

Today, nearly 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion are without basic sanitation. And it is through water, as the images in this collection illustrate, that we are seeing early and devastating manifestations of one of the greatest threats our world faces – climate change.

Climate change is an all encompassing threat which effects virtually all aspects of human life and well-being. It is a threat to health, for a warmer world is one in which waterborne diseases can propagate and spread faster. It imperils the world's food supply, as rising temperatures and prolonged drought render fertile areas unfit for grazing and crops. In turn, it is a threat to social and political stability as it has the potential to cause heightened competition for resources, setting in motion potentially destabilizing tensions and migrations, especially in fragile states or volatile regions. And at its worst, it is quite simply a threat to life itself as rising sea levels could submerge island nations and flood entire coastal areas, putting millions of people at risk.

The world's most vulnerable communities – from Afghanistan to Bolivia to Myanmar – already struggling to survive are now witnessing the impact of climate change on a daily basis. As an international community we have the responsibility to act. We must help these communities adapt and cope with their changed and changing environments.

It is my hope that the Prix Pictet, the world's first prize dedicated to photography and sustainability, will help to deepen understanding of the changes taking place in our world and raise public awareness about the urgency of taking preventive action.

Each artist has addressed the environmental and social challenges we face in their own personal way. The result is a series of powerful images, which seek to confront us with the scale of the threat we face and to inspire governments, business, – and all of us as individuals – to step up to the challenge and support change for a sustainable world.

Kofi Annan
Honorary President
Prix Pictet

Prix Pictet: The Issues

Leo Johnson

Climate change, flooding, Darfur. What reaction do these words induce? A moment of cognitive dissonance – static before we refocus on the football. And this looks set to be the status quo. The implications of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report are fairly clear: to avoid exceeding the two degree tipping point beyond which feedback loops may make climate change spiral out of control, we need a radical reconfiguration of our economies, one that will reduce emissions by as much as 80 percent of their 1990 levels by 2050. For the US, this represents a decrease in per capita emissions of more than 90 percent. Are individuals going to change their behaviour on this scale? Are they going to elect governments with a platform to force changes they themselves do not want to make? The answer is not obviously yes.

The Prix Pictet is born of a flicker of hope – that photographs have the force to break through this barrier. That they have the power, as Gro Harlem Brundtland put it in her remarks at the launch of the prize, “to move us and shake us”. To take the sustainability statistic – validated, econometrically correct, but devoid of emotional force – and make it something that moves us to action.

Yet the reality is different. The effect of the sustainability image, still or moving, is often not to move. Burned villages, charred corpses, malnourished children – these are the photographic analogues of the climate change statistic. On nipresent and yet unseen, their power is less to move us than to numb us. How do you reverse that? The aim of the photographs in this collection is simple: to apply art to counter this anaesthesia; to take the core issues around water and to reframe them; to reveal the lives that are impacted by water; and the impacts on water of these lives; to give these issues a visual expression that engages us.

In David Maisel's *Terminal Mirage*, the point of entry for this engagement, paradoxically, is abstraction. Step one is pleasure; the formalist enjoyment of oblongs of green and cream, shapes that are defined but which have no definition.

Step two is betrayal. The black capillary that seeps across the image transmits to us, like an optic nerve, a discordant message. This doesn't feel abstract. This is particular. This is a man-made landscape, transmuting only in its toxicity.

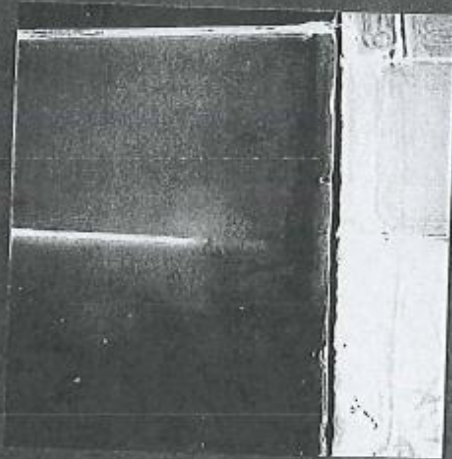
Step three is incrimination. Whose toxicity? The residues of whose consumption? *Terminal Mirage* is oblique about location and silent about the nature of the contaminants. The impact is subtle. No causes ruled out. The particular becomes a universal. It is a moment of Aristotelian recognition. We do this. This is the product of our desires.

Step four is examination. The problem is almost logical. How can we, sentient enough to feel for colour and shape, be somehow insensible to our fabrication of ecological collapse? In framing this contradiction, Maisel forces us to reframe our mental landscape. He bleeds impurities across the boundaries of our self-perception, shifting us from detached observer to implicated and unaccepting participant in what we see. It locates us as individuals, in Maisel's terms, on a “vast map of our own undoing”. It is a moment of recognition to which the logical response at the psychological and ecosystem levels is catharsis – cleansing.

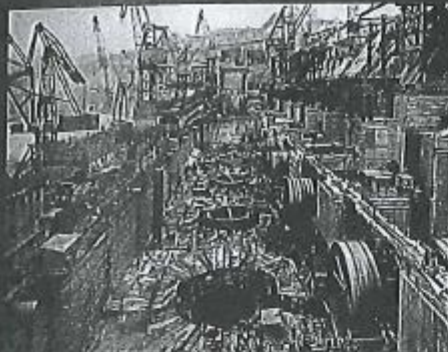
Djibril Sy's image stands in antithesis to *Terminal Mirage*. Underpinning its power is the apparent absence of form – a family snapshot of snorkelling in the sunshine. Except the snorkel mask has no glass, and it's half off his nose. And the water is a café au lait coloured confection of runoff and faecal matter.

Sy has taken the topic of water contamination, the photographic staple of the development report, and provided us with a visual hook. These aren't the boy's goggles. They are someone else's. Someone, probably, who goes on holiday, wears the goggles for a day of snorkelling, then leaves them behind in the hotel room. Someone, in other words, who may as well be us. The fact is simple. He is wearing our goggles, and so we see through his eyes. We see, for the first time, what he sees. It is engagement of the viewer by identification in opposition to Maisel's engagement by self-indictment. The goggles act as a hook that catches us and draws us in – not by the eyeball but by the throat – to the flooded slums of Dakar, Cairo and every one of the world's coastal megacities, home collectively to an estimated 640 million people, and where climate change now threatens flooding and endemic waterborne disease.

Burtynsky's *Dam #6* is a picture of a cause whose impact is to make us understand an effect. The proposition is simple. The scale of the water displaced upstream will be proportional to the scale of the dam. It is by showing us the nature of the dam downstream, the intricacy of its intestines, the crane-dwarfing walls of concrete, that he evokes in the viewer's imagination what cannot otherwise be photographically captured – the sum of social and environmental consequences that result from a reservoir that is 600 kilometres long, and 185 metres deep, rising up behind a wall 23 kilometres wide.



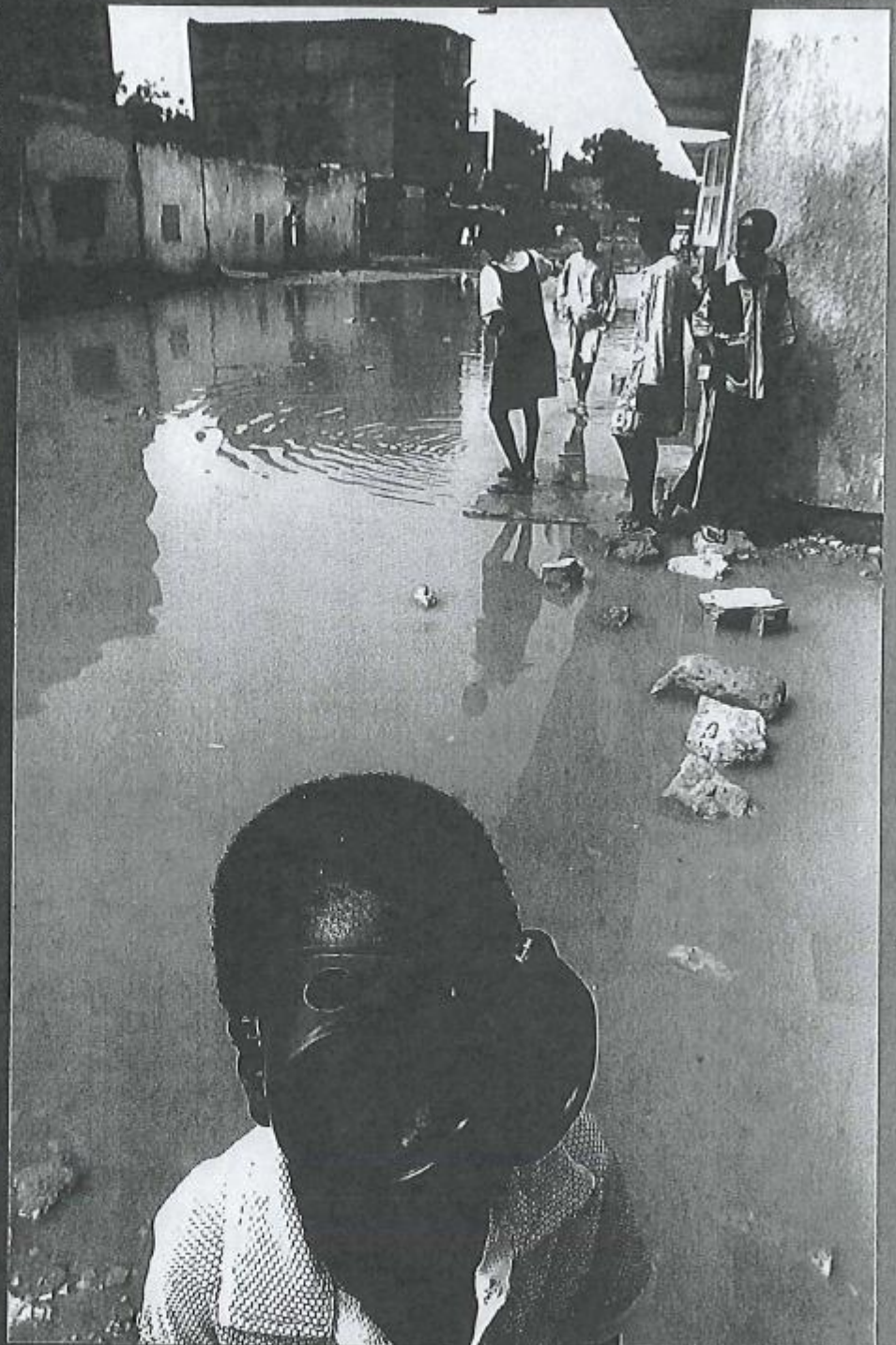
David Maisel
Terminal Mirage 10
Series: Terminal Mirage
2009 Great Salt Lake, Utah, USA



The composition of the image is the composition of the state. Head on, symmetric, apersonal – the naturalist presentation of a man-made phenomenon because the state has no need to spin; because the state can determine that the costs are outweighed by the benefits, that the impacts on 1.2 million lives can be quantified like for like, and offset against the economic benefits of 18,000 megawatts of power.

Because the state, in short, can control. The series presents no overt judgement on this assumption. Yet it explores it. The technique, large format, creates tension with the neutrality of the composition. It is only in the details which the format reveals that we catch a glimpse of the imbalance of social costs and economic benefits. Across the *Three Gorges* series the multi-ton slabs of concrete revealed in the dam are presented as visual counterparts, mega-scale echoes, of the bricks of the resettled villages. Parallel in function, parallel in form, yet there are distinctions that this parallel surfaces. One represents construction, the other deconstruction; one symbolizes a financial order emerging, the other a social and environmental order destroyed. One depicts centrally controlled precision execution, the other villagers who are untrained, equipped only with their hands, and paid to dismantle their own homes, their deadline – the arrival of the water.

Benoit Aquin presents us with a pastoral idyll – Wordsworth. But with one detail wrong: there's no water, and the sheep are brown. At the literal level, Aquin documents the Chinese 'dust bowl' – part of an ecological collapse that includes impacts on 300 million people in China, the desertification of 400,000 square kilometres, and annual air pollution related deaths estimated by the World Health Organization at 666,000 Chinese citizens each year.



Top left
Edward Burtynsky
Dam #6
Series: Three Gorges Dam Project
2005 Yangtze River, China

Left
Benoit Aquin
Untitled 04
Series: The Chinese 'Dust Bowl'
2006 Wuwei Oasis, Gansu, China

Above
Djibril Sy
Floods in the Shantytowns of
Dakar During the Winter Season
Between June and August
2002 Grand Yoff, Dakar, Senegal

1. Water: Foreword & Essays



More broadly, he presents China's microcosm of sustainability challenges that are global – overpopulation, the expansion of agriculture, the over abstraction of water for industry. At the metaphorical level, finally, he presents us with a representation of man's response. It is the sheep chewing the very roots of the vegetation they depend on that speed the desertification. In Aquino's image, heads down, leaderless and smeared with grime, they just keep at it, digging for the remaining roots.

Aquino's image takes the pastoral idyll and inverts it. It reminds us not of the comfort that the planet is in peril, but of James Lovelock's insistence that nature is 'a tough bitch'. What appears in peril is less the planet than our hegemony over it.

Gravo's image brims with water. But the contrast that is starkest is not with the dust bowls of China but Evans' swimming pools of suburban Chicago.

In one, water is common to all. In the other, it is private property. In one, it forms a continuous body. In the other, it is subdivided. In one, it is part of a living ecosystem. In the other, it sits sealed in light blue plastic. In one, the water is free. In the other, it is metered. In one, water is intrinsic to religious, ethnic and cultural survival. In the other, it is a place of pleasure. In one, there are people in the water. In the other, there are none. In one, the water moves. In the other, it stagnates. In one, we sense what the psychologist, Mihály Csikszentmihályi, referred to as 'flow'. In the other, there is no movement.

The contrast Gravo presents is of tone, but it is also, most pressingly, of norm. He presents a society that is, in the words of Walter Dill Scott, "geographically but also culturally distant from our sensibilities". It is a people that is alien in their absence of alienation. We do not see ourselves reflected in them. We see reflected in them the parts of ourselves that are no longer there, and we mourn them.

Chris Jordan's *Refrigerator on Franklin Avenue* explores the theme of excess. Its stand alone out of place, because it no longer has a place – a symbol of the 300,000 displaced in the road permanently by the excesses of Hurricane Katrina. But its contents, disgorged and working in the sun, suggest a duality to the symbol. For generations of Americans, Earl Steward's *White Picket Fence* symbolized freedom – the fence at the edge of the road that defined a territory that belonged to you and your family. Jordan explores a new freedom, the freedom of our generation. This is the freedom to consume. The freedom, made possible by global supply chains, to engage in the economic activity that Jordan refers to as a 'vast and unsustainable act of taking'. It's an activity whose emblem is the fridge. This, defiantly upright, still heavy with Twizzlers, is the white good that Jordan's image reveals planted at the same roadside. It's an image that updates and subverts the economic myth of freedom – a symbol of the excess that the excess of consumption that may make this excess the norm, and ultimately of the absence which void this excess may fill.



Top
Christian Gravo
Haïti, Sodo
Series: Waters of Hope,
Rivers of Tears
2001 Haïti

Bottom
Jerry Evans
Backyard Pools, Will County, IL, USA
Series: Revealing Chicago
2003 Chicago vicinity, USA

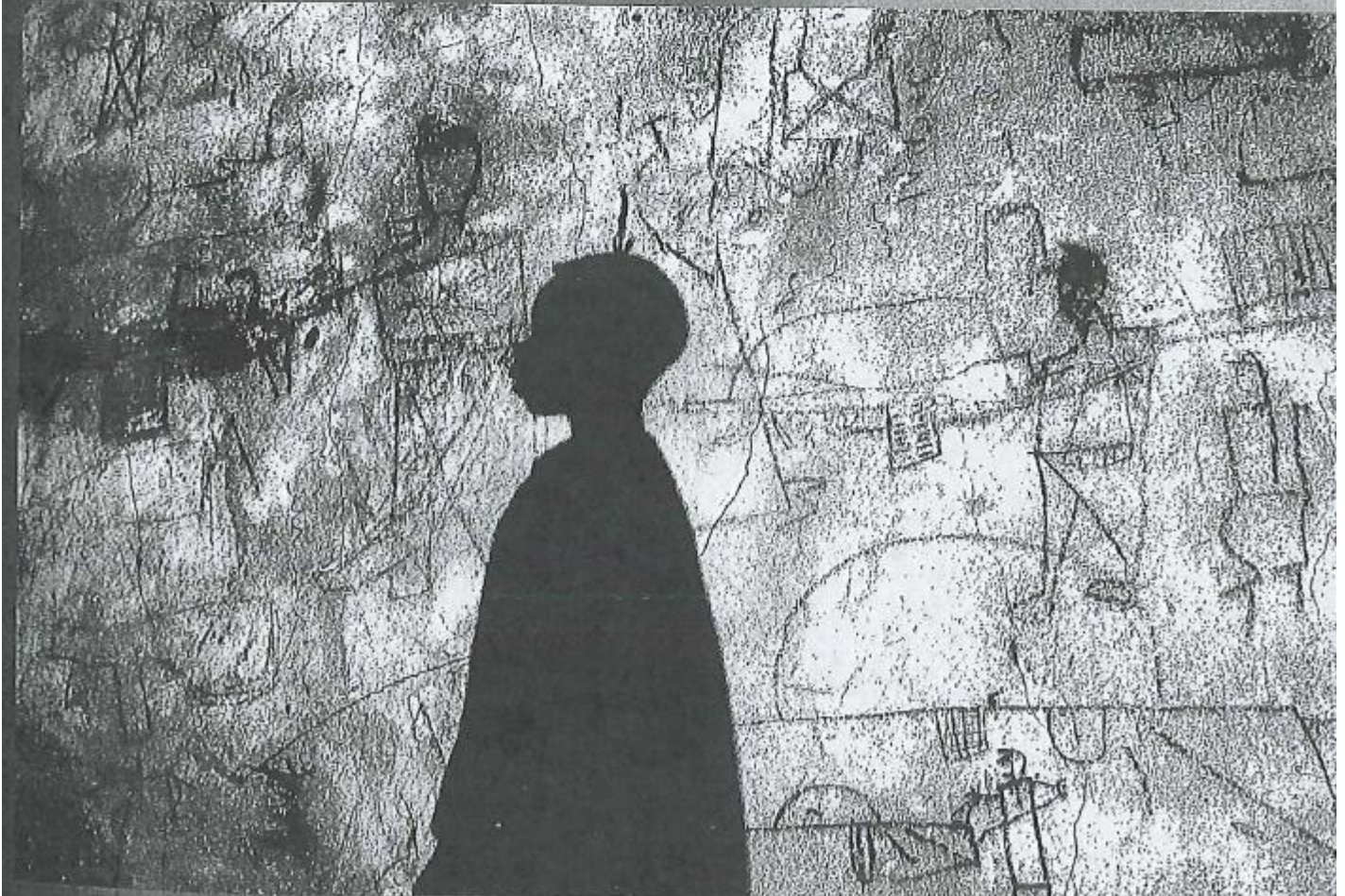
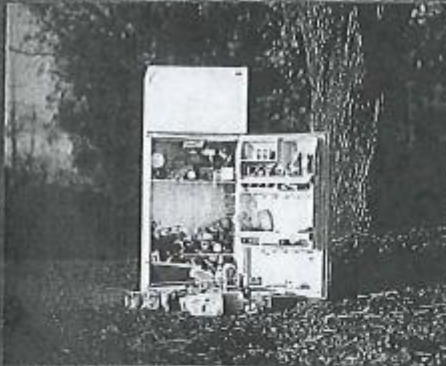
If numbness is our response to the bombardment of sustainability data, then Darfur is at the summit of that numbness. Francesco Zizola does something different. Played out on the wall, in flickering light that resembles a movie theatre, is a map of one boy's mental life. We see his thoughts. He knows the shape of Kalashnikov. How the cartridges feed. At the bottom of the map stands what looks like a woman, unarmed, smaller than the images of the soldiers with her arms outstretched. We see the architecture of his pain.

We don't know the specifics, but we know of the pattern and its projections. Precipitation in the area down 40 percent since the early 1980s. Four hundred thousand dead in conflicts exacerbated by drought. Temperatures predicted to rise in the Sahel by six degrees by 2030.

The boy's shadow falls on the wall at the point where the gun is pointing. Against the wall, the muzzle presses close to the back of his neck. It is a point of intersection — of the drawer and the photographed, of his short-term physical arrest and longer-term psychological imprisonment, of a community's pain and our sense of its complicity.

Above
 Africa, London
 Photographed on location, 2006
 Installation, 2006
 Art installation and projected document
 2006, New Museum, USA

Below
 Francesco Zizola
 The shadow of a Sudanese refugee
 falls on the wall of a mental map
 on which the boy's shadow is drawn
 in a point of intersection
 of a community's pain and our sense of its complicity
 2006, Germany, UK&I



The Images

Francis Hodgson



"A great photograph is a full expression of what one feels about what is being photographed in the deepest sense, and is, thereby, a true expression of what one feels about life in its entirety."

