

SECOND

LOOK

TERRI
CUMMINGS

MICHAEL
HENDERSON

KATHY
LOVAS

MARTIN
MENOCAI

JAMES
PASTER

TONY
SHIPP

honored speaker

EVE
SONNEMAN

curated by
Marilyn Waligore

Second Look examines references to time, such as duration, series, sequence, and narrative, in photography and digital media. Texas artists participating in the exhibition include Kathy Lovas and Martin Menocal of Dallas, Terri Cummings of Fort Worth, and Huntsville area artists James Paster, Michael Henderson, and Tony Shipp. By visiting and revisiting visual information recorded by the camera, these artists reveal an understanding of the experience of time that differs from what we might normally associate with photography. Given the proliferation of images arranged in new combinations, we must reconsider photography's status as solitary, still image and review its influence upon and reaction to new media. The artists included in this exhibition embrace alternatives to the frame, representing a single instant, and in doing so, prompt us to reflect on our own conceptions of how the lens filters reality.



eve sonneman, long lake, central park, n.y., 1973, silver gelatin photograph 11" x 14"

courtesy: bruce silverstein gallery, n.y.

Visual Arts Building Main Gallery
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

Examining the still shot or film clip attests to our fascination with technology's ability to dissect linear time into discrete units. Working in the 1960s Minimal artists Mel Bochner and Sol LeWitt, responding to 19th century photographer Eadweard Muybridge's visual analysis of time, borrowed various aspects of his process: his adoption of three different vantage points; his reliance on increments to document movement; and his arrangement of frames in a grid structure.¹ Photographic experiments of the 1970s informed by systemic art have influenced subsequent work with image progression. Visual and conceptual contrasts and correspondences guide the formation of the image sequence.

EVE SONNEMAN

Eve Sonneman's innovative work with photographic diptychs in the 1970s, as documented by photo-historian Naomi Rosenblum, challenged Henri Cartier-Bresson's concept of the "decisive moment."² "By mounting side by side two images of the same subject taken at different times or from slightly different vantage points, Eve Sonneman suggests that no single view of reality should be considered more truthful than any other."³ Rosenblum recognizes Sonneman's contribution to our reevaluation of modern photography in general, and to our questioning of photography's authority as witness in particular. Eve Sonneman's lyrical response to small events, often occurring on the street, fosters a reconsideration of the potential of the camera frame and shutter. The split-second lag time that falls between each frame harbors an invisible image that prompts our reflection on what occurs off-frame. Photographic time becomes less deliberate and absolute in her diptychs, a format that embraces the potential of 35mm film with its inherent image assembly line. Thirty years later, we can gain insights from Eve Sonneman's experimentation as we attempt to foretell the future of lens-based media.

MARTIN MENOICAL

Martin Menocal photographs dioramas found in natural history museums, echoing similar explorations by the photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto. These displays are designed to instruct, to entertain, or perhaps to persuade. Menocal transforms taxidermy into animation through his film strips. *Untitled 7* documents a buffalo stampede at the edge of a steep precipice. The photographic interpretation of the diorama culminates with a blurred final frame, recording the beast's fate at the base of a deep canyon. Menocal's image energizes the static scene by reinserting the element of time. Menocal



does not photograph a herd of buffalo, but a re-creation meant to reflect an interpretation of reality. What is real is our connection to a model of reality, one that recalls an event. This translation, from its potential origin in 19th century photographs or written records, to the design of the museum tableau, and back to the rephotography of the display, provides a nesting of images that circles back upon itself to form a metapicture. As W.J.T. Mitchell has noted, "The principle use of the metapicture is, obviously, to explain what pictures are—to stage, as it were, the 'self-knowledge' of pictures. That is why the use of metapictures as instruments in the understanding of pictures seems inevitably to call into question the self-understanding of the observer."⁴ Menocal's approach reminds us of our collective reliance on mediated imagery to gain knowledge of our world, parallel to the rephotographed *Memory Renderings* by artist Vik Muniz. Menocal's childhood memory of black and white television programs, sponsored by the government in his native country, Spain, has influenced his adoption of the 35mm half frame, black and white negative format.⁵ This vertical, serial image format produced with half frame exposures recalls the educational film strips used in elementary school classrooms of the 1960s and echoes the didactic nature of the history museum displays. Although the natural science museum provides one attempt to recreate reality, we tend to rely on camera-based representations and re-enactments for information about the world. Ultimately, the camera lens performs a distancing function; Menocal's serial imagery tends to confound rather than explain.

