCH 8, 2004, TONED SILVER GELATIN PRINT, 14 X 14",
 ION ZUPCU, MARCH 6, 2004, TONED SILVER GELATIN PRINT, 14 X 14",
 ION ZUPCU, MARCH 2, 2006, TONED SILVER GELATIN PRINT, 14 X 14",
 COURTESY CLAMPART, NYC

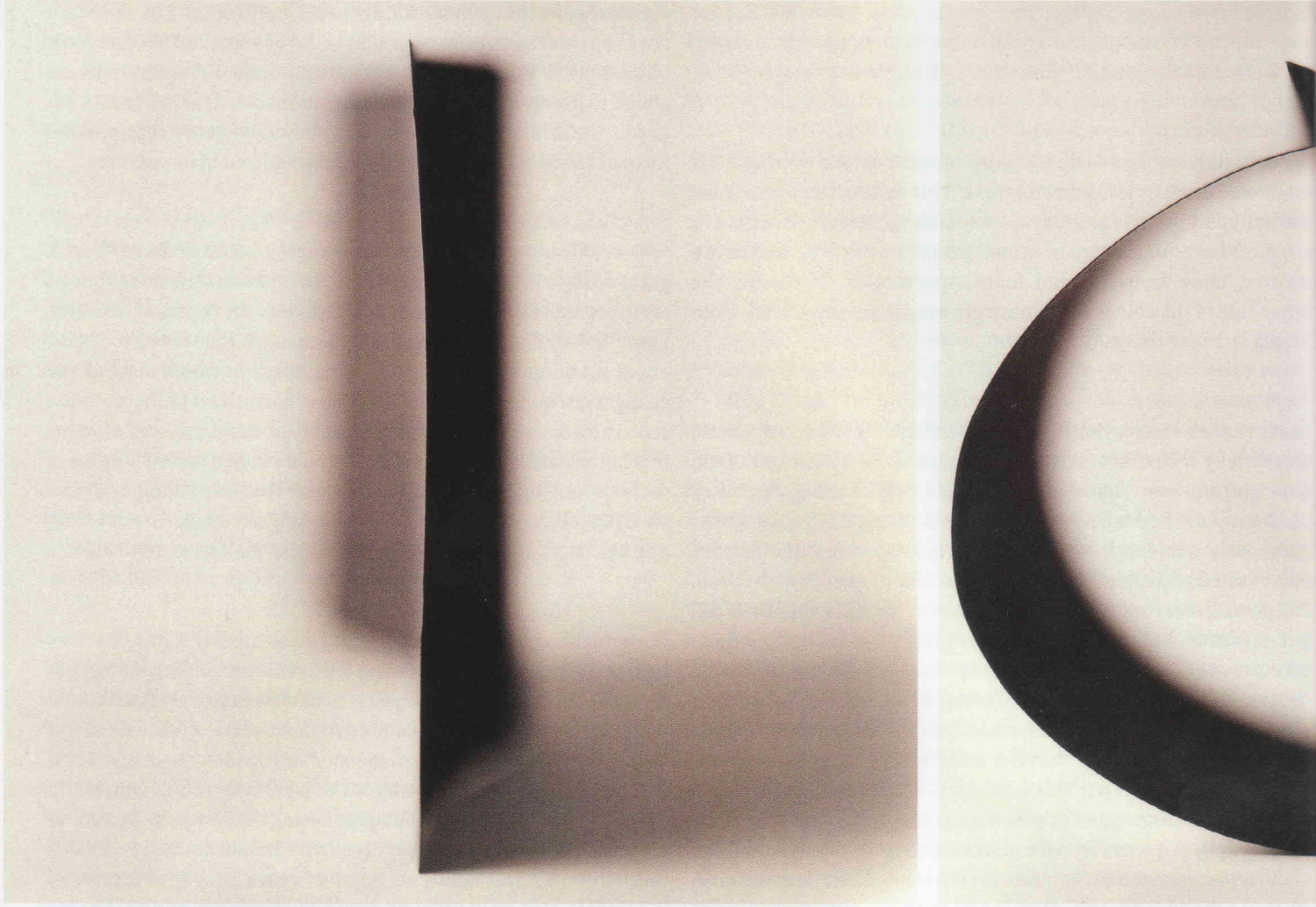
BIOGRAPHIES

BETH E. WILSON IS AN ART HISTORIAN, CRITIC, AND CURATOR. SHE TEACHES ART HISTORY AT SUNY NEW PALTZ, INCLUDING COURSES ON THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE HISTORY OF FILM. IN 2005-06, WILSON SERVED AS INTERIM CURATOR AT THE SAMUEL DORSKY MUSEUM OF ART AT SUNY NEW PALTZ WHERE SHE ORGANIZED THE EXHIBITION THE MATERIAL IMAGE: SURFACE AND SUBSTANCE IN PHOTOGRAPHY. SHE HAS BEEN THE RESIDENT ART CRITIC FOR CHRONOGRAM MAGAZINE SINCE 1999 AND WAS THE CURATOR OF THE 2007 KINGSTON SCULPTURE BIENNIAL.

JOAN BARKER IS AN INDEPENDENT PHOTOGRAPHER, ARTIST AND EDUCATOR. SHE COMPLETED HER MFA IN PHOTOGRAPHY AT SUNY NEW PALTZ WHERE SHE HAS TAUGHT FOR OVER TEN YEARS. JOAN IS THE RECIPIENT OF A NYFA FELLOWSHIP, THE VILLAGE VOICE PHOTOGRAPHY GRANT AND TWO PHOTOGRAPHERS' FELLOWSHIP FUND AWARDS FROM THE CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY AT WOODSTOCK. HER PHOTOGRAPHS HAVE BEEN FEATURED NATIONALLY IN BOTH SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS AS WELL AS FEATURED IN NUMEROUS PUBLICATIONS.
 > WWW.JBARKERIMAGES.COM