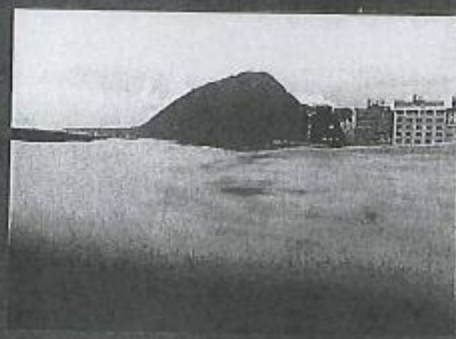
Ansel Adams, A Personal Gredo, 1943

It had to be photography, of course. When we first started thinking about a major prize intended not only to point to areas of sustainability, but (more ambitiously) to encapsulate thinking about those areas and eventually, perhaps, even to mobilise tidal shifts of opinion, we looked at a wide variety of media. We at one stage thought we might have several Pictet Prizes – for shortfilms, for prose writings, specifically for news reporting, or even for installations or performance. In the end, there was no need. Only photography is truly international and transcultural. Only photography has the perfect combination of instant and considered. The first quick flick through these pages will confirm that for photographers of talent on the level of those here, the beautiful economy of communication afforded by the photograph never for an instant bars them from the most subtle of responses, nor the most complex of arguments. This is not simply a collection of pictures of objects which themselves fall under the rubric of sustainability. At this level, the pictures are not merely of things. They are about things, too.

Photography has been the single most influential medium of the latter part of the twentieth century. The advent of digital made possible that period might be coming to an end, but it hasn't turned out that way in the twenty-first. Photography, for so much of its history considered a 'marginal' art form, has in fact turned out the keystone of the whole communication revolution. It is not just that

we all see a lot of photographs – although we do. It is more that the kinds of thinking which were refined in photography have become the archetypal modes of thinking of our time. The short attention spans of the Google generation have been much commented upon, but it is not really the lack of concentration which is at issue. For the Google generation to a surprising degree, there is no difference in value between true, reported, felt, or imagined. This erosion derives ultimately from the habits learnt by seeing rapid successions of photographs for very short views each.

Photography has never been confined to neutrality. 'Objectif' is the French for a lens, yet outside a very few scientific contexts in which objectivity is striven for and logged, photography thrives on the expression of opinion or prejudice, argument or emotion. Many of the photographs in this book tell searing truths, but that is not all they do. What is gathered here is not merely a collection of different places. It is a collection of attitudes, too. Photography allows its best practitioners to express those with all the precision of any other medium.



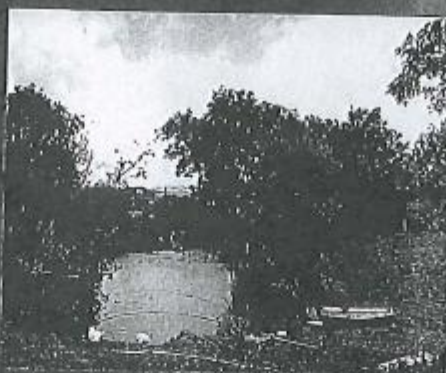
Sebastião Salgado
San, Margin of Life, 1983
Sebastião Salgado/
Amazonas Images/
pictures

Shit
ko Narahashi
you
es: Half Awake and Half
Asleep in the Water
3 Beppo, Japan

From the outset, the Prix Pictet was as open as could be. No limits on the age or nationality of the submitting photographers. No requirement that they be professional photographers. Within very broad limits, no restriction on subject matter. No preference given to type – to reportage, for example over the making of art. The gamble for the Prix Pictet was always going to be how to trawl the oceans out there to find big photographs among all the small fry. I don't suppose it is breaking a confidence to reveal that sometimes the judging panel suffered from iceberg fatigue. Certainly an awful lot of photographers are concerned that the icebergs are melting. (But in the same way that the survival of one or two relatively cuddly species becomes the poster-issue for the whole question of endangerment, so the visual punch of the icebergs represents a very useful shorthand or headline for the whole issue of climate change. A polar bear adrift on a tiny iceberg may not be a scientific case, but it's certainly a hugely compelling image.) We needn't have worried. Thanks in part to a nomination system which worked extremely well, we weren't tasked to find needles in haystacks. Very far from it. The sheer quality of the photography which we have been asked to consider and the quality of thought which it represents, has been a revelation. For that the dedicated group of nominators to the Prix Pictet have to be applauded, as well as the photographers.

There are globe-trotting photographers. Most notable among them, the great Sebastião Salgado was generous in allowing us to use images of his to advertise the Prix Pictet as it developed. Salgado's huge air-miles mirror his intellectual journey. He photographs whole systems, not their component parts, and his ideas have become bigger with time. Who could forget his searing work on the famine in the Sahel? The Sahel was big enough, a region on the global scale. Salgado doesn't deal in regions anymore. He's gone global. Others have a smaller canvas, but still huge. When Asako Narahashi photographs a Japan apparently already sinking beneath the sea, we are invited to look at the concern of a whole very sea-conscious and sea-dependent nation in the face of changing water levels.

Other photographers use the other end of the telescope. We were presented for the Prix with many submissions which were immediately local, only the wonderful metaphorical capacity of photography made them relevant to the wider audience. Siri Hayes' report on the degradation of the small urban Merri Creek near Melbourne, Australia, is one such, and like so very many others could easily have progressed further towards the final award. Jem Southam, from the South-West of England, who has been attentively local for many years, is another. He submitted for the prize a brilliant six-year study of a pond at a place called Upton Pyne, a narrative of one man's attempt (and ultimate failure) to transform a dump into an idyllic watery landscape. The small geographical scale of these series bears no relation at all to the breadth of allusion that



they can carry. It's often these photographs of the intensely known that are the most moving. The principle of 'less is more' often works well, not only in composition and treatment, but also in the knowledge of when one shouldn't bite off too big a project. A series by Sophie Gerrard on the recovery of precious metals from the electronics industry in India by the use of highly toxic acids was a good example of elegant photographic understatement. Even more sparse, yet richly filled with both environmental and emotional meaning, are Nick Sinclair's still-life studies of plastic bottles after long immersion in the sea. Sinclair made a complicated ethical knot out of his little shards of plastic. His bottles used to contain water and now they look entirely watery.

Top
Jem Southam
The Pond at Upton Pyne
Series: *The Pond at Upton Pyne*
1990 Devon, UK

Middle
Sophie Gerrard
And Pollution in the Streets of Mandali
Series: *B-Waste and – The Growing Problem of Electronic Waste in India*
2006 Mandali, Delhi, India

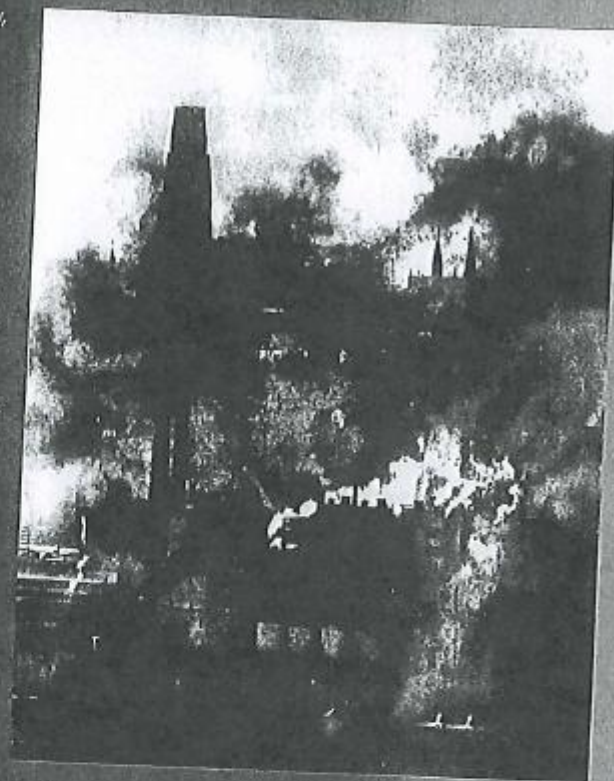
Bottom
Nick Sinclair
Unfused 88, from DUT0
Series: *Drop in the Ocean*
2007 Ayr, UK

1. Water: Foreword & Essays

themselves. But the water they held was a luxury, not a staple. The plastic was good packaging (light, strong, cheap, safe, clear) but lasts too long. We need these bottles and we don't need these bottles. No simple scale of good and bad here. It won't be easy to find the answers to any of the challenges adumbrated in this book. But how encouraging to find the photographers undaunted in identifying them, and clear in communicating their own responses.

The coincidence that each has been put forward for this prize does not define these photographs. To attempt to confine the impressive variety and vigour of forms of expression here into one catch-all category ('change the world' photographs?) should not unfairly restrict our understanding of the photographers. To regard this one as more 'documentary' and that as more 'autobiographical' seems irrelevant, even impertinent. Two great strands have run twined together through the history of photography since its very beginning, the factual and the metaphorical. When in 1839 Hippolyte Bayard published his *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man* he became the first photographer to publish a view obviously not true, yet powerfully laden with meaning for all that. (It was actually a protest at the award by the French government of a pension to Daguerre to the exclusion of others – like Bayard himself – who had been working at developing early photographic processes.) But somehow fact has historically been given priority in what we expect of photography, and other forms of expression have been greeted with surprise, often with misunderstanding, when they have appeared. Yet in the story of 'change the world' photography, fact has not necessarily been the dominant mode. Photography as gathered here is above all a means of expression. That the photographers should have something important to say is at issue, and whether the photographers have the artistic and technical means properly to say those things, not whether their pictures fall into one or other category imposed from elsewhere. No picture which made it onto the shortlist for the Prix Pictet confines itself only to describing fact. But then none is unreal, either.

Some of the photographs here have something of a Eugene Smith flavour. That great photographer found that a study commissioned on the archetypal industrial city of Pittsburgh which



was to have taken him three months took him at least as many years. We are told that in the year 1955 alone, Smith made 11,000 negatives of Pittsburgh. The difficulty is not in seeing things to photograph. The difficulty lies in the thinking that makes sense of the photographs that one has made. It is noticeable that the images submitted for the Prix Pictet were almost without exception made in series. The cumulative effect is important because it is from the accumulation that viewers can see the framework from which the striking detail diverges. The series may be more natural to photography than the single image. Many of the pictures in this book have been previously published, and indeed some of the candidates are distinguished by regular appearances in print, either – like Robert Pollock – for *The New Yorker* – for a regular outlet, or more widely as agencies are able to place the work. Many have had books published, of course, and it is now clear that books have replaced the magazines as the natural home for sustained series of photographs with a coherent theme. One effect of the Prix Pictet should certainly be to encourage magazines to reprint small groups of pictures from the submitted and nominated photographs. If these photographs are to have one tenth of the effect that their force deserves they need to be well edited in sensible groups and viewed in coherent series. They need not just to be seen; too many pictures are viewed with the mind's eye closed. They need to be seen and thought about. They need to drive us to action, not merely to awareness. If the Prix Pictet makes some of that happen, that will have been a success in itself.



Above:
W. Eugene Smith
John D. Rockefeller, Pennsylvania
1955 Pittsburgh, USA

Left:
Hippolyte Bayard
Self Portrait as a Drowned Man
1839

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When the rice bowl turns to dust

Sandals, Leah. *National Post* [Don Mills, Ont] 11 Mar 2010: .8.

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Abstract (summary)

In 2008, the Montreal artist's images of Chinese dust storms won the \$75,000 Prix Pictet in photography and sustainability. [...] with photos from his prizewinning project showing at Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto, Aquin talks to Leah Sandals about crises,...

Full Text

Note: Interview with Benoit Aquin.

Benoit Aquin is one of those rare talents that can take environmental problems and turn them into something that's appealing, not just anxiety-provoking. In 2008, the Montreal artist's images of Chinese dust storms won the \$75,000 Prix Pictet in photography and sustainability. Now, with photos from his prizewinning project showing at Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto, Aquin talks to Leah Sandals about crises, culture and the connections between.

Q Your images of Chinese dust storms are fairly surreal. How did they develop?

A The first time I went to China, in 2002, I stayed with a friend in Beijing who told me about the dust storms. Right away, they captured my imagination. I thought it was a good opportunity to make some interesting images and at the same time create awareness. I also thought there was a strong environmental angle -- at that time, we hadn't heard a lot about China's growing deserts.

Q When do these storms happen? What's it like to be in one?

A The storms happen in spring, with up to 20 per season. Where I was, each lasted about a day. Basically, a lot of earth and topsoil flies away, sometimes being blown as far as North America.

Being in a storm is very tiring. It's much easier to be in a snowstorm than a dust storm, because the dust makes breathing difficult and also carries a lot of pollution. It's also tough on photo equipment, but it generates a very interesting kind of yellow light.

Q What causes these dust storms?

A These storms are human-made -- they're caused by unsustainable agriculture practices. Essentially, when the wind comes, there's not enough protection left on the soil and the soil gets blown away.

Some of the farmlands I went to used to be grassland. But there was nothing left on the soil at all. It was completely cleaned by wind and erosion. The farmers told me that 10 years before, they had grass growing up to their knees. Some areas were almost like oases. So that's a very short time for things to change.

It's pretty scary --400,000 square kilometres, which is equal to half the cultivated land in Canada, has been transformed into desert. That's huge when you're a country with one billion people to feed.

2. Water: Benoit Aquin

When the rice bowl turns to dust - Print document - ProQuest

<http://search.proquest.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/docprin>

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Q Do you worry this could happen in Canada?

A Well, it did happen in the 1930s on the prairies. This project isn't specific to China; I think it can happen many places. We need to be more aware. For all we have, I don't think we do enough for the environment. I still have hope, but I do think we need to act more sustainably.

Q You won the \$75,000 Prix Pictet in photography and sustainability for this project. How did that affect you?

A It was good because it gave me more recognition at home. It also made it possible for me to sell more images in the art realm. It's always a challenge to take a complex subject and make it palpable. It's also challenging to fuse art and documentary. I think art inspires, while documentary work, or journalism, creates awareness.

Q Through the years, you've done projects on sex workers, on hunting, and on pesticides, as well as working as a photojournalist. What connects all your images?

A Hmm. Maybe it's about creating bonds between humans, and about creating awareness of things we don't know -- overall, to make us know we're all in the same boat.

Whenever I do a project I also try to find some balance. I don't like to show just the tough stuff, but everyday stuff, too. In this project, I have pictures of people just sitting at tables, or talking in groups. I think it's important to be honest in that way.

Q Is there anything else you'd want people to think about when looking at these pictures?

A Well, I wish our governments would invest more in cultural institutions and in art, because I think it creates strong bonds between people. And I think those bonds protect us from chaos. Think of Haiti, or Somalia -- these are places where cultural institutions were underestimated. I worked in Haiti recently. When I see our governments cutting into culture, I don't think it's very lucid.

Q So culture is a different kind of sustainability issue?

A Yes, it's very important. Chaos can appear very quickly, and things can change very fast. If there is creativity and bonds between people, it may take a better direction when something hard happens.

- Benoit Aquin: Chinese Dust Bowl continues at Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto to April 10. Visit bulgergallery.com for more information.

Credit: Leah Sandals; National Post

Illustration

Color Photo: / "Essentially, when the wind comes, there's not enough protection left on the soil and the soil gets blown away." Benoit Aquin's Genghis Khan, Mongolie interieure, 2006. Color Photo: Courtesy Of Stephen Bulger Gallery / Tempete a Hongsibao, Ningxia, 2007.; Caption:

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REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS



Thomas Joshua Cooper: Left side of the two-part *Border Crossings: The Polar Circle of the River Torneå: Sweden and Finland*, 1997, silver gelatin print, 16% by 24 inches; at Sean Kelly.

NEW YORK

Thomas Joshua Cooper at Sean Kelly

Expressive in their dark, formal elegance, Thomas Joshua Cooper's large-format black-and-white photographs of rugged coastlines recall the 19th-century landscape studies of Carleton Watkins: untouched mountain wilderness portrayed in its awesome variety and sameness, imbued with the significance of a chosen place. A hunter of the sublime, Cooper observes underlying patterns and represents the specific meaning of their structure. He uses a century-old view camera and tripod which he packs into inhospitable and sometimes dangerous places; he saturates his brooding images with an emotional content that seems to proceed as much from the site as from himself, and later enhances them by enlargement and by selenium and gold-chloride toning.

"Work from the New Found Land" included photographs from a 3,000-mile trek to various landmarks along the rocky shores of Newfoundland and related work from the Baltic coast, which note the voyages of exploration and discovery as well as more contemporary and seasonal events. Made in 1998 during the severe weather of the spring equinox, the images were printed in 1999 in editions of three. Cooper gives them

lengthy titles that are both expressive and specific. They generally include a geographic location, sometimes a category of observation (among these are "indications" and "premonitions"), the years of taking and printing, sometimes the order of the works if they occur in series, and, occasionally, evocative historical and temporal signifiers. An "indication" piece that was shot from Signal Hill, Newfoundland, looks eastward from the site of Marconi's first cable transmission to Europe. Its complex yet reductive surface exemplifies the more contemplative aspects of Cooper's work. If the ocean seems far below, there is no frame of reference to indicate such distance, unless the viewer realizes that the strange, perfect arcs that seem inscribed on the surface of the print are the flight paths of sea birds "drawn" during the film's exposure period. With these marks, Cooper evokes the coded impulses of Marconi's message.

In a highly charged "premonition" image, rocks made more menacing by a strong play of light and shadow capture a rolling surf at Cape Race in Newfoundland, the site of the first land station to receive a distress message from the *Titanic*. A two-part work made within a 10-minute interval at midnight on Midsummer's Night at the Arctic Circle is as much about

the flow of time as it is about the beauty of the surf and the land that gives it form. Cooper makes haunting images of the spirit of a place, drawn with the pencil of nature.

—Edward Leffingwell

Tracey Moffatt at Paul Morris

Tracey Moffatt takes a turn in the salon with her imaginary fin-de-siècle lesbo-gothic photogravure novella, *Laudanum* (1998). With its retro technique and not-so-veiled allusions, it exudes a naughty *Histoire d'O* eroticism. Installed without regard to Moffatt's numbered but not strictly linear narrative, *Laudanum* offered a variety of readings. The story could perhaps begin with an establishing shot of a desolate plantation house surrounded by a decaying Victorian porch that keeps encroaching brush at bay.

But as numbered, *Laudanum*1 introduces the narrative, in which the cruel mistress of our story descends the curving staircase and observes the nubile housemaid prostrate on the intarsia, scrub bucket near at hand. So many things to do today, such as venture into the *salle à manger* where madam observes closely as the maid, polishing some silver, is revealed to be an exotic Asian wench. At which point the tincture of madam's opium meets the raging of her blood, compelling her to humiliate and debase the girl, to shear her hair and bare her breasts. A struggle ensues with scissors, ripped bodice and so on, heading for something truly over the top. Somewhere around here the servant appears in a cameo shot as a recumbent, perhaps swooning odalisque, delicious in the snowy linens of madam's bed. There are scary Bates Motel shadows on the wall in one shot and flames right out of *Carrie* in another. Then the tables are turned and the cruel mistress appears tied by her wrists to the wall in an attic room, stripped to her corselette, recalling a close-up in a scene or two from *Belle*

de Jour. In a final scene (and so numbered), madam in her under-crawls back up the , leaving a tied-up pillow oor where the girl had been.

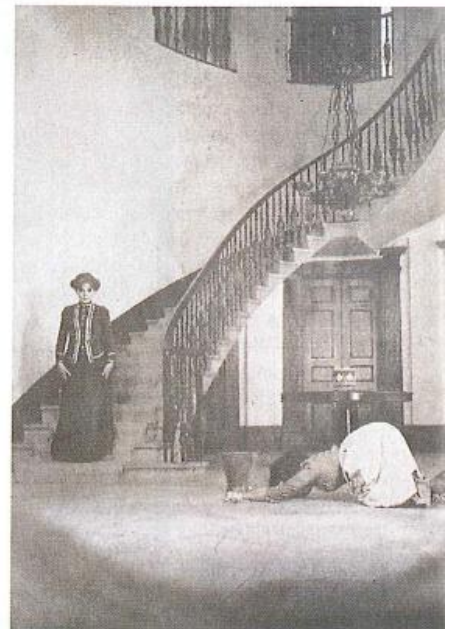
Moffatt uses actors skilled in the art of tableau vivant. Computer intervention and the murky patina of the photogravure process enhance a period aura that is further advanced by the device of faux stereoscopic diptychs, as well as period silhouetting; some images are ovals or fan-shaped, and in one case, a keyhole cut-out reveals a bondage scene. On the concept side of things, the relationships of violence to lust and submission to dominance—and, yes, the real servant problem—are serious issues that implicate others, ourselves included, and are passed down through generations. The gentle viewer understands that if this is all a game, it could be a dangerous one, not a weekend at the summer place gone kinky.

—Edward Leffingwell

Jörg Sasse at Lehmann Maupin

Jörg Sasse collects snapshots by amateur photographers and retools them on a computer—enlarging fragments, altering colors, erasing, transposing or reconfiguring components—to

Tracey Moffatt: *Laudanum*1, 1998, photogravure on rag paper, 30 by 22 1/2 inches; at Paul Morris.



SUSAN DERGES: THE EDEN WINDOWS

BY MARK HAWORTH-BOOTH

On August 10, 1872, a young Jesuit priest, on holiday on the Isle of Man, gazed at the Irish Sea. The priest was also a poet and he found astonishing words to describe what he saw, but even he—Gerard Manley Hopkins—had to admit bafflement at the complexity of the movement of waves. He wrote in his journal: "The shores are swimming and the eyes have before them a region of milky surf but it is hard for them to unpack the huddling and gnarls of the water and law out the shapes and sequence of the running." Despite that, Hopkins was still hopeful of catching subtle patterns in the water: "If it were clear and smooth there would be a network from their overlapping, such as can in fact be seen on smooth sand after the tide is out."