TONY SHIPP

Tony Shipp's sculptural zoetropes reference the work of 19th century photographer Muybridge. The artist states:

When Eadweard Muybridge's sequential images of animal locomotion are viewed in a two-dimensional format, such as a book, we tend to read each image as a separate component of a whole where time stands still. When these same images are put into motion with a device such as a zoetrope, we read the series of images as a single image that moves.⁶

In 1878 Muybridge designed a device, the zoopraxiscope, which was similar to a 19th century toy, the zoetrope. His apparatus allowed the viewer to observe a series of images representing a cantering horse. By placing drawings of his photographs at particular intervals upon a disc, he was able to accommodate the



tony shipp, *untitled (zoetrope)*, 5' x 3' x 3', mixed media, undated

left:

martin menocal, *untitled #7*, 24" x 7", digital print, undated

persistence of vision and simulate motion in a format parallel to the flip book.⁷ In this context, the photograph of a horse is not an emphasis on a moment, but the revelation of a concept; namely, how a horse moves. Shipp continues some aspects of Muybridge's 19th century experimentation through his assembly of mysterious contraptions, amalgamations of cast-off metal, wood, and photographs. He notes that his "interactive zoetrope...forces the viewer to become part of the art."⁸ Shipp plays on our curiosity about the mechanical past by inviting us to complete the work. Peering into a viewfinder covered with copper screen, we discover images floating before our eyes. Shipp's sculptures rely on artificial light, and sometimes an accompanying noisy apparatus of motors and vacuums, to foster an awareness of our participation. As we move away, the work slows down, becomes quiet and static, and awaits the arrival of the next viewer. The images that flicker in the dark chamber may imply connections to magic and the supernatural. Shipp commands the viewer's attention in two different ways. We contemplate this globe-like assemblage that resembles a marriage between the Swiss Kinetic artist Jean Tinguely's machine sculptures and obsolete 19th century devices from the Henry Ford Museum. And on another level we strain to view his transitory photographs that hover for a few seconds before our eyes. In both cases, we may reflect upon technology's powers of seduction. Shipp's multi-media constructions seem like Victorian anachronisms in our era of sleek aerodynamic design, transparent high-tech plastics, and the muffled hum of digital processors. Ultimately, his work reminds us that many aspects of 21st century technologies are based upon 19th century inventions, and their lingering modes of thought.

JAMES PASTER

James Paster's horizontal constructions represent a concern for photography's essence. His rephotographing of Robert Capa's 1936 photograph *Death of a Loyalist Soldier* is performed in succession, so that each resulting gridded image contains multiple copies of the original. As the copying progresses, the grid pattern becomes more refined and the image of the soldier grows more abstract. The rephotographing and reprinting of Capa's image becomes a process that could be repeated into infinity. The original photograph documents the instant when the Spanish loyalist soldier was shot. As critic Vicki Goldberg has noted, Capa's image predates photographs of shootings that received wide circulation such as Eddie Adams' 1968 photograph, *General Loan Executing a Vietcong Suspect*,⁹ and Bob Jackson's 1963 photograph of *Jack Ruby Shooting Lee Harvey Oswald*.

As part of a conceptual exercise involving the rephotographing of Boris Yaro's photograph of Robert F. Kennedy, critic Douglas Davis has engaged in a similar reflection on photography's connection to an historical event. In 1968 photographer Boris Yaro documented the assassination of Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles. Davis asserts that by rephotographing Yaro's image until it becomes unrecognizable, we will still be connected in some way to the moment of Kennedy's death. Davis concludes:

If the first photograph [*the image created by Boris Yaro*] is a fugitive of time, so is the last. Each one is an image, residing only in itself, and in the moment of its conception. The last photograph is a messenger from and an image of that moment, passing through the lens....The game of photograph-upon-photograph is an exercise in the limits and glories of the medium, purposely anchored in a depiction of an event known to and believed in by all of us: a super-real event.¹⁰

In a city like Dallas that fixates on memorabilia connected to the death of John F. Kennedy, as in the Zapruder film, the photograph's physical connection to such an historical moment is not easily dismissed. Paster's image reflects on the photography's contribution to the death of the aura, through reproduction, and to the persistence of a small catalog of images in our collective view of both photographic history and history itself. Goldberg addresses this question specifically:

