

Midwest SPE Conference Presentations

October 23-26, 2003

Congress Hotel, Chicago

Friday, Oct 24

Room 1

8am-9am

Christopher Schneberger: Communing with Spirits

“The series I am currently engaged in deals with traditions of ghostlore, accounts of ghost sightings, the common themes and ethereal threads that connect them. The images I create involve spirits who inhabit environments of the living, in some cases interacting with the living. The spirits are dressed as they were in life, indicating their desire to remain among us. In the instances where the living interact with these spirits, the living are alone and are willing participants in the encounter. A common motive for haunting is the ghost’s need for answers, but in these images the living seem to be also seeking something from the apparitions.”

9:15am-10:30am

Gretchen Garner: Illustrated talk from her book: *Disappearing Witness: Change in 20th Century American Photography*

Garner discusses direct witness as the dominant paradigm for American photographers from the 1920s to the 1960s. During these decades, photographers saw their medium primarily as a vehicle for truthful description and sometimes as a weapon against social injustice. In the 1960s, however, photographic practice and its cultural significance shifted to reflect more personal, idiosyncratic, and staged visions of reality—a trend, Garner notes, that has intensified with digital photography. The major portion of her book is devoted to post-1960s work, exploring how the changes have affected portraiture, documentary, landscape, still life, fashion, and the new genre of self-imagery. In documenting this transformation in American photography, *Disappearing Witness* forcefully rethinks the history of photography itself.

10:45am-Noon

Steven Benson: Red, White and Blue in Black and White

“I became fascinated with the way different entities of American society have communicated their patriotic sentiments following the tragedy of September 11. The U.S. Government, the corporate sector, the religious community and the individual found a specific form of expression which best suited their needs. The images depict the varied expressions which would rarely surface except under the most extreme conditions. While intended to be patriotic expressions I found there to be multiple revealing subtexts. The public displays offered and opportunity to extend their intended meaning. For me, this work raises questions about commercialism, authenticity, vulnerability and the separation of church and state.”

Lunch

2pm-2:45pm

Kathy Pilat, New Trier High School & Liese Ricketts, University of Chicago Lab School: Your Future Students

Come see what photography students are doing long before they enroll in your program. Some students engage in two, three, or four years of daily photography classes before they reach college. Two Chicago area high school photography teachers present their students' work and address the excitement and passion with which the students approach their work.

3pm-3:45pm

Javier Carmona: Pugna: The Potential for Boxing as a Sensual Influence

"The nature of this dialogue asserts *boxing* as the most misunderstood intimate contact between human people. More appropriately, as pugilism, it persists as a rejuvenating filter for ideas and translatable sensation. It forms a perception of life requiring constant renewal, signaling the struggle to maintain it. It is this lecture's extended desire to demonstrate *boxing*: first as formative experience finding its way as translated memory into my fictionalized photographic work. Secondly, as part of a greater phenomenology, *boxing* is contextualized directly with the sensual concerns of internalized behavior as compared to the acting theories of teacher Lee Strasberg. Finally, in the role of photographic educator, *boxing* is associated as a classroom example, reintroducing Minor White's ideas of heightened Self-awareness resulting from heightened sensory awareness."

Friday, Oct. 24

Room 2

8am-9am

Kelli Connell: Double Life

"For the past two years, I have been working on a body of work about the multiple psyches of the self, and how the self is defined through intimate relationships. In the images, the same model is depicted twice—acting out what appears to be moments shared between two people. However, the work reflects the model in close dialogue with her double, or other sides of herself. These images were created by manipulating multiple negatives in Adobe Photoshop. It is important to me that the work looks real, like a documentary about relationships. Because the work is staged, yet looks real, another conceptual dimension of the work is the conversation of truth in photography."

9:15am-10:30am

Shuichi Murakami, Ginger Owen & Kellogg Community College Photography Students, Battle Creek, MI: Student Photographic Experiences from a Small Midwestern Town

This presentation will feature a diverse range of student photographic experiences from a small, blue collared, Midwestern town, and encompasses personal expressions of life experiences and philosophies. It is also an attempt to transcend sociological and language barriers to create a larger global community.

10:45am-Noon

Dana Fritz and Larry Gawel: Garden Views

Dana Fritz and Larry Gawel make photographs in the same locations—formal gardens in the US and Europe. Both artists use a viewfinder to define their compositions but inside those boundaries the spaces are transformed into a very different set of landscapes, both visually and metaphorically. Larry and Dana began this project in 2000 at Villa Montalvo—an artist residency program with an Italian-style garden in Saratoga, CA. Since then they have photographed at gardens in Pennsylvania, New York, and Chicago as well as in England, France, Italy and Spain.

Lunch

2pm-2:45pm

Richard Koenig: Ambivalent Views

“I’m intrigued by tensions found in photographic imagery—principally between the sense of “truth” that photography still enjoys, however wrongly, and its ability to fool the eye. By contradicting flatness and space, by underscoring the importance of perspective, and by superimposing the intimate upon the institutional, I hope to confuse the objective with the subjective in a larger sense. As opposed to resolving issues, I want to increase a perception of tension, to dwell in that which is uncertain.”

3pm-3:45pm

Nate Larson: Twelve Stories

“In my photographic work, I address the world of the paranormal as it emerges through both religious and secular cultures and use this as a base to explore the line between belief and skepticism. Through my investigation, I question the basis of systems of belief and confront the ideas of personal truth and objective truth. In working with these narratives through photography, I further explore the myth of the objective photographic document and dissect the way we document and archive personal experience.”