IN 1993 JOHN DUGDALE, HAVING ACHIEVED A SUCCESSFUL COMMERCIAL CAREER, SUFFERED AN AIDS RELATED STROKE. AFTER MONTHS IN A HOSPITAL OFTEN NEAR DEATH, HE RECOVERED – BUT CMV RETINITIS TOOK ALL OF HIS SIGHT, EXCEPT FOR 20% OF PERIPHERAL VISION OF HIS LEFT EYE. TOTAL BLINDNESS CONTINUES TO THREATEN HIM. DUGDALE CHANGED HIS METHOD OF WORKING, BECOMING A VISUALLY IMPAIRED PHOTOGRAPHER. BY USING AN ANTIQUE LARGE 8X10 FORMAT CAMERA, WHOSE NEGATIVES CAN BE CONTACT-PRINTED ONTO HAND-COATED PHOTOSENSITIVE PAPER, JOHN WAS ABLE TO AVOID THE IMPOSSIBLE DARKROOM PROCESS. HIS PHOTOGRAPHS ARE IN THE COLLECTION OF METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART AND HE HAS HAD MORE THAN TWENTY SOLO EXHIBITIONS.
 > WWW.JOHNUGDALE.NET

JAANIKA PEERNA WORKS AT THE CROSSROADS OF DIGITAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA, OFTEN DEALING WITH THE THEMES OF WATER, SIMPLICITY AND SILENCE. SHE HOLDS AN MFA IN INTER-MEDIA DESIGN FROM SUNY NEW PALTZ, AND SHE HAS WORKED AS TEACHING ARTIST AT DIA BEACON AND THE VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES PROJECT OF THE SOROS FOUNDATION. PEERNA HAS HAD SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN NEW YORK AND IN TALLINN, ESTONIA, HER NATIVE COUNTRY. IN 2005 PEERNA WAS INCLUDED IN THE PUBLICATION COMPONENT OF CPW'S INAUGURAL TRIENNIAL. UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE SOLO EXHIBIT AT 60 NORTH GALLERY IN BEACON, NY AND PARTICIPATION IN A GROUP SHOW NEW AT GALERIE LAVIGNES-BASTILLE, PARIS, FRANCE
 > WWW.JAANIKAPEERNA.NET