Those intricate patterns in waves have been recorded photographically and transformed into windows in a new building with a remarkable religious aura. The artist is Susan Derges and the building is the Education Resource Centre, or "Core," at the Eden Project in Cornwall. The Eden Project, founded by Jonathan Ball and Tim Smit, is an extraordinary ecological center which opened in 2001. Its "biomes," vast globe-shaped conservatories designed by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners, are so spectacular that the makers of the James Bond movies could not resist arranging a stunt on them in *Die Another Day* (2002). Eden represents not only the creative resurgence of southwestern England but also the country's awakening to environmental issues. By 2002 it was among the top five tourist attractions in Britain.

The new building, also by Grimshaw, is the latest chapter in a heartening success story. Derges's windows—some 250 miles south of the spot where Hopkins studied waves—are a major breakthrough in the architectural use of photography. This imaginative commission came about through the sculptor Peter Randall Page, artistic consultant on the building, who recommended Derges's work. He was a member of the Core's design team, alongside Smit, Peter Hampel (creative director at Eden), and Jolyon Brewis (director in charge of the project for Grimshaw).

The new building is a metaphorical tree, with a hollow core and a lattice roof structure. The roof follows the spiral phyllotactic geometry familiar from pinecones. Randall Page's sculpture *Seed*, installed in the heart of the building in June 2007, was created from a block of Cornish granite weighing 167 tons. The faceted spiral pattern carved into the granite echoes the design of the

lattice roof. Top lighting from a window in the center of the roof's "Solar Terrace" allows visitors to see the full range of tonalities in the carving. The Solar Terrace also contains a circular clerestory into which the windows by Derges are set.

Derges has exhibited often in Britain and also in Japan and the United States, where her works have been displayed at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art as well as at numerous prominent galleries. Over the years, she has developed the skill of recording phenomena, without taking recourse to a camera or negative, onto positive photographic paper. Settled in a studio on the edge of Dartmoor in Devon (the county next to Cornwall), she began experimenting with water in 1996. She was at the time reading books by physicists, such as David Bohm and F. David Peat's *Science, Order and Creativity* (1987) and Theodore Schwenk's *Sensitive Chaos* (1962). She found herself living in a landscape made magical by writers: Henry Williamson's 1927 novel *Tarka the Otter* (inspired by Devon's River Taw), and many river poems by England's late poet laureate Ted Hughes. Here Derges cultivated a technique that proved to be ideal for the Eden commission.

Derges took the tree metaphor of the Core building, and she saw water, as she explained in her proposal for the windows, as "an inseparable aspect of the processes and role of the forest canopy in maintaining and balancing our natural environment. It has a cycle that extends across the planet in a series of transformations that protect the atmosphere, deposit nutrients into the earth, and sustain all of life. It follows the archetypal cycles of distillation—evaporating, condensing, precipitating, freezing, and flowing, in a symbiotic relationship with the trees and sunlight."

Derges noted that, as the terrace is a 360-degree circle of window panels, light would fall through them differently as the sun passes across the sky during the course of the day. She therefore proposed that the images should be graduated tonally so that those on the north-facing side of the terrace would be lighter and more transparent, and on the south-facing side the colors would be more saturated and darker, to provide some screening from direct sunlight. The imagery would also be chosen to reflect this, with more airy cloud, vapor, and droplet images on the north side and more "earthly" shoreline, river, and ice images on the south. Eleven original images would be divided into three panels (each 67 by 51 inches, including frames); the twelfth, on the elegantly designed door giving access to the

terrace, comprises four panels. The subjects of the windows are, moving in a clockwise direction and ending with the entrance: 1. cloud, 2. cloud/rain, 3. cloud/rain, 4. stream, 5. waterfall, 6. river, 7. ocean, 8. ocean, 9. vapor, 10. frost, 11. cloud, 12. condensation.

Fusion Glass Designs, a London company with which Grimshaw has worked on other projects, recently developed a new technique with DuPont, the chemicals giant based in Wilmington, Delaware. In this process the original artwork is first scanned to a digital file. Next, the file is printed by ink-jet at 400 dpi onto a transparent laminate. This is then heat-fired between two sheets of glass, causing the ink on the surface of the laminate to sink into the material, which then fuses with the glass to create a very high-quality, full-color duplicate of the image within the glass. The simplicity of the method allows for all of the image-preparation, color-correction, and so on to be done by the artist/designer at the scanning stage—one digital file per image—which is then made into a sample for approval before making the final large-scale print.

In a memorandum she wrote after completing the images, Derges vividly described the working process involved in making the stream and waterfall sequence and the two shoreline images with members of the project team:

[We] went at dusk to look at the site [on the River Taw]. . . . We then returned to the studio to collect the large aluminum plates (41 by 80 inches) that had been prepared to hold the lifochrome positive paper and that were wrapped in black plastic sheeting for protection from light. On returning to the river, equipped with plates, stroboscopic flash, [flashlights], clamps, and waterproofs, we needed two people in the river close to the edge of the waterfall . . . for the initial piece, myself at the side, and others by the bank, ready to pass down and collect the unwrapped plates for the exposure. This had to be done in complete darkness to avoid fogging the light-sensitive paper. Once in position I would fire the flash, exposing the paper, which was submerged just below the water's surface, to a microsecond of flash. Then, very quickly, the paper and plate would be wrapped and made ready to transport back to the studio. The waterfall exposure was more tricky as the sheer force of the water made it barely possible to hold onto the plates and I had to stand on a stone wall just above the waterfall in order to lean out over it to make the exposure—being held in place by one of the team. Once the team had returned home I had to wash, dry, and search the large sheets of paper for any residual debris or sand that might have got onto the emulsion so that the photo lab had no problems with material getting into their processor. . . . When the images returned [from the lab several days later,] it was a rewarding experience to see all of the detail, force, and flow of the river and cascade

perfectly recorded as light-traces within the deep background of liquid shadow that revealed the atmosphere of the place and quality of the water. There was a sense that, although you never step in the same river twice, this was a defining image of the kinds of events that make a river what it is—a self-maintaining, living entity, full of complexity and power.

There were different problems to overcome on the night when the ocean shoreline prints were made, at Dawlish Warren, on the south coast of Devon:

We had been permitted by the ranger at Dawlish to get through to the darkest part of the beach, and it took considerable time to work out the tide and to identify local events on the shoreline that would make effective images. The tide was turning around the time we eventually got to expose the paper. We had to observe the rhythm of the waves and see exactly where and when they would break in order to place the paper/plate in exactly the right place to ensure a wave would break across it at the right time for me to fire the flash. The paper had to be thoroughly washed free of sand and seaweed before processing, as for the river images.

When Derges and her assistants returned to the studio they found that they had captured the sense of a huge body of water moving in across the land—with the second image they exposed completely covering the paper and revealing the force, sand movement, and fractal qualities of the water.

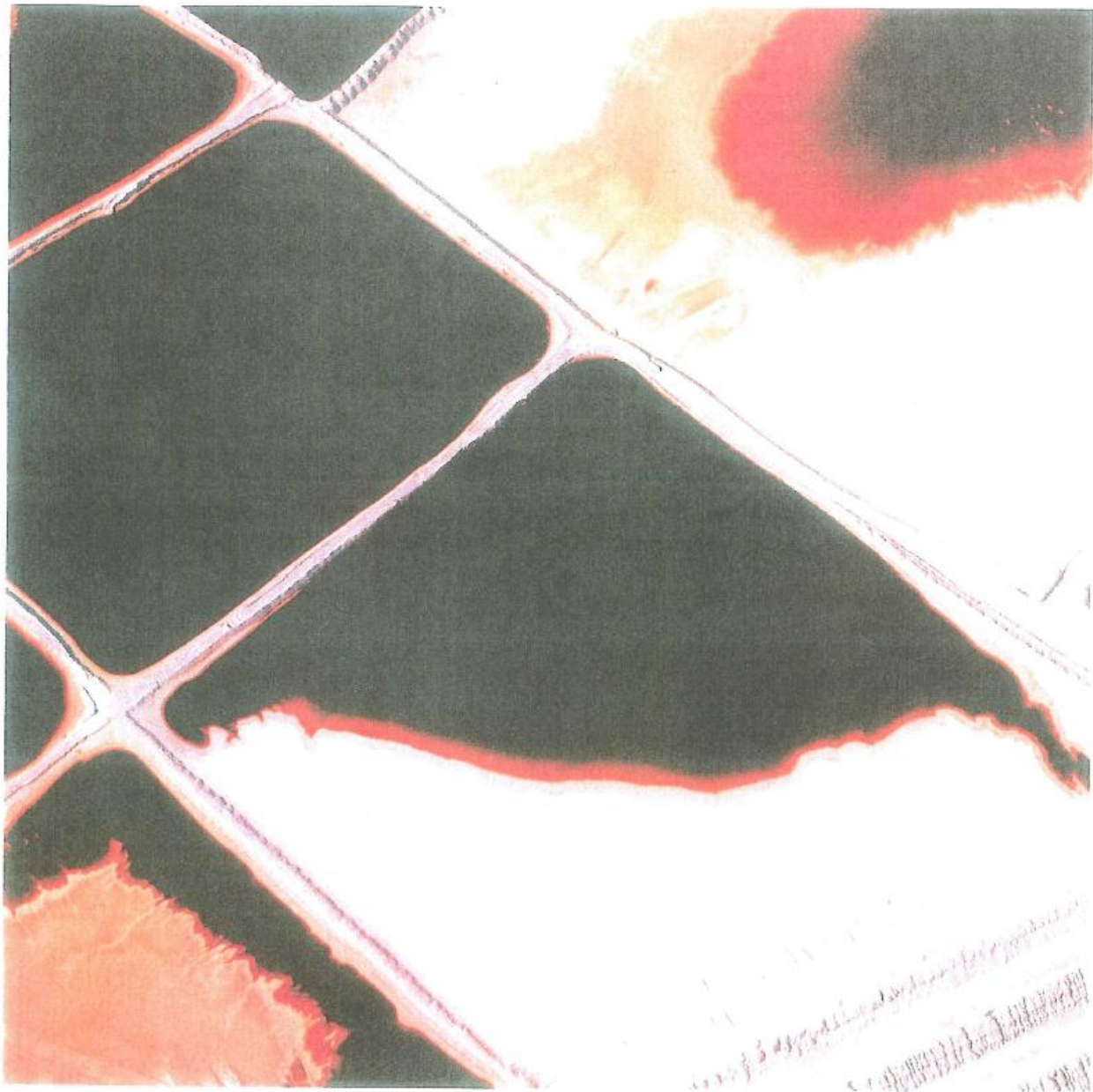
Other images were made in a variety of ways in the studio: Clouds were made out of ink-droplets moving in convection currents within a large glass tank and then printed in a similar way to the photograms made outdoors. Frost was formed on glass in a large freezer and printed in the same way, as was condensation. All the prints were scanned through a large scanner and the individual files prepared to send to DuPont in Wilmington, where they would be printed onto the transparent laminate. These were then returned to Fusion Glass in London to be kiln-fired with glass so that the laminate between two sheets of glass would fuse together to become one object—similar to stained glass—ready for installation in the clerestory at Eden.

The Core building is a twenty-first-century sacred space. However, on my visit there last June it was dominated by noisy interactive machines of little educational value and a visually cacophonous display about recycling. How strange that Eden, whose success is based on the brilliant design of its great biomes, does not yet know how to respond to the truly remarkable works of art and architecture it has brought into being. However, it is a young institution and will surely learn.🌀

CAMERAARTS APRIL/MAY 2003

The Abstract Aerial Landscape Photography of David Maisel

By Marisa S. Olson • Captions by David Maisel



Globe, Arizona, Pond #14, 1990. One of a series of images from *The Mining Project*, which focuses on the miasma of tailings ponds, cyanide leaching fields and other detritus from the mining industry that surround the vast open pits. With this series, I am not attempting to make literal records of environmental degradation so much as I am seeking to reveal the landscape as an archetypal space of destruction and ruin that mirrors the darker corners of our consciousness. C-print, 30"x30" and 48"x48" 2001.



The Lake Project #9824-3, 2002. The drained lakebed reveals planes of poison, arranged in a prismatic structure that could be an enormous diode, a microchip, an enemy encampment, its gridded streets dotted with tent cities or funeral pyres, the mind of the torturer displayed. The lakebed has become the source for further mining activity, further human intervention, and further disquietude. C-print, 30"x30" and 48"x48" 2002.

There is something very particular about the beauty of the Dutch still life paintings. The objects in them, each plucked from nature and arranged by human hands, rest at a hyperreal state of perfection, yet seem to teeter gluttonously on the verge of decay. In this sense, David Maisel's photos have much in common with the Flemish spreads that occupy so many of our museum walls. For more than two decades, Maisel has been making aerial photographs of landscapes lusciously ravaged by environmental damage and the impacts of human activity. For many viewers, it is hard to know whether to appreciate these painterly images as documents of "natural" beauty or to take them as reason to protest. Maisel sides somewhere in between, neither celebrating the tools or effects of degradation, nor taking for granted the bittersweet beauty they've conveyed. "The views through my camera are both spectacular and horrifying," he says.

While chemically-burnt flatlands, whitewashed plains, and neon-green rivulets-cum-toxic sludge sit silent on Maisel's prints, the artists' work asks loud questions about the shape of human interventions. Although these photographs evidence the devastation before him, they also

transcribe an interior psychic landscape that is profoundly disturbing. Freudian psychoanalysts believe in a "phantasmatic," a psychic map of our fantasies. Some say that our efforts in waking life are really endeavors to make this world look like the one of our dreams. It is hard to believe that even the most "heartless" corporate polluter would dream of a biosphere in which life is untenable, but the concept does give weight to a more intriguing notion—the one that the ways in which we have crafted, or polluted, the earth bear a structural resemblance to our psychic activity. It is this fuzzy borderland between psychology and topography that Maisel so well documents.

Shot with a Hasselblad ELX and Kodak E100 VS film, and printed at a large scale (30 x 30 or 48 x 48 inches), Maisel's C-Prints index sites on which the earth's resources have been co-opted by human desires.

"This work has unfolded in chapters," he said, "focusing on such subjects as strip-mines, clear-cuts, leaching fields, tailings ponds, firestorms, and other manipulations of the natural world."

The artist flies over these areas, taking aerial photos, the perspective of which, he says "enables one to experi-



Ray, Arizona, #33, 1990. Photograph of cyanide leaching fields, a mere fragment of the monumentally impacted mining landscape surrounding Ray. The images of these sites are meant neither to vilify nor glorify their content, but rather to expand our notions of what constitutes landscape and landscape art. These photographs intentionally reflect back the visceral nature of their subject matter; the colors and forms are surreal, and the scale confounding. Encompassing the viewer's peripheral vision, these prints become something one can enter into and feel, rather than simply observe. C-print, 30"x30" and 48"x48" 2001.

ence the landscape like a vast map of its undoing." These "Black Maps," as he calls them, are more metaphorically noir, tracking devastation in the beauty of full color. In fact, the prints would likely be unsuccessful in black and white, the land stripped of the shades of the sublime contradictions of beauty and horror. Of course, it is for this reason that the project defies categorization as "documentary," just as these are not your typical "rock and tree" photo-landscapes. While Maisel may be exposing a certain view of the world, his anonymously-numbered titles and restraint in environmentalist evangelizing lead to a more organic experience of the spaces captured, viewers synthesizing their own interpretations, rather than a strict

autopsy of the poisoned grounds.

His most recent project, under the Black Maps umbrella, is the Owens Lake series. In 1913, a group of politicians and land owners pushed through a mistake of gargantuan proportions. In an effort to bolster agriculture and drinking water supplies, in the desert that is Los Angeles, the group diverted or "reclaimed" water from the Owens River and Lake to the Los Angeles Aqueduct, depleting both bodies of their water within 13 years. Perhaps it was the "Keeler fog" that caught Maisel's eye, as he was driving through this stretch of Southern California highway. It would be hard to miss the romantically-named cloud of carcinogenic dust the winds blow over this salt-encrusted



The Lake Project #9823-4, 2002. *The Lake Project* is comprised of aerial images made at the site of Owens Lake, on the eastern edge of the Sierra Mountains in southeastern California. Decades ago, the water from Owens Lake was permanently diverted into the Los Angeles aqueduct. In this image, what little water remains in this shallow remnant of the lake has been stained red from bacterial blooms that result from the artificially high concentration of minerals. From the air, it seems I am seeing a river of blood. If death is mother to beauty, as the poet Robert Haas wrote, then these images may serve as the lake's autopsy. C-print, 30"x30" and 48"x48" 2002.

valley. Or maybe it was the pink glow of red oxidized earth, the bright-shining scab of the Owens' wounds. In any case, it did not take long to get Maisel in the air.

The Owens valley is ripe with 200 square miles of prime photographic views—scenes begging to be caught in the space of the view finder. Maisel's challenge was not only that of photographer but also that of editor. How does one put limits on a boundless curiosity? As the landscape undulates with constructed artifices of diversion and writhes with the dry "flow" of toxic crust, how does one trap one view in isolation of another? Maisel does it as a composer, arranging images that read as both scores for the creation of a print (in the more painterly sense of an

intaglio) and a tally of damage done. As the veiny arteries of this desolate body weave among its copper pool and dead pump-organs, we are ultimately reminded of the interdependency of this spent body and its environment, of our innate biological connection to the subject of Maisel's images, and of the symbiosis between a patch of land and a gifted photographer. ■

Marisa S. Olson is an artist, critic and curator. Her essays on contemporary art have been featured in such magazines as *Wired*, *Afterimage*, *Art on Paper*, *Artweek*, and others. Olson serves on several international boards including the San Francisco Arts Council. She can be reached at: marisa@sfcameraartwork.org.

Foreword

H.E. Kofi Annan
Honorary President
Prix Pictet

This book contains a collection of stunning images from some of the world's best and most original photographers. Together, these photographs by the artists shortlisted for the Prix Pictet highlight the beauty of the earth we share. But they also expose the damage, deliberately or carelessly, we are inflicting on our own environment.

So these images are a celebration and a reminder of the urgent need to change our ways.

This reminder could not come at a more crucial time. In a few weeks, world leaders will meet in Copenhagen for the UN Climate Change Conference. There is a huge amount at stake.

The evidence of the impact that human activity is having on our atmosphere and climate is now overwhelming. The facts show, too, that these changes are accelerating faster than expected. Experts warn of the potentially catastrophic costs including the spread of famine, disease and conflict unless we first halt and, eventually, reverse the changes we are causing to our atmosphere. This demands the most ambitious international agreement ever reached.

It is an agreement which must be radical, universal and fair. It must have climate justice at its heart. For the consequences of failure will fall hardest on those who have done least to cause climate change – on future generations and the poorest nations. It is the developed world which is most responsible

for the pollution in our atmosphere. It is the most disadvantaged communities and countries which, as we are already seeing across the world, will be hardest hit by its impact.

The Prix Pictet was established to help highlight what is at stake and how easily it can be lost. Last year, the first of the competition, the focus was on water. It is through water, the increasing threat from floods and droughts and extra pressures on supplies that climate change is already devastating the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

This year the theme is 'Earth'. The standard is again exceptional. As these images are enjoyed by people around the world, they will make a compelling case for all of us – countries, businesses and individuals – to live in a more sustainable way. But there is an extra responsibility on those of us privileged to live in clean and healthy environments to act to help those who do not.

I congratulate all the artists who have been shortlisted. They have met their challenge. It is now up to the rest of us to do the same.

Kofi Annan
Honorary President
Prix Pictet

A Surreal and Fantastical Reality

Peter Aspden
interviews the
winner of the
Prix Pictet 2008

With disarming lack of pretension, Benoit Aquin freely admits that thoughts of environmental destruction were a long way from his mind when he first visited China in 2002. "I wanted to go to Mongolia – to see how far I could get away from home. I had no specific project in mind. I was there to do some travelling rather than take any pictures.

But then a friend started to describe the dust storms that afflicted the country every spring and Aquin's imagination was fired. Four years later he revisited the country to see the evidence for himself, and took care to pack his camera. He was profoundly moved by the experience, and produced a series of stunning photographs that won the inaugural Prix Pictet last year.

Aquin's *The Chinese 'Dust Bowl'* series illustrates many of the consequences of any environmental disaster: refugees gaze distractedly into the middle distance, wondering if they will ever find a permanent home again; luckless peasants tread their way carefully on the land, avoiding the huge cracks in the ground that signify another failed harvest.

But it is Aquin's extraordinary palette of colours, the limp ochres and lifeless greys of a landscape drained of hydration, that tell the real story. About 400,000 square kilometres of cropland and prairies have turned to desert as a result of unsustainable practices: the barren soil is swept up by the wind which turns it into dust storms that make their way all over the world.

"It was a strong subject," says Montreal-based Aquin with understatement. "I was expecting to see some remarkable things – but I got even more than I expected. Things just seemed to happen for me. I saw three or four storms – the following year there was just one. A line of trucks just suddenly appeared during one storm. It was a gift." He admits what all photographers know: luck has a part to play in the alchemy of his art.

Aquin's work has focused on environmental issues from the beginning of his career, covering subjects such as the appalling effects of pesticide on banana-crop workers

in Central America, and the quick-melting ice floes of the Canadian Great North.

"I am always challenged by complex subjects, and how to make them palpable," he says bullishly. "If you find a strong subject, the challenge is to make it interesting of course, but also a little bit magical too. I like reality when it becomes surreal and fantastical."

He says he enjoys working with journalists: "It leaves you room to be more free with your images. The journalist can anchor the subject so you don't have to tell everything in the image. It is liberating."