"...but photography itself confers a new kind of aura. The work of art that is photographically reproduced in every textbook has greatness stamped upon it through mere repetition in an authoritative context, and the photograph that is repeated often enough can become both symbolic and essential."¹¹

James Paster's act of appropriation seems to respond to Goldberg's comment and prompts a reconsideration of Walter Benjamin's essay, "A Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Paster's investigation of time and photography extends to his studies of highway markers along Interstate 45, specifically the monotonous route between Dallas and Huntsville. The banality of the images coupled with a ruler and an EKG printout suggest relationships among time, space, and methods of measurement, as in miles per hour or heartbeats per minute. Paster employs the photographic series to compress or to expand our experience of a moment.



terri cummings, *gestalt*, 8' x 12' x 16' (variable), mixed media, installation, 2003

TERRI CUMMINGS

Both Kathy Lovas and **Terri Cummings** connect memories of the past with the experience of space in their installation works. Snapshots of girls about the age of six or seven, enlarged onto veils of cloth, form the structure of Terri Cummings' *Gestalt*. Cummings' oversized prints speak to the weight that family photographs retain in our visual memory, as in Roland Barthes' reflection on the depiction of his mother in the Winter Garden Photograph, a photograph that is never reproduced in *Camera Lucida*.¹² Terri Cummings amplifies the impacts of her images through the inclusion of sound, triggering the viewer's reflection on photography's role as a catalyst for memory. Likewise, one recalls the effects upon memory produced by a sensory experience, as in the tasting of tea and madeleine in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.

Cummings adopts the commonplace, the familiar. She unfurls brightly colored, patterned fabrics, reminiscent of calico, into her space. These colored panels, juxtaposed with black and white photographs, pull the viewer into her personal past, while sharing in a collective experience of American culture. Cummings abandons the wall, allowing her quilt-like banners to define a space for the viewer's entrance and exit. That a photograph could be fluid and changeable is suggested by the fabric supports. Our stories become metamorphosed over time despite photography's inherent ability to fix an image. Memory is transitory and subject to revision; the photographs float to underscore that fact.

Kathy Lovas encourages us to draw connections between disparate materials through her arrangement of photographic images, sculptural objects, and painterly surfaces. Her photographs become like the materials in her installation, physical matter that occupies space and insists upon its presence. Unlike the transitory nature of photographic paper or Cumming's draped images, Lovas' photographs are solid, affixed to wood. *Company House* includes materials that allude to the work of German artist Joseph Beuys, such as a wool blanket, shredded newspaper, and a steel pail. We sense that these materials, like Beuys' fat and felt, have a strong

niees each photographic fragment, at times fostering disjunction rather than resolution. How do we reconcile the image of young girl with the caption "back porch" or the photograph of a boy with the caption "ice rink"? We are invited to look beyond these snapshots of children to read the valuable information in the background, details that reference a locale. These wood planks with photographs, leaning up against the wall like a fence, suggest the periphery of a house or yard. Likewise the gleaming pail set upon a wood pallet may symbolize a pier and beam foundation or a water pump. A blue field, interrupted by collage elements, could be sky or water, areas of open space signifying potential. For Lovas, *Company House* connects to personal history. She attempts to dis-



kathy lovas, *company house*, detail, dimensions variable, mixed media installation, 2003

personal meaning for the artist and perform a symbolic function in the work. Presented in the gallery in a manner emphasizing spareness, these objects provide clues to the viewer without revealing all the details of the narrative. For Lovas, photographs function as artifacts; over time they accumulate, revealing cultural and historical information about the past. As viewers we are asked to decipher the relationships among these elements, in order to arrive at our own narrative. A caption accompa-

cover her past as she searches for a particular geographical location, the site of a house. She states, "*Company House* can be viewed as a puzzle. The puzzle concerns a search for a house, a search both futile and satisfying at the same time."¹³ Lovas' search for her roots has led her on a journey that remains unresolved, pointing to the fact that photographs, like objects, can reveal only a portion of a tale.