ROB PENNER STUDIED PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS IN NYC. AFTER LEAVING SVA, ROB BEGAN A COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY CAREER SPECIALIZING IN FASHION AND ADVERTISING. AROUND 1990, ROB MOVED INTO GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PRODUCTION EVENTUALLY SPENDING THE MAJORITY OF HIS CAREER MANAGING THE PRODUCTION OF ADVERTISING MATERIALS. THIS PAST YEAR PENNER DECIDED TO CLOSE THAT CHAPTER OF HIS LIFE AND MAKE THE COMMITMENT TO HIS ART. > WWW.ROBPENNER.COM

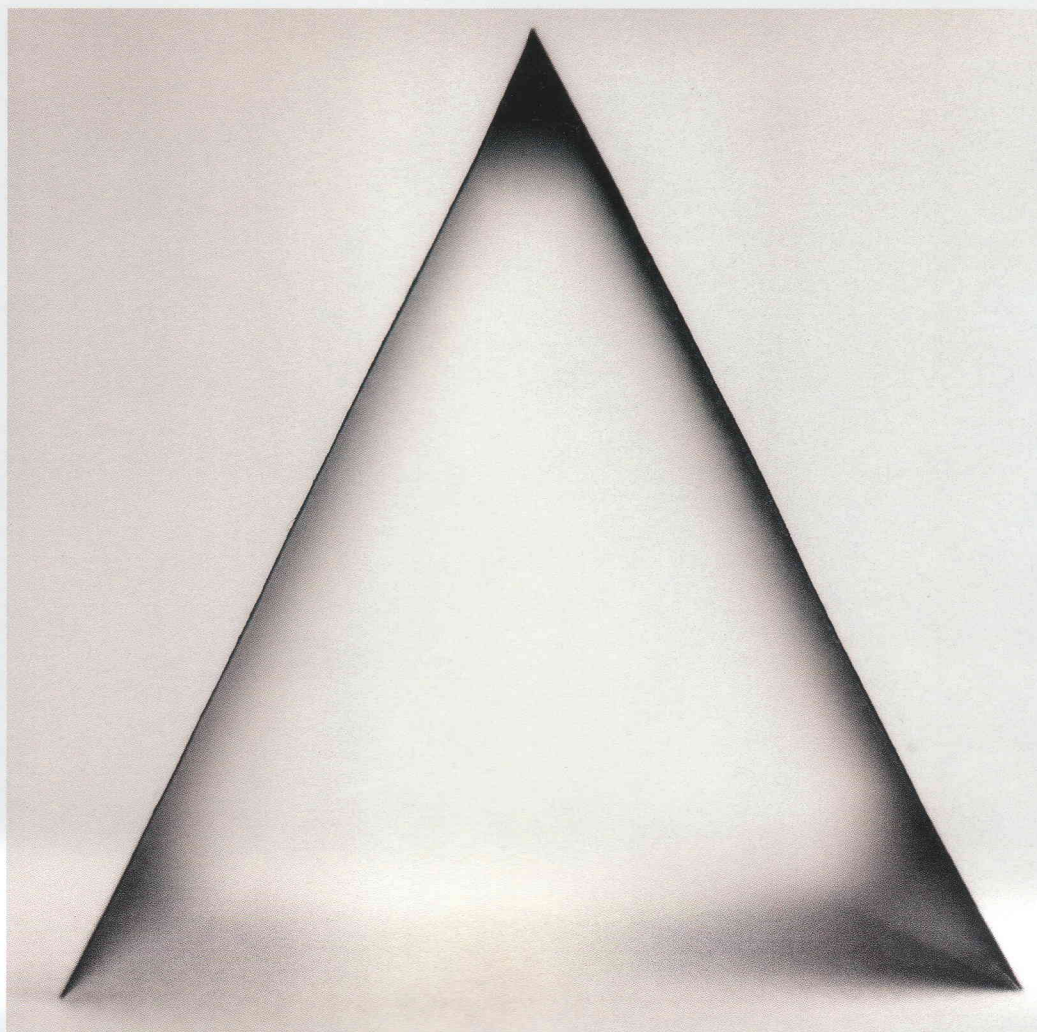
SAM SEBREN IS A MULTI-MEDIA ARTIST BASED IN ATHENS, NY. HE HAS HAD NUMEROUS SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS IN NEW YORK AND IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA. SEBREN'S MOST RECENT EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE A PERFORMANCE/ACTION PIECE FOR THE WHITNEY BIENNIAL AS WELL AS GROUP SHOWS TIME'S UP! AND AMERICA FOR SALE AT PROTEST SPACE IN NEW YORK CITY.