I ask how he balances the demands of truth and artistry, and he pauses to reflect. "I think it has always been a challenge to balance the demands of a career and more spiritual concerns. I don't know if I will ever succeed in that."

It is a tension that has made itself felt in Aquin's current project which addresses the world's food crisis. "It picks up some deep concept of our essence," he says. "It is a really profound problem that we have to answer, and I don't think things are radical enough for where we are now. Of course it gets very political."

The contrasting imperatives of journalism and art are something that can be used to his advantage, he says. "You can show things in a magazine that are designed to have an immediate impact. With placing works in a gallery, you can achieve something different, much more oneiric. It works on a different level."

Another recurrent theme in his work is that of hunting: "It is a less journalistic subject, but it goes back a long way. The very first pieces of art, paintings on cave walls, were

6. Earth: Foreword & Essays

about hunting. The first ecologists were hunters. It is very interesting: when I show some of the images to urban people, they really have a hard time with them, but when I show them in the country they are really interested to know where the pictures have been taken. It shows how you can be disconnected from where we came from."

In a way, he says, the subject matches the intimacy of his most obviously personal work, the series of portraits he made of sex workers in Montreal, using a Polaroid camera and the subjects' own words. "It was a project to break the barrier between normal and marginal walks of life." It was also one of his most difficult assignments. "It was very tough - trying to find the people in the first place, and then getting them to agree to be in the project."

It was one of his artful pieces of work, I say to him. "I am not competing with photojournalists," he replies spiritedly. "I want to do something different."

Benoit Aquin won the inaugural Prix Pictet in 2008. His book 'Far East, Far West' will be published in October 2009.

Peter Aspden is the Financial Times' Arts Writer. He was a member of the Prix Pictet Jury in 2008

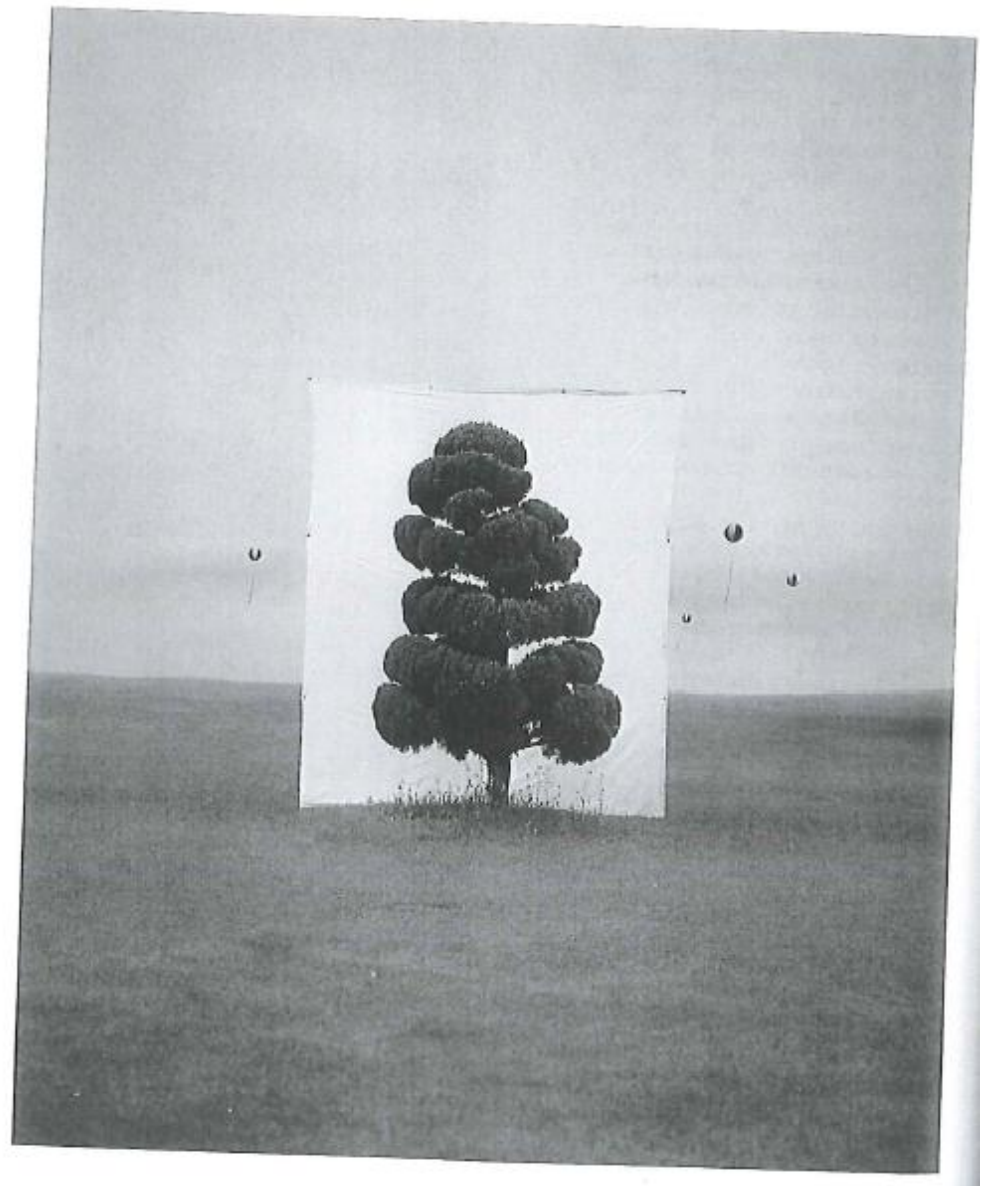
Top
Benoit Aquin
The Motorcycle and the Dust Storm
Series: The Chinese 'Dust Bowl'
2006, Bayannur, Inner Mongolia, China

Bottom
Benoit Aquin
Woman with the Headscarf
Series: The Life or Death of the Oasis
2008, Urumqi, Xinjiang, China



Francis Hodgson

It will be of little comfort to those not included, but we could have compiled two or five excellent shortlists from the material submitted for the Prix Pictet in its second year. The quality of the photography brought before the judging panel remains outstanding, thanks in great part to the efforts of a worldwide group of nominators all avid to get the best photography seen and recognised.



Myoung Ho Lee
Tree #2
Series: Tree
2006, Korea
© Myoung Ho Lee,
Courtesy Yossi Milo Gallery,
New York

6. Earth: Foreword & Essays

The urgency of the issues gives impetus to the Prix Pictet. Everyone – the photographers, the administration team, the sponsors, judges – sees that mountains need to be moved in terms of public awareness, commercial involvement and legislative change, if differences are to be made where they matter. But nobody has questioned the ability of photography itself to take on this challenge.

The first Prix Pictet set a dauntingly high standard. Yet the challenges have not gone away: there is no shortage of issues for photographers to address. The photographers in this book are great communicators at the height of their powers. From them you will find a mixture of fact and emotion more viscerally seizing and therefore more urgent than anything you will encounter elsewhere. It is to be hoped, if this marvellous photography is not to go to waste, that all readers of this book will understand that it contains a great deal more than illustration. It incorporates the reasoned or impassioned arguments, the full range of points of view of a group of photographers who have earned the opportunity, with the help of the Prix Pictet, of making a difference.

No vocabulary matches the range of photography that we judges had the privilege to see in this year's selection. The world's leading aerial photographers, with their eagle's eye view, find clearly legible economic patterns where we had seen none. This year again, I was struck by the great aerial views of David Maisel, who makes brutally and beautifully clear the clash on the global scale between profit and housekeeping. His images, far from the abstractions they seem, have the immediate incontrovertibility of medical scans. Maisel remains a fine diagnostician of the planet's ills. On a different scale, and in a different emotional register, I found Myoung Ho Lee's *Tree #2* vastly touching. Isolating one tree almost as a life-size bonsai, this simple artistic act gives an importance to trees in general which we would do well to replicate everywhere. It is not, as it happens, an entirely original idea: David Buckland (the English photographer turned environmentalist) made a very similar series many years ago. But never mind. If an idea is powerful enough to be heard it will be heard many times.

There were dozens of highpoints this year, pictures well thought out, well made and entirely appropriate to be well received. We saw loud clamorous pictures and muted elegies. We saw new coherent ways of

looking at global problems familiar to everybody, but we also saw many unknown local issues brought before us with skill and effort. Many times, as I reviewed submissions of the highest calibre, I found myself wondering what the future holds for committed photography of this kind. There are fewer and fewer newspaper and magazine outlets for non-commercial images (the newspaper industry has been cutting its photography budgets for years, long before the present straitened times). Anybody, I suppose, can get pictures seen online now, though without much context. But to get the greatest series of pictures seen in a context where they can have their proper effect becomes rarer. I certainly saw, this year for the Prix Pictet, many world-class series which had not yet been published. That makes the role of the Prix Pictet doubly important. For we know that there is every chance that pictures seen in this context will be seen again elsewhere. I know that everybody involved thinks that is a good thing.

No panel of judges could be entirely confident, given the outstanding quality of so much that we have seen, that we have every decision right. We acknowledge that a panel composed differently on another day might have come to very different conclusions. But we remain enormously proud, together, to place before you a group of pictures, which we feel, can stand on their merits alongside any number of others. The present volume concentrates upon the images shortlisted for the prize, but it is completed, of course, before our final decision is reached. That is entirely right: all of these pictures are winners. They must now go out into the world and gain their effect. It is a privilege and a pleasure to help them on their way.



Left
David Maisel
American Mine (Carlin, NV 8)
2007, Vicinity of Carlin, Nevada, USA

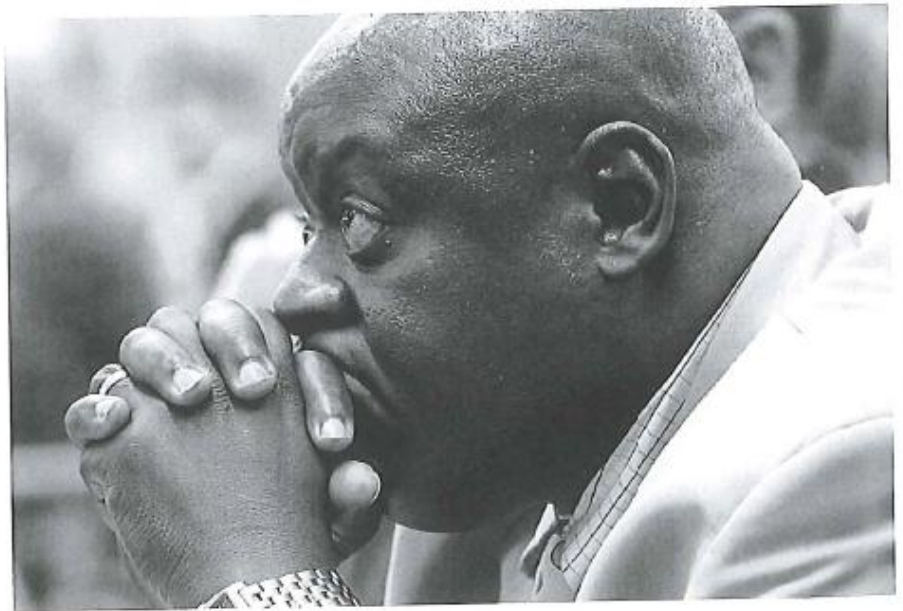
Right
David Maisel
American Mine (Carlin, NV 18)
2007, Vicinity of Carlin, Nevada, USA



Prix Pictet: Issues

Leo Johnson

The challenge of climate change, as Kofi Annan has said, lies not in the data, but in our response to it. The Prix Pictet is born of a flicker of hope – that photography has a demotic force, an emotive impact on the individual that is greater than the statistic; a power, in short, to use the aesthetic as a counter to our anaesthesia, to move us from numbness towards response.



Joe Sternfeld's series, *When it changed*, is among a number of works exploring this transition. The subject matter is not an obvious source of compelling visual material: a government representative in a meeting with other government representatives, listening to another government representative talking. But what Bamfo, the Ghanaian representative, is listening to is data on the impact of climate change. Sternfeld documents the effect. The eyes are bloodshot. The mouth is parodic in its grimace. The hands, clasped in a gesture close to supplication, unconsciously suppress speech. Alone in the frame, Bamfo appears incapable of movement. What Sternfeld captures is the moment of collision between the biophysical necessity to decarbonise

and the economic mandate to maintain growth, between the individual response, pity and fear and the institutional response, the avoidance of systemic disruption. Its combined and continued effect, in geometric proportion to the severity of the problem, is paralysis. Sternfeld's series was taken in 2005. It is an anatomy of numbness, and an articulation of the role of photography as a countervailing force.

Edward Burtynsky's *Quarries* series lays bare a relationship between ecosystem and economy. Across the horizontal axis, in Burtynsky's Iberian quarry, we see earth's patient accumulation of strata. Down the vertical, we see the velocity and voracity of man's subtraction. Burtynsky's quarry

Joel Sternfeld
Robert Kofi Bamfo
Series: *When it Changed*
2005, Montreal, Canada

6. Earth: Foreword & Essays

presents a tension between appetite and engineering, between the Bacchic urge to consume and the Euclidean precision of its execution. The result is an image of an economic system which appears to have organised itself around the principle of excess, and is now heading towards its terminal point. At the bottom of the quarry the mine meets the water table. Suspended above, poised for sepulchral free fall, we see a crucifix.

Yuri Kozyrev explores earth not as physical entity but as the source of identity. Kozyrev captures a timeless Middle Eastern café scene. Palm trees. Men sitting on plastic chairs. The hours passing in companionable silence. Except these chairs have no legs. They are propped up instead on rubble. The hands cradle the trigger not the teaspoon. The gaze, finally, is not that of a companion, but of a man sitting alone in his car on the freeway. It is the gaze of the auto-industrial economy – both seeing and unseeing, possessing and dispossessing.

In Baku, at the Naftalan clinic, a man bathes in oil, his arms raised in a gesture of almost religious subservience. The healing properties of oil include treatments for spondylitis, fungi and neuralgia.

Paolo Woods captures the patient at a point of transition, poised to descend further, submerging the entire body below the rippleless surface, or to emerge.

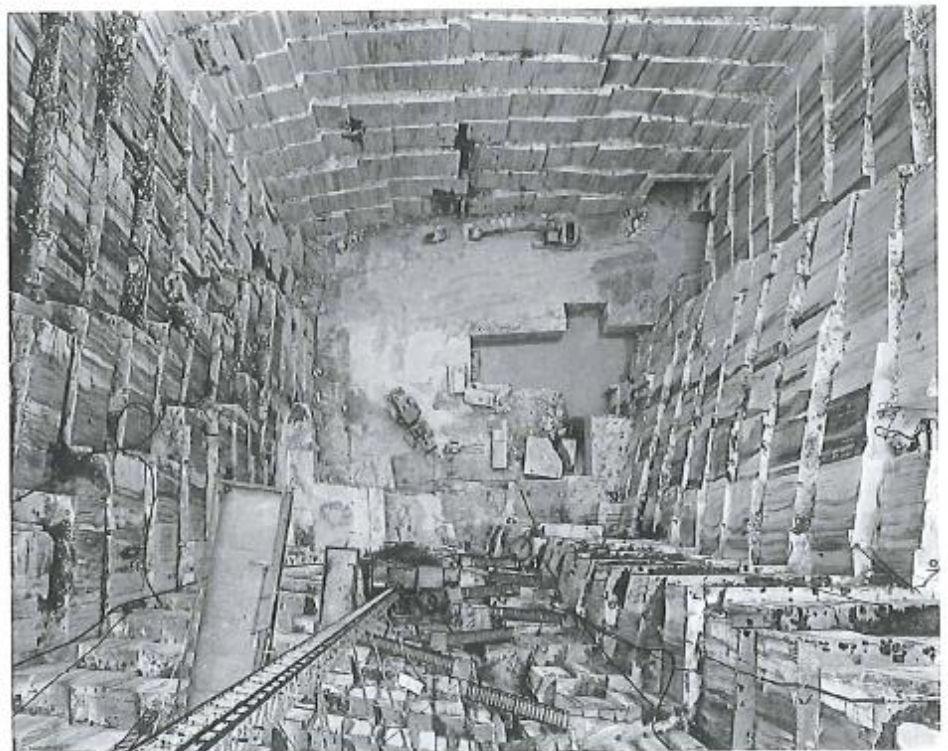
There is a grammar of images of malnutrition in Ethiopia. The arid land. The outstretched hand. The bloated stomach. The transformation of the statistic into the individual. Thomas Dworzak appears to subvert that grammar. His clinic is cuboid and clean. The corpses, faceless, are orderly on the slab, a replica of the numeral III in their composition. Their death is a statistic. Yet Dworzak positions us at the feet of the corpses. We can see the contours of the bodies. Child-sized. In blankets whose purpose is to swaddle. In front of us are the threads that would open the blankets, show their faces, transform them from statistic to brother, to son, to daughter. The effect of those threads, unpulled, in front of us is simple. They evoke another lifelessness – our own, the emotional lifelessness with which we enable ourselves to tolerate our widening failure to meet the most basic needs of the poor.

Nadav Kander's *Yangtze, The Long River* series sets the patterns of the displaced family against the formal structures of the

Left Top
Yuri Kozyrev
US Soldiers Keep Watch over the Ruins of a Police Station Destroyed by Insurgents in the Largely Sunni Village of Zurah, Which Sits on the Outskirts of Bagdab.
Series: #4
2007, Zurah, Iraq

Left Bottom
Paolo Woods
A Man Takes a Bath in Black Gold
Series: A Crude World
2003, Azerbaijan

Below
Edward Burtynsky
Iberia Quarries #8
Series: Quarries
2006, Paredes, Portugal



Prix Pictet: Issues

state. In Nadav Kander's *Shanghai I*, the mottled bamboo poles that hold the family laundry extend the composition of the pylon. The clothesline itself offers an echo of the horizontal steel pillar above.

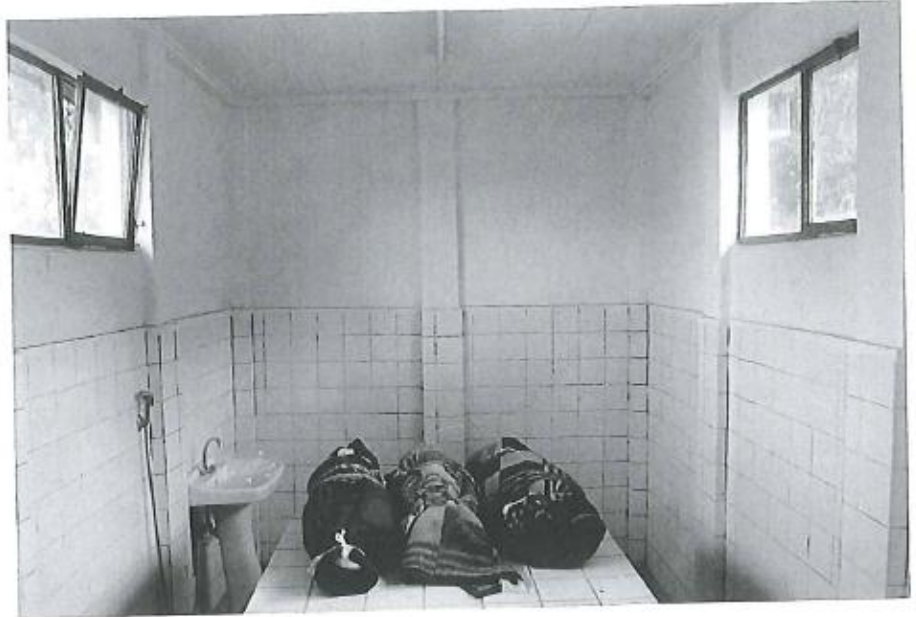
In *Chongqing IV*, Kander observes an outdoor meal, with its orange glass teacups, embroidered tablecloth and high-backed wicker chairs. The force of the detail is this – for the family this meal is not a picnic, but their dinner. A fisherman participates in their intimacy. The water's natural level is etched in its paint-stripping acidity on the pillars above their heads. Beneath the eight-lane highway, its pillars their walls, this is home.

A collective implication emerges from the works of the photographers addressing the theme of 'Earth'. The economic principles that have governed development exist at a disconnect with nature, and it is man that this point of disconnect leaves in peril.

If four degrees of warming and the displacement and mass migration of 650 million poor people living in coastal megacities form part of our projected future, then Kander's family prefigures one of the defining competences required of us all in the 21st century, that of adaptation.

Top
Thomas Dworzak
Three Dead Children
Series: The Green Hunger
2008, South Oromia Region,
Shashamene, Quyeru, Ethiopia

Bottom
Nadav Kander
Shanghai I
Series: Yangtze, The Long River
2006, Shanghai, China



on mass incarceration

Dædalus

from the MIT Press

Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

The Summer 2010 issue of *Dædalus* provides a compelling look at the U.S. penal system — the historic growth of imprisonment over the past three decades, its concentration on the most disadvantaged segments of the population, and the social, political, and economic significance of this punishment regime on American society.