Michael Henderson bridges past and future through his presentations of three-dimensional animation and video. Paralleling the experiments of video artists Nam June Paik and Matthew McCaslin, Henderson employs a moving image that can exist beyond the limitations of the single video box. In *Indian Marker*, he pairs two monitors: one, above, with a chirping bird; and another, below, with an open field. In the upper monitor of *Indian Marker* a bird poised on a wire appears intermittently. The camera frame itself is stationary, but the lens occasionally zooms in and out. The lower monitor presents a tree-like form composed of spiraling silver letterforms that have been generated using a 3D animation program. As the camera slowly circles, we follow this 3D model, which floats and rotates within the confines of a wooded, natural environment. Slowly, we observe two different frames of reference: the upper camera view is fixed; and the lower view wanders and searches. This juxtaposition of nature and technology initially seems incongruous, but we become mesmerized by these paired images that rely on unconventional codes. Lev Manovich has discussed the potential of a "spatial montage" of simultaneously coexisting images" which emphasizes "the position of images in space in relation to each other."¹⁴ Manovich explains that "spatial montage can also be seen as an aesthetics appropriate to the user experience of multitasking and multiple windows of GUI."¹⁵ Henderson's use of multiple screens or exported video stills demonstrates his fascination with our everyday attempts to negotiate simultaneous sources of visual stimuli. His *Elaboratron* film moves from one medium to the next. The video splashes onto the screen as we are guided through fields of texture and light. The transition to a three-dimensional animation of rotating spheres and cylinders pushes the viewer through space. The progression and superimposition of 3D models and video imagery underscores Henderson's facility in generating both virtual and real worlds. The distance between these two depictions of reality is being reduced through constant technological improvements in the digital simulation of natural or imagined forms, as in special effects. Augmenting his composites of film and animation, Henderson has exported or "captured" individual video frames, which are presented as enlarged inkjet prints. These fragments of time function like markers, punctuating moments in the film, and freezing them for our reflection. Like the paired monitors in *Indian Marker*, Henderson doesn't allow the single frame, moving or still, to tell the whole story.

The artists represented in this exhibition have explored how the camera lens records time and place, locale and detail, visual information and the phenomenon of light. The potential erosion of the "truth value" of photography and other lens-based imagery may be due to the introduction of digital technologies that render all images subject to revision, pixel by pixel. However, these artists emphasize a changing awareness of how we see or interpret, how we simultaneously engage multiple frames or screens, or different kinds of sensory information. Digital data streams increase the potential for delivering more information within a given moment. As **Second Look** artists embrace formats that employ the use of multiple windows, they acknowledge the limitations of the fixed position of the camera eye, with its one point perspective. In addition, Shipp, Lovas and Cummings have utilized sculptural form and space to prompt the viewer's consciousness of the act of looking. On one hand we can consider contemporary culture's attempts to erode the camera's connection to reality. But these artists realize that reality is subject to interpretation. They know that over time we reinterpret lens-based imagery, especially when images are assembled in groups, series, and sequences. These artists encourage us to be engaged viewers/readers, to rewrite our personal narratives, to pull information from more than one source, viewpoint, or timeframe in order to establish new frames of reference.

– text by Marilyn Waligore © 2004

- 1 Scott Rothkopf, " 'Photography Cannot Record Abstract Ideas' and Other Misunderstandings." *Mel Bochner Photographs: 1966-1969*. (New Haven: Yale, 2002) 12.
- 2 Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville, 1997) 569.
- 3 Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*. (New York: Abbeville, 1994) 248.
- 4 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Metapicture." *Picture Theory: Essays on Visual and Verbal Representation*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 56-57.
- 5 Martin Menocal, Artist's statement, 2004.
- 6 Tony Shipp, Artist's statement, 2004.
- 7 Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*. (New York: Abbeville, 1991) 32.
- 8 Shipp.
- 9 Goldberg, 226.
- 10 Douglas Davis, "Photography as Culture." *Artculture: Essays on the Postmodern*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) 77.
- 11 Goldberg, 219.
- 12 Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. (New York: Noonday Press, 1981) 63-73.
- 13 Kathy Lovas, Artist's statement, 2004.
- 14 Lev Manovich. *The Language of New Media*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001) 323.
- 15 Manovich, 325.



michael henderson,
indian marker,
56" x 20"x 20",
2 channel video,
2003

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EVE SONNEMAN

artist, photographer, painter

lecture: March 31, 2004

7:30 p.m.

Jonsson Performance Hall



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