JULIANNE SWARTZ RECEIVED HER MFA IN SCULPTURE FROM BARD COLLEGE IN 2002. SHE HAS EXHIBITED HER WORK IN ONE-PERSON SHOWS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS SOME IN THE UK, CHINA, GERMANY, AND IRELAND AND INCLUDED IN EXHIBITIONS AS SUCH INSTITUTIONS AS TATE LIVERPOOL, WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW MUSEUM, P.S.1/MOMA, AND SCULPTURE CENTER. SHE IS THE RECIPIENT OF NUMEROUS AWARDS AND GRANTS INCLUDING MOST RECENTLY, NYFA'S ARTIST FELLOWSHIP IN SCULPTURE AND THE P.S. 1 MUSEUM'S NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIO PROGRAM.

KATHLEEN SWEENEY IS A MEDIA ARTIST AND WRITER. SHE HOLDS A B.A. IN FRENCH LITERATURE FROM NEW YORK UNIVERSITY AND A M.A. IN INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS FROM SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY. OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS, SWEENEY'S AWARD-WINNING VIDEO ART HAS SHOWN AT SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST FILM FESTIVAL; DENVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL; WALKER ART CENTER; THE KNITTING FACTORY; AND ZENTRUM FÜR KUNST UND MEDIEN TECHNOLOGIE, GERMANY. SHE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A BOOK ABOUT TEENAGE GIRLS, REPRESENTATION AND MEDIA ENTITLED MAIDEN USA: GIRL ICONS COME OF AGE. (NEW YORK: PETER LANG PUBLISHING, 2008). > WWW.VIDEO-TEXT.COM

SUSAN WIDES EXHIBITS HER WORK REGULARLY AT KIM FOSTER GALLERY IN NEW YORK CITY. HER WORK HAS BEEN FEATURED IN FIFTEEN ONE-PERSON SHOWS AND OVER SIXTY GROUP EXHIBITIONS IN THE US AND EUROPE. TEXTS ABOUT HER WORK HAVE APPEARED IN ART IN AMERICA, ARTFORUM, NEW YORK TIMES, NEW YORKER, VILLAGE VOICE, AMONG OTHERS. SHE CONTRIBUTES TO MAGAZINES SUCH AS HARPERS, DOUBLE TAKE, ARCHITECTURE, 2WICE, AND NEW YORK.

ION ZUPCU WAS BORN IN ROMANIA; HE NOW LIVES AND HAS A STUDIO IN HOPEWELL JUNCTION, NEW YORK. HE GRADUATED FROM THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHERS, BUCHAREST IN 1983. ZUPCU'S WORK HAS BEEN EXHIBITED IN ROMANIA, ENGLAND, HONG KONG AS WELL AS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. > WWW.IONZUPCU.RO



PHOTOGRAPHERS' DISCUSSION