Articles include:

- Bruce Western & Becky Pettit
Incarceration & social inequality
- Robert Sampson & Charles Loeffler
Punishment's place: the local concentration of mass incarceration
- Candace Kruttschnitt
The paradox of women's imprisonment
- Jeffrey Fagan
On juvenile justice
- Marie Gottschalk
Cell blocks and red ink: mass incarceration, the great recession & penal reform
- Loïc Wacquant
Class, race & hyperincarceration in revanchist America
- Jonathan Simon
Clearing the 'troubled assets' of America's punishment bubble
- Nicola Lacey
American imprisonment in comparative perspective
- Mark A.R. Kleiman
Toward fewer prisoners and less crime
- Robert Weisberg & Joan Petersilia
The dangers of Pyrrhic victories against mass incarceration
- Glenn C. Loury
Crime, inequality & social justice

Publication Date: August 19, 2010

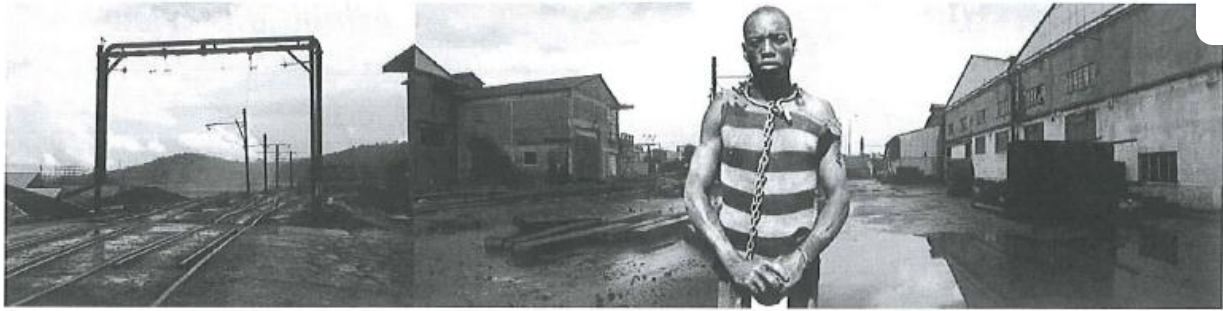
MIT Press Journals <http://mitpressjournals.org/dædalus>

exhibition review

**The Beautiful Time:
Photography by Sammy Baloji**
Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch
College, New York
March 26–April 28, 2010

reviewed by Catherine Bernard
“The Beautiful Time,” an exhibition of photographs by Congolese photographer and video artist Samuel Baloji, was well worth seeing. It was hosted by the Sidney Mishkin Gallery at Baruch College in New York, from March 25 to April 28, 2010, and organized by the Museum of African Art in New York. The guest curator, Bogumil Jewsiewicki from the University of Laval in Québec, authored a handsome thirty-two-page catalogue replete with full-page color reproductions of Baloji's photographs, published by the Museum of African Art. All photographs and montages were dated 2006.

The exhibition consisted of eight photographs of present-day Lubumbashi copper mines and surrounding landscape. They were accompanied by fourteen large-scale photo-montages juxtaposing black-and-white archival materials with recent photographs of the site. In addition, six paintings by Congolese artists, dated from 1994 to 2004, were hung on the wall, facing the entrance of the gallery. Done by different artists—Bwalya, Tinda Lwimba, Burozi—they all belonged to a style that could be classified as “popular” or “folk” art. Close by was an archival photograph, circa 1930, showing the terril heap and chimney. A fifteen-minute video, *Mémoire*, completed the exhibition. Realized by Baloji, it featured dancer/choreographer Faustin Linyekula interpreting a choreography filmed in the middle of the industrial vestiges of the mine. “The Beautiful Time” developed a historical narrative that explored the colonial mines and architecture of the former Elizabethville (now Lubumbashi), capital of the Katanga region, while offering a postcolonial *état des lieux* of this region of the former Belgian Congo, which became the DRC in 1960 under Mobutu's rule. In his work, Baloji reflects on the transformations of the mining city from the colonial times to the present by juxtaposing images of the colonial period with present-day landscapes. The different media—straight photography, montage, painting, and video—



echoed the complex strata of Congo's history, as if an excavation, organized by the artist, was taking place, its narrative unfolding in front of the viewer.

In Katanga, first copper, then cobalt and uranium helped establish a colonial industrial empire. In Lubumbashi, workers in the copper mines were well treated and given medical care, education, housing, food, and running water, which in turn insured a high production level for the UMHK (Union Minière du Haut Katanga or Mining Union of Upper Katanga; Jewsiewicki 2010:9). As a result, the city of Lubumbashi enjoyed a degree of prosperity, as is recalled in the small contemporary paintings depicting factories and minors during colonial time. After 1960, the company then known as Gécamines slowly decayed and by the 1980s had fallen apart under the strain of both corruption and war and the site was progressively abandoned (*ibid.*, pp. 9–10). These historical layers are doubled by a biographical one—Baloji was born and raised in Lubumbashi during the 1980s—and his photographic landscapes convey a bleakness and desolation that remind the viewer of the contemporary situ-

ation of the DRC and the Katanga region and the renewed pillage of its natural resources that has taken place in the past two decades.

"The Beautiful Time" is a title that brings a sarcastic tone of the exhibition while it also conveys a possible nostalgia for a past in which life seemed easier. It is clear that the idea of modernity so tightly linked to colonial power was ascribed to Lubumbashi during its early, prosperous era. However, it is clear also that to Baloji the past is not as beautiful as it has been remembered.

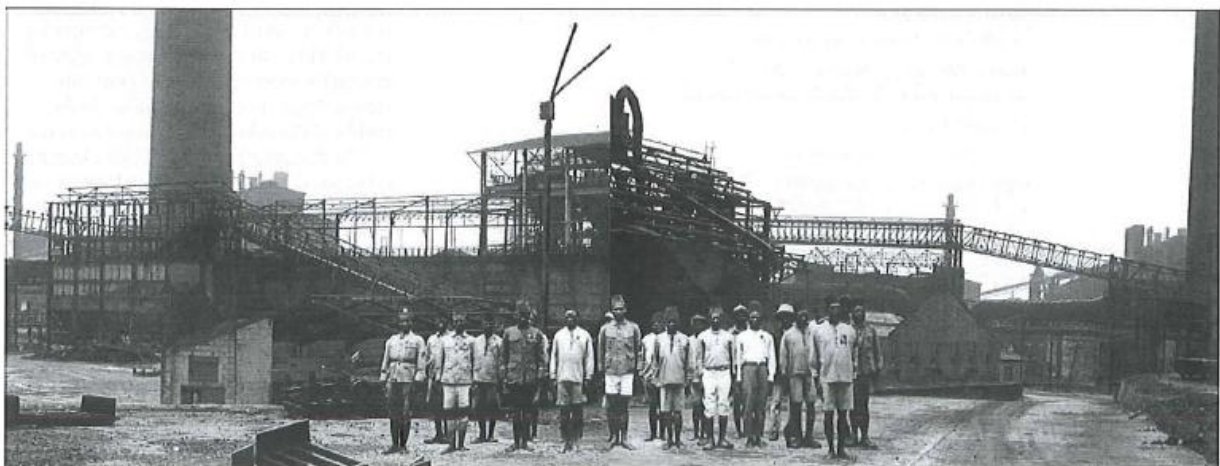
The landscapes are desolate, filled with abandoned machines and haunted by emptiness. His photomontages juxtapose archival photographs of mine workers or colonial officials with the present-day landscape. In one, Baloji shows the portrait of a prisoner—prisoners were used as mine workers—with a chain around the neck, collaged in front of the contemporary industrial wasteland (Fig. 1). The man's expression is haunting as he looks at the viewer with a stare of pain and anger. Another one shows images of soldiers and workers, all of them barefoot, lined up at attention as if they were part of a military review and collaged right in front of abandoned

1 Sammy Baloji
Untitled (2006)
Digital C-print; 60cm x 240cm
(23½" x 94½")
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

machines and buildings (Fig. 2). In these photomontages, the condition of servitude of the Congolese workers is evident. Some are shackled, other attached by ropes (Figs. 3–4), most are wearing tattered clothes and all bear somber expressions.

What comes through in Baloji's work is the contradiction between what has been portrayed as the prosperity of colonial times and the reality of the exploitation of the natural resources and the workers in the mines then. If we recall, Katanga was one of the most important sources of uranium during the colonial and then the Cold War period. Bogumil

2 Sammy Baloji
Untitled, 2006
Digital C-print; 60cm x 159cm
(23½" x 62½")
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



7. Earth: Sammy Baloji



3 Sammy Baloji
Untitled, 2006
Digital C-print; 60cm x 159cm
(23½" x 62½")
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Jewsiewicki reports in his essay how Belgium won a place at the peace conference following World War II because of its access to uranium in the Katanga region, which was used by the US in 1945 to build the first atomic bomb.¹ The end of the colonial period and the murder of Patrice Lumumba orchestrated by the CIA, along with Mobutu's coming to power, were linked to the importance of uranium during the Cold War. At the time, the US considered

Mobutu a more palatable leader, given American military objectives, than Lumumba, who was leaning towards a socialist/revolutionary vision and was endorsed by the USSR.

For the historical complexity it portrays, "The Beautiful Time" is an important exhibition and becomes even more meaningful as we consider the current development of the mine industry in the Katanga region. Miners are again digging, this time for coltan, an ore indispensable to the manufacture of cell phones, computers, and other electronics.² The working conditions are precarious, the trade grossly unequal, and profit arms rebels as well as international corporations.³ In Katanga today, the postcolonial industry, fueled by the demands of first world consumers, perpetuates the same dynamics of exploitation and power as shown in Baloji's photographs of "The Beautiful Time." They stand as a warning for the future.

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Notes

1 See nuclearweaponarchive.org/Usa/Tests/Trinity.html

2 It is estimated that the DRC holds about 60% of the world's reserves of coltan. In 2008, the DRC signed an agreement with China regarding the exploitation of coltan mines in Lubumbashi.

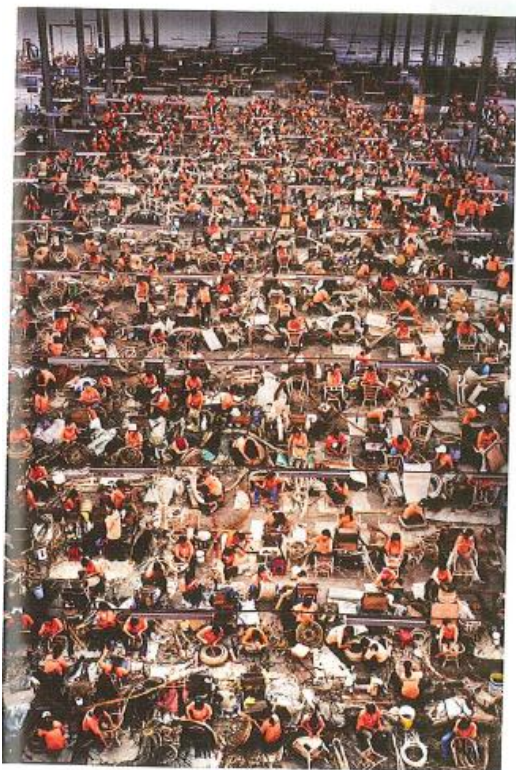
3 For more information regarding the involvement of industrial corporations in coltan extraction and the link to the wars on the Rwanda/DRC border, see <http://www.globalissues.org/article/442/guns-money-and-cell-phones> as well as *Les Mines de l'enfer*, a fifty-two-minute documentary by Olivier Baudry De Vaux, <http://www.monalisa-prod.com/vf/catalogue.php?id=88>

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4 Sammy Baloji
Untitled, 2006
Digital C-print; 60cm x 170cm
(23½" x 67")
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST





Andreas Gursky: *Nha Trang, Vietnam*, 2004, C-print on Plexiglas, 116 by 81 1/2 inches; at Matthew Marks.

notion of a shifting, unstable identity; and the boorish, pathetic and grotesque aspects of our personalities. To represent clowns directly, as she has in her latest series, seems almost redundant. In a 2000-01 series, a withering study of middle-aged women holding on stubbornly to a youthful self-image, Sherman drew attention to the cracks in the veneer: the once-fashionable clothes, the outmoded hairstyles. Clowns are explicitly about such imperfections, revealing the pathos behind the flamboyantly slipshod costume, or the menace underlying the glee.

Sherman is an unparalleled performer and a sharp observer of human folly and weakness. She has said that she didn't like clowns as a child (who does, really?) and only began visiting the circus in her 30s. Clearly, she found some fertile ground. In a particularly effective work, a pensive male clown tenderly holds a pink balloon-dog on one side of a diptych, while, on the other, his female counterpart, wearing a Carmen Miranda hat of balloon-fruit, has folded her arms and closed her eyes, looking resigned and world-weary. In a creeper photograph, a yellow-suited slickster manages to look altogether threatening while playing a small

accordion. The most girlish-looking clown in the series—with pink ponytails and a stuffed animal—is also the most sexual, with fabric breasts and a triangular patch of felt pubic hair that recall earlier Sherman series in which she incorporated prosthetic body parts.

The strongest pieces are those that focus in on the details of Sherman's carefully calibrated performances and her nuanced use of color and costume. Slightly weaker are the ones that digitally montage more than a single figure, providing too much information and narrative direction. In one of the photographs with several figures, three images of the same blue-haired clown, with different

expressions and in different sizes, are seen against a zigzagging, psychedelically colored background. The digital backgrounds are new to Sherman's work, and the more trippy and hallucinogenic they are, the more they draw attention away from the characterizations. In the most compelling photographs, the clown is an isolated Everyman, and we are given the freedom to peruse his psychological depth. While the subjects of her *Film Stills* or *History Portraits* were distant as cultural icons, the clowns can be read as embodiments of us all.

—Jean Dykstra

Andreas Gursky at Matthew Marks

Walking into this exhibition, I thought that nothing could be more in conflict with the cool

white spaces of the Matthew Marks Gallery than the first photograph, *Untitled XIII (Mexico)*, 2002, which depicts a gigantic garbage dump. Rotting trash, boxes and plastic pails stretch to the horizon, marked by a row of cargo containers and beyond it a hint of the city. The implied stench is unrelieved by the exciting way that bright colors and a variety of textures clash with the photograph's flatness and glossy surface.

Other images showed the opposite end of the chain of production and consumption. *Greeley* (2002), for instance, pictured the American West in the age of the grid, with cattle standing amid feed troughs and pools of water and waste in a vast muddy field cut into squares by fencing. There is no green anywhere, except for a few trees beyond the lot, but there are still cowboys, patrolling rather than herding. Another cow picture, *Fukuyama* (2004), shows a variant from the East—in a land with less space, vertically stacked rows of cows in a feedlot built against a mountainside. The exhibition underlined the structural familiarity of this unusual scene with a photograph of a prison, *Statesville, Illinois* (2002), depicting a vertical grid of numbered cells, cages with little openings for food and barred windows for the inmates to look out from.

Nha Trang, Vietnam (2004), in which uniformed female chair- and basket-weavers labor under a grid of lights on overhead cables inside a huge factory, shows the transformation of handicraft into manufacture as a society is driven deeper into modernity. The women's individuality—like that of the prisoners in *Statesville*—persists even while the structure of work contains it, just as their survival serves to profit others. This picture is so rich in observation that one forgets just how rarely contemporary art portrays labor, the effort and suffering that are actually the other side and support of gallery culture. Gursky's ambition, to

image both the vast multiplicity of our world and the recurrent structures that regulate it, is unusually great for a contemporary artist. This exhibition was a welcome reminder of how successfully he is realizing it.

—Paul Mattick

Deborah Roan at Von Lintel

However manipulated by computer software they appear to be, Deborah Roan's wide-format, multiply exposed photographs are the result of chance and mechanical process. Her subject is an unpeopled urban landscape—the buildings, displays, logos and electric signs of New York. Within this broad array, Roan locates specific images in store windows and illuminated signs and frames and exposes them on a roll of color film. Then she shifts pictorial context and runs the film through the camera several times more, producing random multiple exposures. After she processes the negative as a continuous strip, she selects and cuts the layered images into panoramas of three to five frames each. These are enlarged and printed. Hues are vivid and occasionally lurid: electric blues and yellows, intense magentas and reds. Mounted directly to thin sheets of aluminum, the prints are 3 feet high and as much as 10 feet wide.

Documenting the marketing of religion, *Gia* (2000) depicts a Chinatown sale of Christmas kitsch by focusing on an array of pricey pendant crosses, a Madonna and a head of Christ suspended from a battery of heavy gold chains, all in a palette of red, gold and blue neon. The title derives from signage in the window display, a reference to the Gemological Institute of America, an organization that provides certification of stones. Exploring the visual cacophony of nocturnal Chinatown, Roan layers the imagery of *Greenpoint Bank* (2002), superimposing an elaborate dragon puppet, a photograph of a Jack Russell terrier

Deborah Roan: *Red Chair*, 2000, digital Cibachrome on aluminum, 36 by 96 inches; at Von Lintel.



NAOYA HATAKEYAMA

born in 1958 in Iwate, Japan

lives and works in Tokyo

WWW.LAGALERIE.DE WWW.TAKAISHIIGALLERY.COM

Naoya Hatakeyama's photographs in the series *River* (1993–94) are in vertical format, like a Japanese hanging scroll, and are divided horizontally in the middle. In the lower half we see water flowing along a canal and reflecting the light from windows of the houses that rise up in the top half of the picture. A patch of sky – either day or night – can be seen above the roofs, and there is an occasional tree reaching across the canal. Each setting is perfectly balanced within the format. The pictures, 100 x 49 cm, reveal a delicate sensitivity to form, colour, perspective, horizontal and vertical lines, foreground and background – all combined to convey an extreme sense of composition.

Hatakeyama is not, however, simply focusing on some picturesque feature of Tokyo. The atmosphere of the canal is in stark contrast to what lies beyond its banks, where one knows for a fact that there are hundreds of thousands of people rushing around, each with his or her own desires and aims and obligations. Down here in the canal, where the photographer wades through the shallow water, the hustle and bustle of the outside world is shut out. It's almost like a modern Japanese version of the Styx, the river of Greek mythology across which the souls of the dead were

ferried; the canal leads to the underworld of the city, to the unconscious, suppressed realms of society.

Hatakeyama studied at the School of Visual Art & Design in Ibaraki, has had his work acclaimed at international exhibitions, and has won several awards, including the Higashikawa Domestic Photographer Prize in 2000. He focuses mainly on the fragile beauty of urban and industrialized places. In such series as *Lime Hills* (1986–91) and *Lime Works* (1991–94), he looks for the marks that man leaves on and directly beneath the skin of the earth; he is not interested in man himself. The series *Untitled* (1989–97) shows the city as a sea of concrete boxes divided up by the lines of its streets, as do the *vedute* photographed in Osaka in 2002. The Moloch of Osaka, though created by humans for humans, is shown by Hatakeyama as an 'all-over' composition – a structure in which humans in fact are a minor consideration. In *Underground/River (Tunnel)*, 1999, he burrows deep down below the city, using lamps to light up the pitch-dark world of the sewers and their brackish water. In Hatakeyama's painterly use of light and shade, the three-dimensional, geometric shapes of the concrete drains are turned into a contemporary Hades.

NADINE OLONETZKY

Nadav Kander

To be really honest about why I started photography, it is because it was the first thing I ever did well at as a child. I had learning difficulties, all sorts of problems. But then when I started taking photographs, they got attention. At thirteen, I took a picture of a girl watching a school gala—she turned out to be a teacher's daughter—and that got into the school magazine. *Frame: wow!*

I had a great love for the workings of cameras and watches; there were some cameras in our attic in Johannesburg, old ones. I fiddled a lot. A friend's dad had a darkroom; he was a good photographer. I still remember the pictures he had on the walls of graveyards, and tunnels superimposed. It had a huge effect on me in that dark teenage way. I loved the work. He processed my film, told me which ones were good, took me under his wing a little bit.

I then found other ways of getting people to look at me—notably a huge motorbike. That took over for a while. That was until I fell off it quite badly and then photography took its place again. Since I was about fifteen I knew I was going to be a photographer.

What formalized it was going into the air force—it was mandatory in South Africa then—and one of the places you could get an easier ride was to try and get into a more skilled job, so I pushed the photography thing. I printed for eighteen months, a very good technical grounding. There was some routine stuff of turning out prints of aerial photographs, but I had a lot of time to do my own thing and learned a lot in the darkroom. I decided then that when I got out I would want to find an apprenticeship, which is what I did before leaving for England eight months later.

I was drawn to found pictures—pictures where there was a subject that I realized needed me to formalize and compose to make a picture. I was not drawn to the full creation, to the idea of starting off with nothing. I was rather drawn to landscape or subjects where you intervene to make the picture satisfying to yourself.

I have never been that interested in commenting, in documentary. It has always been about the satisfaction I get from a composition, a line, an amount of space, a feeling, an

atmosphere, a response to a picture. I am still about that today. I've always admired art that tells me more about the artist's opinion and state of mind shown to me through the subject matter.

"Accuracy" is an approach the artist can decide to employ. With the Obama people, I chose to photograph them very accurately, but I wasn't interested in actually capturing a moment in time. Rather, they are a group of representations of people showing the economy of gesture and stance that is so interesting to see. The way I achieved that was to remove the context of time and place, photographing them on a light background so that one sees everything they do, and show the differences between them, but I was not concerned as to "What is this person about? What can I divulge about their personality?" They are almost like waxworks and this sets it apart.

I also let the subjects in part be the authors of these pictures; they were never coaxed into anything they didn't naturally do. I might invite them to try a stance that was typical of them, but I was very conscious they should be themselves. I would never say, "Lift your chin, look this way."

11. Earth: Yao Lu



Kazuo Shiraga: *Funryū*, 1973, alkyd paint on canvas, 71 1/2 by 89 1/2 inches; at McCaffrey.

various radically direct, performative approaches to raw materials. Refinement was not their game. A 1955 film shows Shiraga sprawled on the ground, half naked, wrestling with a viscous mixture of clay and concrete. This full-body engagement led to a versatile technique of painting with his bare feet. Other artists leaped through paper screens, fired paint at canvases with guns or made provocative use of ordinary objects.