Saturday, Oct 25

Room 1

8am-9am

Eddee Daniel: The Urban Wilderness

‘The oxymoronic concepts of urban development and wilderness can be seen as mutually exclusive or, as I choose to do, as a paradox that challenges preconceptions of how nature is understood as well as perceived in the context of a rapidly expanding urban civilization. Using local circumstances as both an example of and metaphor for larger, increasingly universal, ones, a project entitled Urban Wilderness attempts to resolve the inherent contradictions of its title and bring a new awareness to living with nature in an urban environment. In doing so it will help to fashion for a community in transition and identity that combines typically disparate realities into a more harmonious unity.’

9:15am-10:30am

Bea Nettles: Confronting Mortality: Our Parents', Our Own.

Nettles work is an effort to clarify, to find meaning and significance in daily existence, to come to terms with the passage of time, and to explore the selective, multilayered nature of memory. As more baby-boomers approach retirement, while undertaking the care of elderly parents, these topics are especially relevant. Her slide lecture will relate her history as an artist and her fascination with photography's many aspects, especially its ability to provide us with a visual legacy.

10:45am-Noon

Darryl Baird: Looking for the Picturesque

"The word picturesque has a close association with landscape and especially strong is the connection to landscape photography. From "Kodak Moments" to roadside scenic views, we have learned that certain vantage points are "better" for viewing and capturing the landscape. My curiosity about this subject got the better of me as I prepared for a trip to England with a group of my students. As I introduced the idea of a specific school of English landscape design and two centuries of designers' influence on the English countryside, I found many references to tourism, the "sublime" and the picturesque. I began looking further, not knowing where this new journey might take me."

Lunch

2pm-2:45pm

Ruth Adams: On Intimacy: Privacy vs. Voyeurism

"Photography as a medium demands intimacy from both artist and viewer, especially when the subject is the human form. My art deals with intimacy -- whether the subject is an intimate view of a flower's secret recesses or private images from my life. While my various bodies of work appear completely different at first glance, they all address or represent interior, intimate spaces. My goal is to elicit from viewers an awareness of the connection between voyeurism and the act of looking at art. When a photograph depicts an intimate subject, gazing at the photograph forces the viewer to become a voyeur. I try to make my audience spellbound by my images even as they realize that they have become a voyeur just by studying them. Come join me on an intimate and voyeuristic journey through two very different but connected bodies of work: Organic Studies and Privacy versus Voyeurism."

3pm-3:45pm

Vagner Whitehead: Memorial

"Unlike most traditional photographic landscapes, *Memorial* aims to depict an imaginary space as opposed to describing an actual one. The memorial refers to both a place that honors a deceased person or past event, as well as a memory—these images hopefully convey that places can be catalysts to memories. What I search for are places and situations that remind me of the places and the people that I have encountered, but that are not around me anymore."

Saturday, Oct 25

Room 2

8am-9am

Priya Kambli: Suitcase Series

“When I moved to America in 1993 I crammed 18 years of my life into one suitcase. It weighed approximately 45 kg. The finite amount of space within the suitcase meant I could only bring the essentials. The notion that I was distilling my life so as to fit within the given parameters of a suitcase didn’t bother me. Even though I couldn’t carry each and every item I could create the impression of a whole through careful selection of a few elements. In the *Suitcase Series* I am interested in juxtaposing snippets of information that interact with each other to convey an open ended narration.”

9:15am-10:30am

Cybele Clark-Mendes: Recent Work: Havana Cuba

“In the past two years I traveled to Havana three times, where I had the opportunity to create photographs and experimental video related to my experience there. The portraiture work details the manifestations of race and miscegenation in Cuba. The essay consists of posed portraits, specifically of families and individuals. My intention was to document the blending of races, superficially visible in skin tone and facial features, which emphasizes the evidence of miscegenation. The time spent in Cuba coupled with the collection of my life experiences, leads me to question how it is that Cubans managed to integrate and miscegenate into an ostensibly harmonious group. In all fairness, Cuba is no utopia regarding racism, yet the racial climate is nowhere as pernicious as it is in the United States.”

10:45am-Noon

Michael “Chester” Costello: Alamo & Costello’s Appleseed International, 1999-2004

The *Appleseed International* project will be introduced in a slide presentation and artist discussion. Documentation from this intercontinental photo-based treasure hunt will be contrasted with seminal practices in abstract formats of photography during the early twentieth century, contemporary practices of travel documentary, and how self-portrait and travelogues have been utilized to create a narrative within a project. *Appleseed International* is the third stage of *(IR)rational Movements with a Camera* and attempts to address concepts of randomness theories prevalent in western society, offerings as symbols of trust and communication and the value of a work of art on a level not monetarily driven.

Lunch

2pm-2:45pm

David Hanlon: Deaccessioned Treasures: Reassessing 19th Century Architectural Photographs in Institutional Collections

A growing recent interest in reevaluating the aesthetic concerns and artistic value of topographic projects undertaken by early photographers has greatly changed the nature of how historic reference collections, housed in many public and educational institutions, are now seen and used. This presentation will focus on how two photographic collections,

the Sturgis Collection at Washington University and the reference images once held by the St. Louis Art Museum, evolved from their original use as visual study aids during the first half of the twentieth century to holdings of artistic merit by its end.

3pm-3:45pm

Andrea Ferguson: Beauty Queen: An American Spokesmodel

“I am interested in how beauty is defined by a society and what kind of roles it plays within a culture. My family dominated the Miss Strawberry queen pageant for many years. I, myself never competed, thus making me the only girl on my fathers side of the family to not hold the title. This presentation will explore the phenomenon of beauty pageants from a national to a local level.”