The canvases at McCaffrey rewarded close examination. Several involve varied intensities of single colors, while others unleash multiple hues. Pictorial activity, whether swirled, lumpy or furrowed, may be all over, or centered and thinning toward the edges. Shiraga often worked while suspended from a rope above canvas (or paper) placed on the floor. The airborne attack yielded long, sinuous passages retaining the parallel tracks of his toes. His expressive range is considerable. Recurrent floods of blood-red pigment suggest violence. Elsewhere, footprint traces subtly allude to dance. Shiraga—like others in the group—was influenced by the Abstract Expressionists, who had exhibited in Japan in 1951. But the performance/action aspect of Gutai work, starting as early as 1954, anticipated and/or influenced Allan Kaprow's Happenings, Yves Klein's Anthropometries and much that followed. In the '60s, Gutai drew many international avant-gardists to Osaka.

When Gutai disbanded in '72, a period of eclipse followed. Subsequently, many shows in Europe and the U.S. have re-established the group's significance. A

selection of Gutai work appeared at the 2009 Venice Biennale (emphasizing its proto-Fluxus aspect), while a small, fascinating show that opened last July at the Pollock-Krasner Center in East Hampton comprised paintings and archives. The Guggenheim held a Gutai symposium in November. Individual Gutai participants are finally receiving attention here, as well, but many individual careers remain to be explored, and a full-scale Gutai exhibition in a U.S. museum is surely overdue.

—Elizabeth C. Baker

[The Pollock-Krasner show, titled "Under Each Other's Spell: The Gutai and New York," is at UB-Anderson Gallery, University of Buffalo, Mar. 27-Aug. 22.]

YAO LU BRUCE SILVERSTEIN

Rarely exhibited in the West, Chinese artist Yao Lu (b. 1967) documents his changing country in atmospheric works that look to the future through the lens of the past. In his first show in the U.S., Yao presented 16 photographs, most circular or rounded windowlike compositions floating on a white ground, 47 1/4 inches square, with two horizontals measuring 6 and 10 feet across. The neutral backgrounds and compressed spaces suggest traditional Chinese landscape paintings; the works even bear the red signature stamps and collection seals known as chop marks. But these mist-shrouded scenes (ranging from 2006 to '08) are digitally composed montages of photographs taken by Yao of China's ubiquitous construction sites and trash heaps.

In these cleverly disguised scenes, Yao subtly critiques China's willingness

to sacrifice its history and despoil the environment in its breathtaking sprint to modernization. Deceptively pastoral scenes of rivers, lakes and mountains blanketed with flora or dusted with snow are, upon closer inspection, ravaged landscapes awaiting development. Lush-seeming hillsides are actually green mesh-covered mountains of debris. A flowing river is revealed to be a road winding around mounds of rubbish, and rocky outcrops are broken chunks of concrete. Some scenes are nonspecific, while the titles of others provide locales—fishing boats near Mount Yu, a house on Mount Fuchun, a spring picnic beside Lake Dongting—all soon to be lost, presumably, to sprawling construction. The lone tree, pagoda or house illustrates not an ideal but the lone holdout still standing in the revision of a national narrative.

Yao's work is akin to that of Masami Teraoka, Yun-Fei Ji, Shahzia Sikander or any number of artists who recycle traditional art forms to suit contemporary themes. With tiny human figures visible in some works, Yao's pictures also touch on the tradition of the sublime, here with humanity overwhelmed not by nature but by the forces of commerce and "progress." While many of his compatriots found expression in physical feats or Western modes of representation, Yao's message seems more poignant and mournful than defiant. His transformation of environmental depredation into nostalgic renderings of natural beauty raises the question of whether the new China, like Yao's fabricated scenes, is built on falsehood.

—Stephanie Cash

Yao Lu: *Viewing of the Waterfall from the Pine Rocks*, 2007, chromogenic print, 47 1/4 by 47 1/4 inches; at Bruce Silverstein.



LISTENING TO PHOTOGRAPHY

THE SILENCE OF EDGAR MARTINS

BY DAVID CAMPANY

The Surrealists did not get out much. Theirs was an agoraphobic art of highly charged intimacy. They saw the imagination as an unruly chamber, best evoked in tight, horizonless frames. When they did venture out, it was usually under cover of darkness, when the grip of social law is loose and the black backdrop of night can turn social space into a potential stage.


The Surrealists did take holidays, often by the sea. They had fun, but rarely made art to rival their urban efforts. Essentially bourgeois types, dividing city from country, work from leisure, they did not recognize themselves on the beach. It was a missed opportunity. After all, the beach is the porous boundary par excellence. Every surface is on the move. Substance and void blur. Light and time define each other. Desire strains to be set free. Space becomes a diagram of unnerving simplicity and vision is intensified. At night, even more so.

Few places in the world retain their character around the clock. Most depend on a particular time of day and a particular use. The more dependent they are, the more they seem to disappear from us at all other times. The beach is such a place. At night it is almost nothing of what it is by day. A beach without people may still be a beach, but when we can't see the sea, what is it? To be on the beach at night is always to trespass a little—beyond official hours. To photograph it at night is always to transgress a little.

As much as it is a medium of record, photography is a means of estrangement. The two qualities are not opposites, but they are a paradox. Like the Surrealists, Edgar Martins seems to

exploit this. His pictures may strike the viewer as records, but they may also have the quality of visionary projections. As in lucid dreams, the world seems to be manifestly there before us, but its meaning remains unattainably latent. The world is stripped back to what really matters, but it remains a puzzle. Vision insists—but upon *what* we cannot be sure.

Are these beaches in Martins's images, or merely beachlike spaces? They could almost be interiors. A curtain of black velvet, or the digital equivalent, could easily substitute for the infinite night. The sea has gone, and taken with it any sense of horizon. This could be a movie sound stage for shooting scenes under controlled conditions. Martins eliminates unwanted weather, sights, and sounds. And like arranged studio images, his photographs have that sense of unreal perfection. Photography is rarely so absolute. The chance that creeps in is what gives it the effect of reality. Deprive a picture of chance and every inch of its surface comes under scrutiny.

Most of the time, it is the stillness of photography that seems to define the medium. It has done so at least since the birth of cinema. Stillness is thought to be the quality that makes photography what it is. The *silence* of photography is rarely even noticed. Perhaps it is too obvious to mention. Even so, silence is what allows photographs to do what they do and to be what they are. Occasionally, it does come to the fore. Martins's photographs dramatize their own muteness. Indeed, whatever meaning we may look for here, we look for it in an unusually palpable silence. 

Foreword

H.E. Kofi Annan
Honorary President
Prix Pictet

The world has changed dramatically in the past several decades. And it will change more, faster and faster. This presents us with an enormous challenge: how can we sustain life on earth with current rates of production, consumption, depletion of natural resources and population growth?

One of the key traits of human economic advance has been exponential growth. People have used every means they can to convert the resources of the Earth into wealth. Despite the enormous benefits to society as a whole, this pattern of economic development has not occurred without consequences.

In spite of all we have accomplished through science and technology, the existence of extreme poverty, inequality and environmental degradation continues to preoccupy us. And we will soon run out of margin.

For it is only recently that we have understood that the environmental resource base, upon which all life depends, is finite. We have also come to understand that there are limits to the carrying capacity of our planet. And economic growth alone cannot solve the challenges of an increasingly crowded world.

Without a shift from 'business-as-usual' to 'sustainability', a series of cascading threats to global well-being is inevitable. To avoid this, we must work towards a new era of global cooperation around shared goals of sustainable development.

Prosperity must be maintained through new strategies for sustainable development that complement market forces, spread sustainable technologies, stabilise the global population and enable the billion poorest people to escape extreme poverty.

Though we live in a time when confidence in global cooperation is at a low ebb, experience teaches us that collective action is vital to achieving shared goals.

If we take the right measures, there will be room for all on the planet to live in peace and prosperity. If we have the courage to change course, we will be able to achieve the four

goals of our global society: environmental sustainability, the stabilisation of the world's population, the end of extreme poverty and a new era of global cooperation to solve common problems.

This collection of extraordinary photographs shows us why a new economic model is needed – one that is global, inclusive, cooperative, environmentally aware and science-based.

These photographs remind us that when we look around the world today, almost all the crises that afflict our global economy have environmental roots, such as climate change, pollution, water shortage, biodiversity loss, decline of arable land, depletion of marine life, scarcity of energy sources, persistent pockets of extreme poverty, the threat of pandemics and a dangerous imbalance of resource appropriation within and between countries.

In this book you will see that each artist has addressed the environmental and social challenges we face in their own personal way. Their focus has been as wide as the theme Growth itself. The subjects they have chosen have ranged from the compromised glory of the natural world to urban and industrial topographies that seem alien, strange and devoid of life. The result is a series of images, often of overwhelming power, that shocks us into realisation of the world we now inhabit and of the scale of the threat we face.

They are images which should remind governments, the private sector – and all of us as individuals – of the urgent need to confront the challenge and paradoxes of our current pattern of growth before it is too late.

Kofi Annan, October 2010

Growth's Twisted Beauty

Sue Steward

The word 'growth' doesn't always conjure positive images: cancer cells grow; slums sprawl; poverty multiplies. Small may be beautiful, as the environmentalist E. S. Schumacher once wrote, and it may be easy to ascribe many of the world's current problems to unsustainable economic growth. Yet growth is vital to our well-being. This contradictory theme has inspired the artists nominated for the Prix Pictet to produce works of compelling beauty.



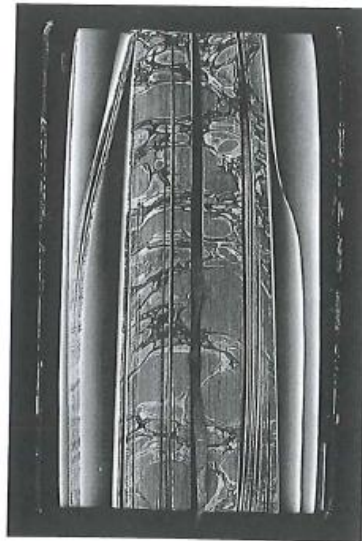
Top
Paul Dunn
Officer, Victoria, 2003
Series: Imagined Communities
2003
Officer, Victoria, Australia

Right
Veronica Bailey
Russell's *Modern Europe*
Series: Hours of Devotion
2007
Coutts & Co, London, UK

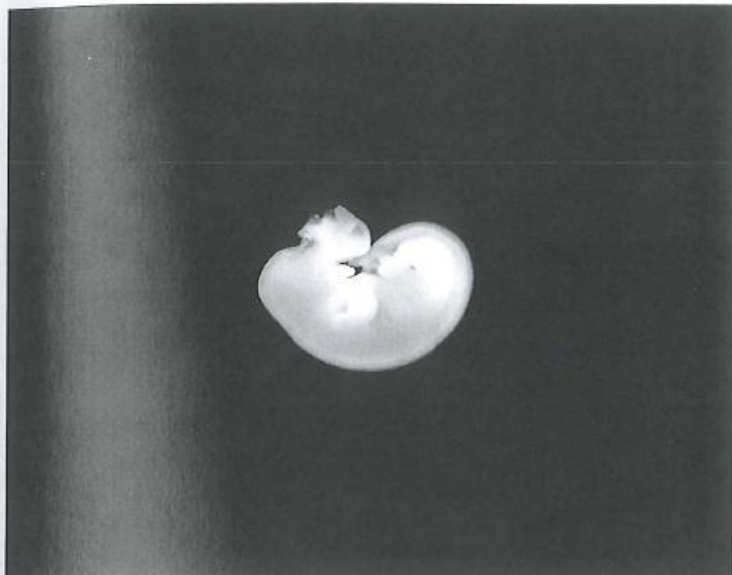
The work of the 450 photographers nominated for the third Prix Pictet defines 'growth' almost literally. But technical, compositional and craft-based skills come into play to create a richly diverse kaleidoscope of imagery. Many photographers draw on photo documentary to tease out details and expand visions of their subjects, while others occupy that indefinable borderland between photography and fine art.

"Come and see how we've grown!" exclaims Paul Dunn's photograph of a garish cardboard cut-out man in a poster advertising a new suburban enclave outside Melbourne, Australia. For him, growth is exciting and for future residents, growth is positive. That excitement spills through this book, even in works where photographers are questioning or revealing the negative impact of growth itself.

Pre-empting the economic crash of 2008, the conceptual photographer Veronica Bailey set her series *Hours of Devotion* in the library of Coutts Bank where she explored books with historical economic significance. Her photograph of the late 18th-century classic, William Russell's *The History of Modern Europe*, is focused on the sumptuously marbled endpaper hanging heavily between leather-clad covers. The overall effect of the series and the richness of Bailey's images evokes that era of European economic growth and frenzied seaborne trade.



This year's theme threw up many surprises. Tim Flach's poetic representation of horses from the series *Equus* possesses a sublime beauty and includes a fertilised, perfectly circular cell floating like a moon, and a tiny 30-day old equine foetus with a clearly defined face, floating inside its amniotic sac.



A link exists between Flach's pictures and Steve Pyke's twenty-year study of his son Jack who was first photographed twenty minutes after his birth. These tender, black and white images of natural growth contrast with the freakishness of the body-builders who inspired Valérie Belin. She invited men and women to pose in non-clichéd moves and shot them in black and white to emphasise their oiled, sculptural forms and robotic artificiality.

Many photographs used more traditional routes to approach our planet's problems of population growth, waste and pollution. The artists have applied a rich variety of technical, compositional, conceptual and theoretical approaches, but monochrome remains a common language for photo-journalists raised on the Magnum model. It is refreshing to see the many non-Western photographers documenting crises in their own countries.

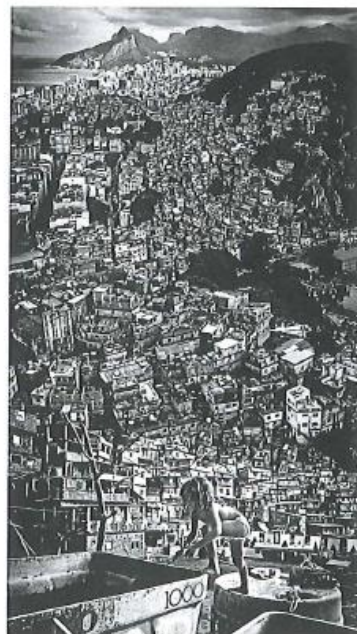
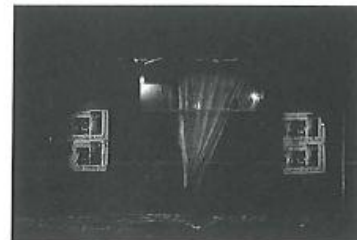
Overpopulation and migration are dominant subjects linked to the consequences of need, greed, pollution, waste, appalling housing and horrendous working conditions. The sprawl of towns and cities all over the world has led to the rise of the slums, shanty towns and favelas that are a source of inspiration for many photographers in this book. In 1950, 29 per cent of the world's population was urban, now it stands at 50 per cent, and UN

forecasters predict two billion people will live in urban poverty by 2030.

The most familiar examples are the vast favelas of Rio de Janeiro which cling limpet-like to the hillsides. Julio Bittencourt points his camera into the windows of one favela block and engages with the residents in a voyeuristic dialogue between outsider and inhabitant. In contrast, Claudia Jaguaribe romanticises these favelas by using digitised, super-bright colours. Her significant aerial shots, taken from a helicopter, deliver unfamiliar views which illustrate scale and physical proximity to conventional neighbourhoods.

Africa and India are also riddled with shanty towns and populations that continue to grow exponentially. Christian Als (pages 32-35) presents images from Kibera, one of Africa's largest shanty towns, encircling parts of Nairobi. His documentary style shifts the focus between an intimate, single boy showering to a family group at dinner, and a community funeral. In India, Rajen Nair takes a similarly straightforward approach when exploring Mumbai's 'Slumbai' (of *Slumdog Millionaire* fame), in a city where over 50 per cent of the population are slum dwellers.

In Mexico, President Vicente Fox pledged to tackle his country's housing crisis by building six million houses by the end of his term. The



Above left
Tim Flach
Embryo - Day 30
Series: Equus
2008
Fertility Unit, Newmarket, UK

Above top
Julio Bittencourt
Prestes Maia 04
Series: In a Window of Prestes Maia 911 Building
2008
São Paulo, Brazil

Below
Claudia Jaguaribe
Girl on Rooftop
Series: Rio de Janeiro
2010
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Growth's Twisted Beauty



Mexican photographer Livia Corona reveals how he stuck to his promise and built acres of houses in grids, offering colourful geometric designs on the landscapes but sterile, isolated lives without facilities for the new residents. *Moving Day, Zumpango, Mexico, 2010* ironically captures the excited anticipation of one family's new life in one of these homes.

The suburb of Agbogbloshie, outside Accra in Ghana, is a dumping ground for tons of computers and e-waste from Europe and the US each month. Two photographers have documented the effect of the dumps on the community, including child labourers. Nyaba Leon Ouedraogo calls his series *The Hell of Copper* (pages 43–45), and Irish photographer Andrew McConnell refers to the products being handled as 'toxic junk'. Ouedraogo's prints possess a beauty which contradicts the subject, emphasising the gothic, choking atmosphere of the smoke enveloping boys, who are collecting computer parts to sell, and other figures illuminated by fires burning plastic parts for their copper content.

Plastic waste turns up all over the globe. Chris Jordan's portraits of dead albatross chicks (pages 40–41), with gaping stomach cavities packed with bottle tops, fishing lines and junk mistaken by their parents for food, is a small story exquisitely drawn.

In Bangladesh, Saiful Huq Omi visited abandoned ships where workers – adults and children – use their bare hands to strip metal for recycling. *Ships and Beyond* (pages 46–47) includes a 16-year old boy who lost an arm and leg in an accident and is compelled to remain at his post. Omi's anger and empathy radiates from his sharp, tonally perfect black and white photographs.

An occasional lightness emerges from these many stories. Gwenn Dubourthoumieu's visits to a Congolese village resulted in the series *JECOKE* based on a dance which local men perform together on dusty ground, wearing bowler hats, suits and natty shoes. They compete for the coolest moves in a dance craze invented in their village decades ago. Dance crazes usually fade but this one still feeds the souls of these men, and Dubourthoumieu's finely composed scenes transmit their rhythm and joy.



Top
Livia Corona
Moving Day, Zumpango, Mexico, 2010
Series: Two Million Homes for Mexico
2008–2010
Zumpango, Mexico

Right
Gwenn Dubourthoumieu
JECOKE – 2
Series: JECOKE
2009
Lubumbashi, Katanga, Congo

13. Growth: Foreword & Essays

Some countries, cultures and situations seem inherently photogenic, and China and India are often a gift for photographers. The futurist tower blocks packed together in China's dense conurbations soar above the threatened *hutongs* where ancient architecture, culture and lifestyles are vanishing as fast as the towers rise. Michael Wolf's images of Hong Kong (cover and pages 68–69) present a graphic full-frame detail of tower clusters that reflects his attraction to their irresistible geometry and the rhythm of their repeated patterns.

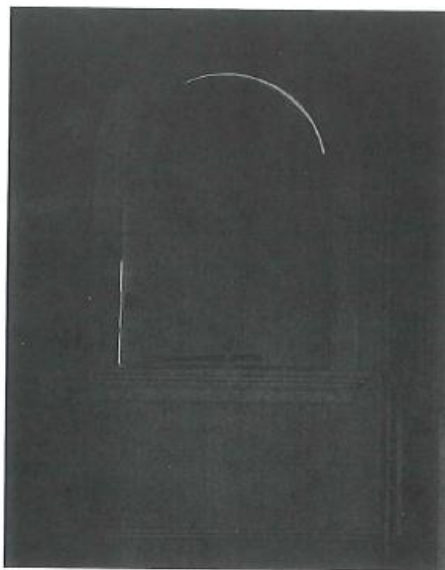
In contrast, Dave Wyatt shows the emergent Chinese middle-class occupying houses built in imitation of English architecture, whose interior décor comes from European and American magazines and TV programmes. They serve as backdrops to Yeondoo Jung's portraits of South Korean families posing proudly in their identical rooms devoid of any Korean cultural history (pages 66–67). "Civilizations grow and die", says Claude Doury after photographing a thoroughly Western wedding in Central Asia.

Abstract and fine art photography is rather underplayed in the collection but it does contain many superb, eye-catching examples which defy categorisation. Stéphane Couturier's *Melting Point* (pages 18–20) series possesses an ironically layered and diaphanous quality, and Simon Norfolk's 'sublime' images resist easy definition, representing Star Wars technology and the consequences of wars and often veiled narratives through vast designs which imprint themselves on the viewer's mind.

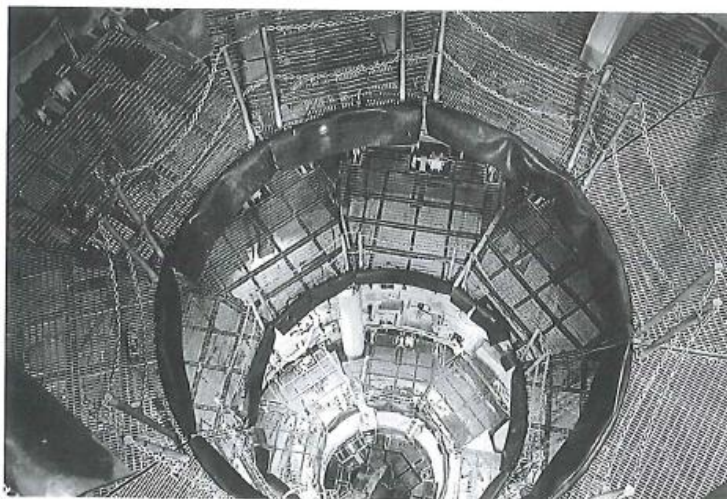
By contrast to the most of photographs in this collection, the American photographer S. Billie Mandle interprets 'growth' through her private, spiritual explorations. In the series *Reconciliation* she uses near abstract images of confessionals, suffuses them with light and appropriately mystical colour, to create a tranquillity and beauty epitomised by *Holy Redeemer*. Her work serves as an elegant and surprisingly secular presence in this remarkable collection of photographs which mark the diverse and imaginative approach that the nominated photographers have applied to the theme of Growth.

Sue Steward, November 2010

Sue Steward is photography critic and feature writer for *The Evening Standard* and photography critic for BBC Radio 2's *Art Show* with Claudia Winkelman. She is also a reviewer for BBC Radio 3's *World Routes* and author of the definitive book on Latin American music, *Salsa: Musical Heartbeat of Latin America*.



Left
S. Billie Mandle
Holy Redeemer
Series: *Reconciliation*
2009
USA



Below
Simon Norfolk
Titan II Silo
Series: *Full Spectrum Dominance*
2008
California, USA

The Paradox of Growth

Leo Johnson

Two years after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, one year after the failure of the Copenhagen Summit to secure adequate global carbon reduction commitments, five policy makers and opinion formers gathered to debate 'The Paradox of Growth'.



"We had an experiment – an alternative system – which was catastrophic both to poverty and to ecology."

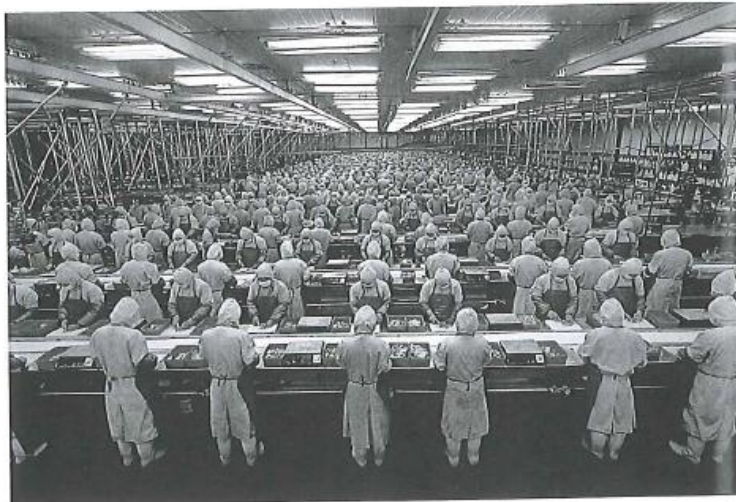
Francis Pike

"The solution isn't to say, 'Thou shalt not have those things that we already have, but you don't yet have ...'"

Stephan Chambers

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Minouche Shafik



If we have acquired a collective immunity to the data of sustainability, the Prix Pictet's goal is to reverse this effect, to use photography whose aesthetic has the power to counter our anaesthesia, photography, to invert Roland Barthes' famous phrase from *Camera Lucida*, that does not shout but wounds. As Stephan Chambers commented at the outset of the debate, "we ignore what the artist points us towards at our peril." The panel's task was to engage not just with each other but also with the works, highlighting and reframing some of the challenges and paradoxes of growth.

Francis Pike opened the debate, taking the long lens view of the historian. "There is an existing model. It's worked incredibly well in raising living standards faster than in any period in human history in the past two hundred years. It's called free market growth. It began with the industrial revolution in England, the Anglo-Saxons' great legacy to the world. And this model is still valid."

Christine Loh responded with her reading of Domingos Peixoto's *Untitled* (page 56-57) – a fisherman at his moment of success, two fish held aloft within his palm. Except he has scooped them from a slurry of decomposing fish floating on the surface by the waste pipe. Peixoto's picture delivers a specific visual challenge to the central tenet of neoclassical economics. Does trickle-down growth work? Is the liquid that flows from the end of this pipe beneficial? Or is it, in Christine Loh's terms, 'brutish' in its possibilities?

"Economists", commented Sir David King, "need to be humbled. We need to understand just what happened to the Reagan/Thatcher model that became the global model for economics: deregulate, and leave the free market on its own, with a government that has a minimal role to play." "We should be very careful", Stephan Chambers added, "about embracing uncritically any notions of easy globalisation or simple-minded growth."

Right
Edward Burtynsky
Manufacturing #17, Deda Chicken
Processing Plant
Series: China
2005
Dehui City, Jilin Province, China

Minouche Shafik added a layer of complexity. "Growth", she commented, "may have the potential to have negative consequences for the poor, but what, other than growth, has the capacity to lift them out of poverty? For many parts of the world", she continued, "there is no option but to have significant levels of growth in order to reduce poverty, to stop the fact that 1,000 women die every day in childbirth and billions of children are malnourished." Is the cause, in other words, also part of the cure? Is what the Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati termed 'immiserising growth' a necessary condition for ending the misery of poverty?

It is a paradox that Edward Burtynsky elaborates in *Manufacturing #17*. Burtynsky's large-format composition captures the dehumanising scale of the production line. But is this scale not simultaneously evidence of progress, of a new capacity, against the backdrop of a history of national famine, to deliver affordable food at scale? Burtynsky creates a visual equivalence between the packagers and the packaged – both mute, wrapped in pastels, commoditised and quality-controlled. But is this process not also evidence of industrial maturation, and a precondition for growth on the international export market?

As Minouche Shafik commented, "there is a grimness to that image, a horrible grimness, but in two decades, China has reduced poverty at a pace that took us centuries to do in the West. So there is also something beautiful about it in a strange sort of way, and we have to recognise that."

JeongMee Yoon's *Jeeyoo and her Pink Things* (pages 50–51) shifted the debate from production to consumption. As surrounded as Peixoto's fisherman is by dead fish, Yoon's girl is entombed in pink plastic. Is this image a validation of the economist assumption that consumption creates utility? Is she the happiest girl in the world? Or is this, in Sir

David King's words, "a fruitless waste of resources"? Is this a living place transformed into a temporary waste-processing zone? Is this testimony to an international project of consumption engineering, with growth for the sake of growth as its goal, and environmental and social cost as its outcome?

In Brian Ulrich's *Kentucky Fried Chicken* (page 54) a giant statue of Colonel Saunders, KFC's commanding officer, lies in the recumbent/regime change position more familiar to Lenin, Ceausescu and Saddam. Must growth be dethroned?

Francis Pike rebutted the question. "No growth is not an option. We must have it. We had an experiment – an alternative system – which was catastrophic both to poverty and to ecology, and which led to the great genocides. So we have seen these catastrophes, and I think we have to be very careful, in looking at growth, that we do not fall for the extremist wing of the green movement, which would actually rather have no growth at all."

Christine Loh countered with a question. "Right now, the model we in China are following is your model. So some people from China would say, 'You have been there first. You come up with some ideology or principle that is more compelling.' If what we are witnessing, in other words, is a Western challenge to the grand narrative of growth for the sake of growth, then where are the West's counter-narratives to compete with it?"

"This is not", Stephan Chambers countered, "about growth or no growth. This is about a different kind of growth. One of the problems that we face is that the real cost of most of what we do is not properly understood or accounted for. These things that economists call externalities are all over the place. The solution isn't to say, 'Thou shalt not have those things that we already have, but you don't yet have'. The price of the pink plastic is wrong.



"We have never really understood Earth's operating guidelines, and we're only now trying to piece it together."

Christine Loh

"What is growth for? It's not just for things."

Professor Sir David King

The Paradox of Growth

The solution is to price these things properly in respect of the damage they will cause."

"Isn't that", countered King, "the lovely belief that the market always gets it right?" Regulation, King asserted, is required, citing Rwanda's transition through the political leadership of President Kagame's government to an energy-secure and low-carbon economic model. "I would argue for growth", Chambers commented in agreement, "with the kind of regulation that internalises the costs of things and allows us to harness the productive engine of growth while costing accurately the damage that growth can do."

But beyond that, King asked, is another, deeper, principle also relevant? "What is growth for?", he commented. "It's not just for things. Things are there in order to improve human well-being, or it becomes conspicuous consumption. I'm talking about the need for a renaissance in our thinking."

But isn't there any evidence of this renaissance, any counterbalance to the plastic of Yoon's pink project? Christine Loh turned to Yeondoo Jung's family at music practice in *Evergreen Tower*. Is this, arising out of the East, King's



Renaissance Family of the future, musical, harmonious, quietly leap-frogging Western consumerist concerns?

And if so, is this an emblematic image, Minouche Shafik posited, of "culture eating strategy for breakfast", of culture in her terms as "the real driver, a non-regulatory, non-interventionist way of actually causing huge changes in society"?

You cannot see through Thomas Struth's *Paradise* (page 12–14). The eye gets stuck. The effect is simple; we are forced to recognise not just the scale and complexity of the ecosystem's functions but our place within it. For David King, this point is salient. "We have co-evolved with all other living species and with the geology of the planet. We require exactly the atmosphere that we have."

Struth's image locates the viewer at a point of transition between two economic systems, between one that did not work, and yet dismissed these ecosystems services as valueless externalities, and one that does not yet exist, though by the hard law of regulation and the soft law of markets and culture manages to value and therefore protect these services as the underpinnings of sustainable growth. Our gaze has turned from the first to the second. But this is an economy whose wiring we have not yet mapped out whose 'operating manual' in the words of Christine Loh, we have only just started to decipher. As the viewer in Struth's *Paradise*, we cannot yet see all the way through.

Participants

Stephan Chambers
Director of the MBA and EMBA
Degrees, Saïd Business School,
University of Oxford

Professor Sir David King (Chairman)
Director, Smith School of Enterprise and
the Environment, University of Oxford
and former Chief Scientific Advisor to
the UK Government

Christine Loh
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer,
Civic Exchange (Hong Kong)

Francis Pike
Historian & Entrepreneur

Minouche Shafik
Permanent Secretary,
Department for International Development

Leo Johnson (Chair)
Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers,
Sustainability & Climate Change

Left
JeongMee Yoon
Jeeyoo and her Pink Things
Series: The Pink and Blue Project
2007
Seoul, South Korea

14. Growth: Edward Burtynsky

stuffed into a backyard swing, the diaperlike seat constricting him (*Swing Set*, 2002).

The dynamic *Mother of the Bride* (2002) shows the bottom half of a woman in a pink dress hoisted in a gilt chair by several tuxedoed men. In other photos, the drama is understated or missing. In *Helen's Passing* (2003), a group of people leaving a snowy cemetery may be personally connected, but as a study of figures in a landscape, it seems pedestrian.

Interiors are Stern's preferred milieu: the landing of a town house, a cushy living room, a room with an oversize bed. The edges of the prints sometimes recede into shadows so that the eye focuses on the featured individuals. In the memorable *Ezra* (2000), a young boy turns away from a TV to look at us, one hand draped over the back of a sofa, a slight look of worry in his brow.

"[Family] presents both a place of origin and a point of departure," Stern says in a statement for the show. Focusing on what

tured two by now historic sets of photographs. "Rush Hour," the earlier, is a series of medium-size, highly informal color prints from 1976 recording men and women on the streets of New York, Chicago or Philadelphia. These works, shot with a small camera and daytime flash, are easy to overlook, as they present so many of the characteristics of amateurs' snapshots, with off-kilter compositions, abruptly interrupted movements, oddly truncated figures turning away from the lens and shadows occasionally cast across areas of significance. Sternfeld isolates and freezes a slice of everyday life in which presumably lurk all sorts of hidden dramas. One can't help wondering whether these works inspired Philip-Lorca diCorcia's later street photographs.

Sternfeld's work on the "Rush Hour" series landed him a Guggenheim, which he used to explore the American hinterland, the subject of the glorious set of



Joel Sternfeld: *Domestic Workers Waiting for the Bus*, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1983, printed 2003, digital C-print, 58 1/2 by 48 inches; at Luhring Augustine.

she calls "those murky places in between," she manages for the most part to carry us beyond the confines of a photo album into more resonant territory.

—Carl Little

Joel Sternfeld at Luhring Augustine

"American Prospects and Before," Joel Sternfeld's exhibition at Luhring Augustine, fea-

color photographs in the gallery's two main spaces. These works, created from 1979 to 1983, were first shown in 1984 in the "Three Americans" exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art (along with photos by Robert Adams and Jim Goldberg) and were issued in 1987 as *American Prospects*, a landmark book that has just been lavishly reprinted by D.A.P.

Many contemporary photogra-



Edward Burtynsky: *Three Gorges Dam Project, Wan Zhou #1, Yangtze River, China*, 2002, chromogenic print, 40 by 50 inches; at Charles Cowles.

phers favor the large scale of traditional history painting. New printing technologies have enabled Sternfeld, too, to blow up the size of his original images, first exhibited in a 16-by-20-inch or 20-by-24-inch format, to a scale of 42 by 52 1/2 inches, here as digital C-prints. They retain an extraordinary crispness of detail, great intensity of hue and deep focus. Half of the prints on display had not been previously exhibited or published.

Sternfeld is a master in revealing the uncanny, setting a precedent for younger photographers like Gregory Crewdson. *Domestic Workers Waiting for the Bus*, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1983 shows three black women walking down a road flanked by vast, immaculately maintained properties. One imagines that few, if any, of the people who live in this affluent suburb are black, and that these residents rarely walk around in it, as the road lacks sidewalks. The majestic composition recedes one lawn at a time, raising issues of class and race with dignity and restraint. Typically for Sternfeld, the actors are seen from some distance, a remove that serves to strengthen the serenity of the whole.

Near Grafton, West Virginia, March 1983 is another singularly beautiful composition, though now without people. A shed and some industrial architecture fill the left side and distant middle ground, sparing a patch of lawn on the right, on which a green and black beat-up truck is parked. The frost on the rooftop

and grass tells us this is the early morning. Here, as elsewhere in "American Prospects," Sternfeld achieves a remarkable balance of volumes, colors and textures, an effect that makes the series enormously rewarding, both formally and emotionally.

—Michaël Amy

Edward Burtynsky at Charles Cowles

For the past two decades, Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky has been producing large-scale color images of what we might call "manufactured landscapes": sites, ranging from abandoned quarries in New England to ship-breaking operations on the Indian Ocean, where human industry has indelibly transformed the natural environment. His latest series, "Before the Flood" (2002), closely examines several upriver cities along China's Yangtze River that are soon to be flooded with the completion of the massive Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydroelectric engineering project in history. Although we see the dam itself, an imposing cliff of reinforced concrete stretching into the distance, in one photograph (*Three Gorges Dam Project, Dam #3, Yangtze River, China*), Burtynsky is primarily concerned with the landscape of human displacement and the remarkable spectacle of entire settlements being dismantled, brick by brick, to make way for government-sponsored "progress."

In the diptych *Three Gorges Dam Project, Feng Jie #3 & #4, Yangtze River, China*, we look



Ron Nagle: *Kangofu*, 2003, porcelain and glaze, 8½ inches high; at Garth Clark.

out over a vast panorama of destruction, a gray vista of bricks and concrete, twisted steel and downed trees, among which are interspersed small encampments with makeshift tents and cooking fires, apparently inhabited by the laborers who rummage through the remains of this city for salvageable brick, metal and the like. Burtynsky uses a large-format viewfinder camera that affords the works great depth of field, and he prints his photographs at a scale grand enough (*Feng Jie #3 & #4* measures approximately 2 by 5½ feet) to draw our attention to the varied details of a scene, from the neatly stacked bricks in the foreground to the antlike figures working on hills of rubble in the distance. For the majority of photos, Burtynsky positions himself slightly above the scene and makes sure that no people appear in the immediate foreground; the effect is to dwarf the human presence, subsuming individual figures within landscape as a whole.

The resulting images are appropriately sublime, in the strict sense of the term: they inspire feelings of awe mixed with terror. Indeed, there is more than a casual suggestion in many of these photographs of that 18th-century master of the architectural sublime, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and in particular of his "Views of Rome." Works like *Three Gorges Dam Project*, *Wushan #11*, *Yangtze River, China*, with its ruined building and great sewer mouth sitting alongside the river, evoke some contemporary Cloaca Maxima; *Wan*

Zhou #1, which presents a group of tiny workers struggling to disengage steel-reinforcing rods from a bafflingly complicated concrete wreck, reminds us of the Romans Piranesi often depicted despoiling the city's ancient monuments for building materials.

But if Burtynsky's photographs from "Before the Flood" look back to the origins of the sublime in Romantic scenes of ruination, they also appear shadowed by a set of contemporary images collectively seared into more recent American memory: the ruins of the World Trade Center. He undertook this project only 13 months after those unforgettable scenes unfolded, and the particular sublimity that he found along the Yangtze River, the palpable sense of tragedy and uprooting that he captured there, seems subconsciously linked to the overwhelming destruction that took place in Lower Manhattan. Those complementary references subtend Burtynsky's photographs of the Three Gorges Dam project, and contribute to their peculiar power. —Tom McDonough

Ron Nagle at Garth Clark

The words I associate with Ron Nagle's sculptures are: Bay Area, Finish Fetish, tiny, ceramic and cup. For decades, Nagle has toyed with the conventions of the cup, pushing the form to the point of abstraction, retaining it perhaps merely as a carrier for his multiple layers of perfect, brilliant glaze colors. These hues provide the only hint of the artist's other life as a pop musician and composer.

His new works shown at Garth Clark offered several sharp surprises: they are bigger—up to 11 inches tall—and they are nearly figurative. Most of the 10 objects (all 2003) take off from a snuff-bottle or perfume-bottle form. They are heart shaped at the top with a little neck and hemispherical cap in the cleft. Some are wide-shouldered, assuming a cartoonishly masculine air, while others play a diminutive heart-shaped "bodice" against a long "skirt" for a kind of Gay Nineties feminine silhouette. Whatever the particulars of form—some smoothly rounded, others sharply joined fronts and backs—all have sensuously glossy surfaces that flow like a thick liquid down to a raised, rippled edge. Below that is a con-

trasting matte, pebbly finish (often gray) and below that, discoverable only with close looking, is a thin, recessed base of a slightly different color that lifts the main form a quarter inch or so above the pedestal.

This combination is still typically Nagle: obsessive perfection of surface and construction combined with eye-popping colors. Whimsical tiles loosen things up. In *The Puddle of Love* (5½ high by 7½ inches in diameter), a black stopper tops the dental-appliance-pink body that ends in a raised edge like ocean foam, with the white of this contour given shadow and weight by a thin "seepage" of deep red on its lowest extremes. The two-sided form sits on a circular gray base. The expansive *Flat Bastard* (7¼ by 13¼ by 3 inches) suggests a steam iron wearing Mickey

Paula Hayes at Salon 94

"Forest" was c and gardener show in New York since 1997. Hayes works in many mediums, including landscape and garden design, sculpture, performance and drawing. She has been privately commissioned to execute gardens in Germany, France and New York and, in fact, created one for Salon 94, which can usually be seen beyond the gallery's wall of windows but was unfortunately obscured by snowfall during my visit. Having grown up on a family farm in upstate New York, where corn, hay and potatoes were cultivated, she is committed to elaborating and strengthening the relationship between nature and civilized society.



Paula Hayes: *Terrarium*, 2004, plants with black sand, dogwood sticks in handblown glass, 16½ by 29½ by 13½ inches; at Salon 94.

Mouse ears. The stopper is red, the body moss green and the drip edge white with lavender along the bottom. The sub-base is a sliver of golden orange. *Twenty* (6 by 11 by 3½ inches) is obviously named for the cartoon bird of the same color, and its top profile almost sheds its heart identification to big shoulders. Below the low waist of the form, the sunshine yellow turns peachy, then white with sparkles along the pronounced drip edge that has a blue-gray shadow. The under-base here is bright red.

With these works, Nagle fully abandons the central void of the cup to make something more like a solidified image—still small, and still so intensely colored that it seems to have the power-potential of a fuse.

—Janet Koplos

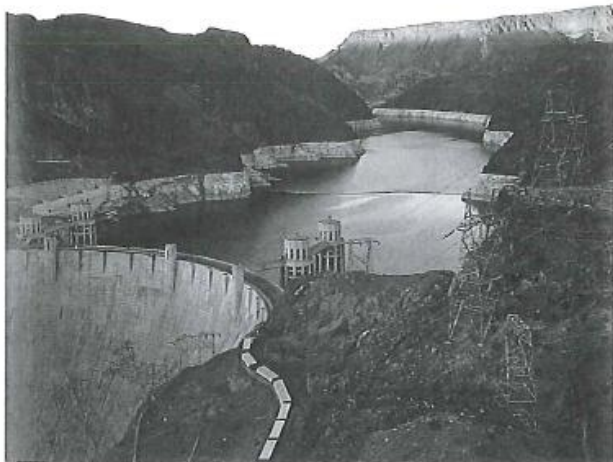
Eccentrically enough, but with a telling ecological intelligence, in 1999 Hayes devised a contraption for wearing a plant on the body, much as an infant is carried about by its mother. The plant, usually a cactus, potato plant or fern, is secured by a felt strap with a base; tubes allow the soil to drain water. The idiosyncrasy of the idea is offset by the gentle pleasure afforded by holding something living, and it underlines Hayes's strong belief in the meaningfulness of ties between plants and people.

Recently Hayes has more exclusively devoted herself to gardens, and this show was an exercise in developing her interest indoors. For it, the artist planted living specimens—art-works in their own right—in silicone and blown-glass vessels

MITCH EPSTEIN: AMERICAN WORK

In his 1981 introduction to *American Landscapes*, John Szarkowski wrote: "We have been half persuaded by Thoreau and by the evidence of our own brutal use of the land that the earth is beautiful except where man lives, or has passed through; and we have therefore set aside preserves where nature, other than man, may survive. . . . This is an admirable idea, and would perhaps be nobler still if we locked the gates to these preserves and denied ourselves entrance." While pursuing his most recent photographic series, *American Power* (begun in 2003), Mitch Epstein has discovered that, within contemporary America, it is no longer nature, but our "brutal use" of nature that is aggressively protected. The clamorous police response to his presence as a photographer beneath the shadow of a West Virginian coal power plant reveals not only the pervasive influence of both corporate interests and paranoia in post-9/11 America, but also the resilient perception that photography constitutes a threat to security, and therefore retains its own mysterious power.

American Work, Epstein's recent exhibition at the Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam (FOAM), showcased five grand prints from *American Power*. Despite the limited number, the selection revealed the diversity with which Epstein is both approaching and defining "power"—from the use and abuse of natural resources, the societal implications of such actions and their environmental impact to the power of nature itself, and even that of sexuality within contemporary America. Epic in scale, rich in detail, Epstein's compositions are easily located within the traditions of painting as well as those of photography. A couple beneath a tree near Niagara Falls—the woman gracefully wading out into the river, the man sitting on a rock, captivated by her gaze—invokes Titian's *Adam and Eve*, or perhaps his *Venus and Adonis* with the gender



roles reversed. A rag-strewn tree in Biloxi ravaged by Hurricane Katrina bears an eerie resemblance to Goya's *Disasters of War* etchings, with their dismembered corpses scattered similarly among bare branches. Even the abstracted chimneys of Ohio's Gavin Coal Power Plant emit churning plumes of smoke that mimic the brushstrokes of a windswept Van Gogh cypress.

As with the best visual art past and present, there is something palpable and deeply personal about these images, their compositional structures and textured surfaces evoking as much emotional response as their subjective content. Much contemporary large-format photography relies on scale, high vantage-point, and the precision of the medium to captivate museum visitors. But the best of Epstein's photographs manage to hold the gallery wall like an Old Master work, luring one's gaze through measured arrangement and subtlety of color, line, shadow, and texture.

In his earlier series *Family Business* (2000–03), also featured at FOAM, Epstein further revealed his artistic agility. *Family Business* documents the financial collapse of Epstein's elderly father: a story of the American Dream leading one man to disillusion and despair. In its entirety (as seen in the monograph published by Steidl in 2003), the project is at its most dynamic, forceful, and moving. Yet even intensely edited and placed within the museum context, the images held the space. Again, allusions to fine art are evident, particularly to that of the American twentieth century—a fluorescent light bulb tucked into a corner hints at Dan Flavin; a plastic-wrapped flag on a pink wall riffs on Jasper Johns. But the more old-world, painterly intuitions of Epstein's eye are not entirely absent here: a portrait of the photographer's swimming father—naked, arms spread wide, literally sinking into the blackened water—hung at the far end of the galleries like a Pietà, an ever-present reminder of the martyr at the center of the surrounding tragedy.

Exhibited together, *American Power* and *Family Business* demonstrate Epstein's remarkable ease in the public and the private realms, and also reveal what lies at the heart of his concerns as a documentary photographer, whether its effects are mutual or deeply personal. When asked why he is pursuing *American Power*, Epstein often responds simply: "I have a daughter"; and *Family Business* could easily be subtitled "I have a father." But what the two projects share most is an intensive examination of a place, America, that appears to have transformed from a land of plenty into one of fear, greed, and devastation. ❧

—Aaron Schuman

Mitch Epstein: *American Work* was presented at FOAM: Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, June 29–September 19, 2007.

Mitch Epstein, *Hoover Dam and Lake Mead, Nevada, 2007*.

Courtesy Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York/Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

the show) is based on a Vietnamese practice of entombing the deceased in the trunks of old-growth trees. The piece carries this association in its surface texture, bulk and empty sockets. In these and other works, the concept of empty vessels that formerly held something of value comes into play, another metaphor for the body and its status after death.

Yet, an exuberance is present as well. Large wall sculptures like *Shoal* simulate the geometric abstraction of encrustations and life forms that thrive in tidal pools, giving a sense of rampant organic growth. *Swell's* puffy, cottony surface (actually resin and fur) suggests a blown-up image of microscopic mold gone wild, while the rubbery tentacles of the hubcap-size *Shoal Interior* give the impression of responding to our approach. At times the line between art and natural science gets blurred in these works, but in the end, poetry prevails.

—Christopher Schnoor

Chris Jordan: *Crushed Cars #2, Tacoma*, 2004, inkjet print, 44 by 62 inches; at Paul Kopeikin.



Sean Duffy: *Casual Friday*, 2004, mixed mediums, 70 by 140 by 123 inches; at Suzanne Vielmetter LA Projects.



ALBUQUERQUE

Tom Waldron at Richard Levy

Tom Waldron's oeuvre presents multiple paradoxes. The work seems simple but proves complex, and initially looks stable but visually morphs in unexpected ways. Each highly refined form appears solid but is actually fabricated of welded quarter-inch steel. Contemporary in appearance, his sculpture nonetheless suggests unearthed artifacts whose uses—ritual or practical—remain hidden from us.

Waldron showed six tabletop pieces (averaging 14 by 22 by 5 inches) and three floor sculptures (stretching to around 55 inches). Subtle dissonances arise between orderly forms and surfaces marked by rust or oxidation. Patinas can be uniform or mottled; colors range from red to shoe-polish brown to purple or slate. In the larger pieces, Waldron left industrial traces—stamped numbers, incised lines,

pockmarks—on his polished surfaces. The tabletop sculptures evoke a sense of monumentality, while the scale of the larger pieces reads literally. Neither group was well served by the installation: the small work would look more imposing at eye level, and the bigger pieces long to be outside, or in starker, more open settings.

Sensitively scaled (7 by 20 by 16 inches), *Puddle* (all works cited 2005) presents a gracefully sloping, almost tongue-shaped mound formed by two curving sheets of steel, one that rises and one that lies on its side. A slight asymmetry dramatically lifts one side while the other lists. Self-contained, this and other works give the impression of forms dwelling outside time—but not space. Edges, planes and entasislike curves are always slipping out of sight, drawing the eye onward and offering only temporary pause.

This quality of simultaneous rest and motion is reflected in the titles, which are often both nouns and verbs: *Shunt*, *Brake*, *Puddle*. The play of light and shadow redoubles this sense of mutability, adding a painterly effect and sometimes suggesting lines drawn on the metal ground.

The shape of Waldron's aesthetic, at least for now, looks as resolved as the individual works do, and that might not be for the best. Has he become so assured of his own mastery—so sensitive to materials and shapes, to the cumulative effects of slight adjustments—that we sense more repetition than investigation? *Brake* and *Brace*, for instance, are near twins, and hard to distinguish from the work of a decade or more ago. Given the oeuvre's looming authority, that is hardly a fatal flaw. Still, one was left hungry for more.

—Arden Reed

LOS ANGELES

Chris Jordan at Paul Kopeikin

In the spirit of recycling, Seattle photographer Chris Jordan has found new use for other people's junk. For the works in his debut show in Los Angeles, he has taken pictures of various scrap heaps and dump sites, from the usual mix of cans and bottles to the high-tech graveyards reserved for last year's cell phones and circuit boards. Together these images make for an arresting critique of American consumerism. One print shows a vast field of broken bottles, punctuated by the occasional cork. Another features piles of flattened cars, stacked like so many magazines. Yet another captures a mess of cell phones, hundreds of clunky old-style Nokias and Motorolas that have been replaced by today's flip-phone models.

Most of these pictures were taken in Seattle and Tacoma, but the style is overwhelmingly Düsseldorf, recalling the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Struth and above all Andreas Gursky. Not only are Jordan's prints large, even by today's inflated standards, but they share Gursky's fascination with the effects of global commerce. And



Tom Waldron: *Puddle*, 2005, steel, 7 by 20 by 16 inches; at Richard Levy.

Jordan too has a soft spot for objects organized in rows and stacks, effectively turning the world into one big assembly line or shopping aisle.

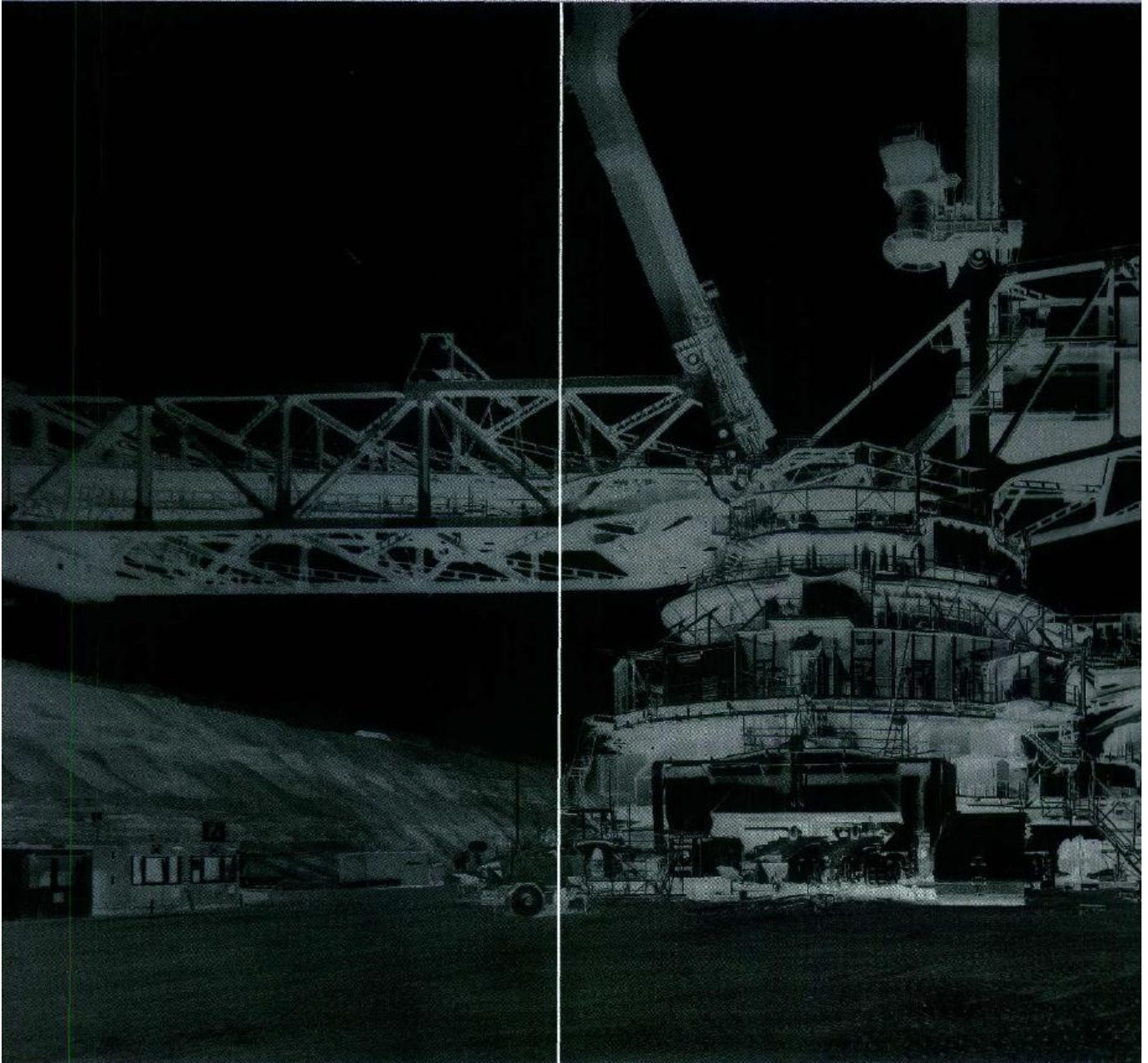
To his credit, though, Jordan brings his own sensibility to the Düsseldorf fray—a kind of homey, post-industrial Romanticism. He finds beauty not in shiny new cars or Prada stores but in the shredded steel and broken glass littering the country. His desolate recycling piles often take the shape of mountains, lending a sense of sublime to the detritus of everyday life, while his more painterly fieldlike compositions read like forgotten landscapes. Especially powerful is *Glass*, *Seattle* from 2004. The panoramic view of broken glass—heavy on green and yellow shards—blooms with color like a chaotic flower garden.

The other thing that distinguishes Jordan from the pack is that he does his own printing. After shooting with an 8-by-10 view camera, he scans the film into Photoshop and prints it himself on an Epson 9600 using archival inks. Photographers who send film out to studios may still retain a good deal of control over the final product, but Jordan's images, beautifully detailed, have an integrity and authority that smack of a single vision from start to finish. Rarely has trash been handled with such care—perhaps even receiving enough attention to transcend its lowly cultural status. [On view at Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, Sept. 8-Oct. 15.]

—Jori Finkel

Sean Duffy at Suzanne Vielmetter LA Projects

In scruffy group shows and solo exhibitions over the past decade, Sean Duffy has been praised for his offbeat delineations of *Star Trek* characters made of fake fur and for conceptually wacky sculptures such as *Triple-Turntable* (2001), a record player rigged

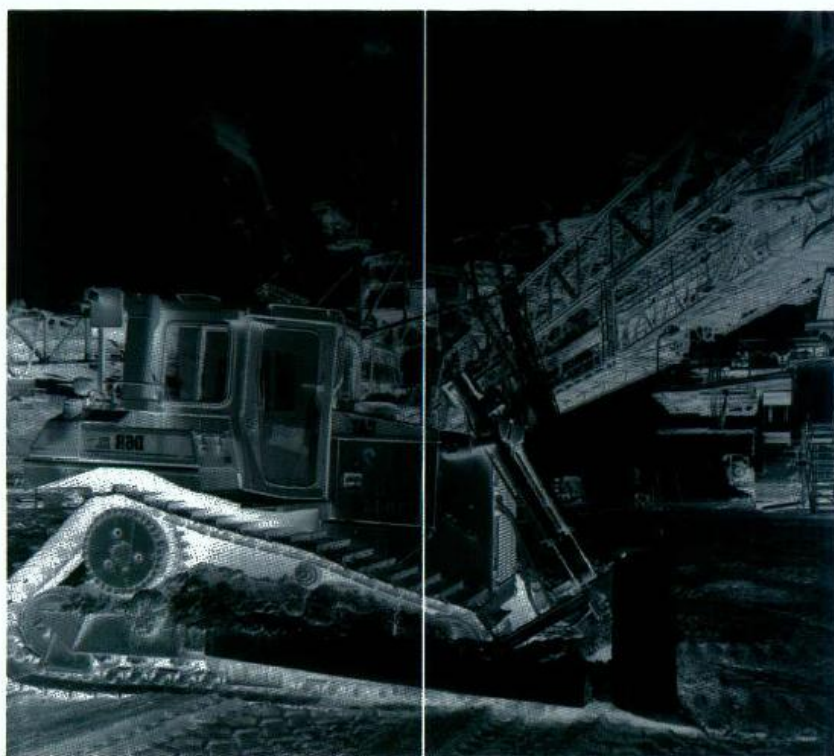


SPECIAL FOCUS

VERA LUTTER

PORTFOLIO

FOUR



above: **RHEINBRAUN, XVIII: September 5, 2006**, 2006, silver gelatin print, 253 x 285 cm. © the artist

facing page: **RHEINBRAUN, VII: August 29, 2006**, 2006, silver gelatin print, 230 x 142 cm. © the artist

Inherent in the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) is the familiar, says Freud in his 1919 essay. Something has first to be familiar, he explains, so that then, by means of new events or changes, it becomes uncanny.

In my work I like to find things we are able to relate to – yet not relate to entirely – so that a sense of suspense occurs, initiating and carrying the dialogue between artwork and viewer. This sense of the familiar yet unfamiliar, the known yet unknown, I try to support with both the choice of what I give evidence to in an image, and how I go about that. Since my work is never representational, the viewing is never (or should never be) an act of identification.

The large machines and bucket-wheel excavators in Hambach, Germany, a mine once carrying the beautiful name of RheinBraun, gave me material of that nature. The machine possesses industrial properties with which we are familiar, yet the image doesn't quite come together in a meaningful (or in an explicit) way. The object's monumentality is beyond anything we have seen before, and it does not reveal a function to the common eye.

Niki de Saint Phalle, John Currin, Eva Hesse, Andro Wekua, Sara VanDerBeek, Sherrie Levine, and Michael Krebber. Piecing together the implied puzzle, one could find a little bit of each of these muses in Olowska's works. (Rosemarie Trockel came to mind, too.) But beyond this reading emerged a more critical, and contemplative, view of Western consumer capitalism as a jumbled grab bag of styles one could choose from, passé to some, fashionable to others.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler

Michael Wolf

BRUCE SILVERSTEIN

Looking at Michael Wolf's photographic series, one is flung between two poles: Is the photographer trying to demonstrate how dehumanized the world has become, or is he insisting on the opposite?

One series, "Architecture of Density," 2003–2009, shows images of Hong Kong high-rise buildings, with rows and columns of windows that seem to extend ad infinitum and, in fact, look quite like pixels. The images don't have the all-encompassing feel of those by Andreas Gursky, such as the artist's *Hongkong and Shanghai Bank*, 1994; the motion Wolf's works inspire is less one of stepping back to be enveloped by a pattern than one of coming in close to look for interruptions in it. Human presence, however, is scant: A group sitting amicably on a windowsill turns out to be shirts on hangers, and in night shots, figures are so blitzed by the light blazing out of windows that they are unidentifiable. In "Transparent City," 2007–2008—the series' name referring most obviously to the kind of glass curtain ushered in by the International Style, but with overtones of containing nothing and having nothing to hide—images of Chicago office buildings are taken from closer up, so that people are visible, although largely obscured by the grid, going about the familiar business of office life. Seeing examples from these series together, one gets the impression that the photographer is slowly approaching from a distance, and in "Tokyo Compression," 2010, he comes in for a close-up. Here, riders pushed up against the doors of Tokyo's crowded subway are more or less ambushed by Wolf, so that their defenselessness—compared with that of his unaware subjects in "Transparent City"—is quite apparent. Do they close their eyes to keep him away, to create one last barrier of privacy? Or are they simply exhausted? One woman, framed in condensation on the window, opens a single wary eye.

This sense of photographer conflated with camera, along with the slick surfaces of the first two series, gives the work a chilly feel, suggesting that Wolf takes the side of the machines. But "Street Views," 2009–10, another series, complicates matters. Combing Google's feature of the same name—an enormous database of images—Wolf finds people who happen to have been captured by the search engine's roving automated camera. (The prints on display are made from Wolf's photographs of his computer screen, thus adding another degree of remove to a process that already puts the subject at a distance.)



In discussions of street photography, Henri Cartier-Bresson is impossible to avoid, although it feels cynical indeed to associate the "decisive moment" with a machine that doesn't look, but merely eats up and spits back that which passes in front of its many lenses. These images are accidental, contextless, impartial, belonging to a global corporation but available in the public sphere—and in fact, another artist, Jon Rafman, has evidently made use of the very same images in a similar project. But, surprisingly, an odd assertion of something human arises, perhaps because the results are so hard to interpret: A girl appearing to run and jump in play could just as well be trying to escape, or even be getting shot, and a naked woman at the edge of a body of water could be a contemplative nudist or a hesitant suicide. A couple kisses somewhat frantically; a seagull is caught midflap. Here, even with no human agency behind the photographic apparatus, and despite both viewers and subjects being dogged by the doomy feeling of relentless digital surveillance (and the accompanying suspicion that anything we do can be dissolved into bits), the subjects are revealed to be irreducible. They are still permitted—and here maybe it is apt to invoke Cartier-Bresson—some mystery. With a simple enough gesture, Wolf has located our humanity in the cloud.

—Emily Hall

Matt Connors

CANADA

YOU DON'T KNOW: As the eponym for Matt Connors's sophomore show at Canada and the subject of a large-scale photograph therein, this plaintive slogan reverberated through the process-conscious abstractions on view. It was culled from a protest placard spied in a British documentary about 1970s progressive rock and—like so much of prog rock's esoteric subject matter and often fantastic lyrics—bespeaks an antiauthoritarian sentiment lodged in the chasm between '60s utopianism and what came after (the "hangover we exist in today, in our post heroic state," according to the press materials). Yet the phrase resonates at the level of subtext more than of form, since Connors seems to go out of his way to make clear the reasoning behind his compositional choices and the exigencies occasioned by their execution, whether through cockeyed figures, over-painted designs, or rings left behind by paint cans, jars, or coffee mugs (containers he was using at the time to hold paint, gesso, and brushes).

Like the epic concept album which prog rock is best known, Connors's efforts concentrate on big themes: modernism, abstraction, and the chrome, to name just a few. Gesture is crucial, too, preserved as credible affect as much as procedural happenstance. Indeed, signs of doing and having been done are ubiquitous. From the gorgeously aqueous *Table II (16 Cups)* (all works 2010), and its aforementioned celestial pockmarks (stubborn indexes of containers, left behind as Gottlieb-like aesthetic incident), to *Correspondences*, and its more evidently and deliberately manipulated tie-dye-like stain, the supports are critical—as repositories for



Matt Connors, *Picture Corners*, 2010, oil, acrylic, colored pencil on canvas, 27 1/4 x 27 1/4".