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Abstract

This research examines a medium of symbolic communication--photography--to understand how the social context of the use of that medium shapes its social meaning. Camera club photography is compared with photographic activity which is institutionally legitimized as art, in order to elucidate how art world legitimization shapes the nature of photographic activity. The distinctive featues of "art" as a communicational system, as manifested in photography, are described. A variety of research methods were employed. Data on camera club activities were gathered through participant-observation over a three year period. Observations of art photography activities such as exhibit openings and conferences were conducted. Interviews augmented observational data: 10 camera club members and 19 art photographers make up the interview sample. Pertinent documents were analyzed as well. Art and camera club photographic activities diverge. Art photography is highly personal and concentrates on representations of artists' ideas. Successful artists contribute innovations to the field. Art photographs do not convey easily interpretable meanings. Successful work is described as mysterious and interpretations involve viewers' own personal reactions to ambiguous content. Conversely camera club photographs are direct, their content straightforward. Camera clubs carry on the pictorialist tradition in photography, updated with borrowings from commercial portraiture, nature and travel photography. Camera club photographers demonstrate their competence through skillful reproduction of the camera club aesthetic code. Innovation and personal self-expression are devalued. Art photography has been constructed in contradistinction to all other uses of the medium. The accessibility of photographic technology to amateurs and professionasl alike, and the ease with which competence in the medium may be attained are inverted in art photography. Art photography transforms this democratic medium into a pursuit requiring special criteria for admission. The relationship between camera club and fine art photography may be described in terms of folklorists' distinctions between folk art and fine art. While innovation attends art world legitimization, the club context frames amateur photography as a traditional activity, maintaining aesthetic values distinct from the art world. Both highly skillful uses of the medium, the social contexts of camera club and fine art photography shape the social meaning of these activities.

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CAMERA CLUBS AND FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY:
DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN ART AND AMATEUR ACTIVITY

Dona Beth Schwartz

A DISSERTATION

in

COMMUNICATIONS

Presented to the faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

1983

Supervisor of Dissertation

Graduate Group Chairperson

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Writing about art has been the province of art historians and art critics, members of the institutional structure of the "art world" (Becker, 1976). Due to their role as opinion leaders and agenda-setters they are part of the object of study rather than explicators. Social science has been slow to join in the discussions of art. Definitive statements about what might constitute a "sociology of art" have begun to appear recently -- e.g. Adolph Tomars' 1940 Introduction to the Sociology of Art, Jean Duvignaud's 1967 The Sociology of Art, Albrecht, Barnett and Griff's 1970 reader, The Sociology of Art and Literature, Arnold Hauser's The Sociology of Art (originally appearing as Soziologie der Kunst in 1974) and Howard Becker's 1982 Art Worlds.

Perhaps what Walter Benjamin (1936) has called the aura of "religiosity" which surrounds artworks has protected art from social scientific dissection. Indeed, sociologists turned their attention to art in response to the arguments of social critics that popular participation would dilute high culture, yielding mediocre art (MacDonald, 1952; Rosenberg, 1957; Ortega y Gasset, 1957). The mass culture debate which blossomed in the 1950's produced such terms as "highbrow," "middlebrow" and "lowbrow," "masscult" and "midcult," "superior", "mediocre" and "brutal," making a distinction between legitimized cultural products and those which were seen as vulgar imitations, appealing to some aggregate called "mass man." In fact, critics of mass culture recommended that the cultural divisions they outlined be strengthened so that the intellectual elite would be able to preserve high culture.

Studies by Toffler (1964) and Gans (1974) came as reactions to this stance. Whereas little empirical evidence had been produced substantiating the harmful effects of the mass media on high culture, these writers offered arguments to the contrary, upholding the importance of all art forms as they appear in different social contexts. Gans called the availability of different art forms for different social groups "cultural pluralism."

Since World War II art has been democratized. With greater affluence and leisure time attendance at art museums, concerts and plays has increased (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978) and amateur activity abounds (Barzun, 1956). Coincident with what has been called an "explosion" of art activity, sociologists and other social scientists have begun to devote more attention to art. As defined by many current researchers, art includes spheres of activity previously not considered under this rubric. This broadened perspective seems to stem from a relativistic view that the arts in all their manifestations, from rock 'n' roll to opera, from quilting to oil painting, have their own integrity and are worthy of the same serious attention previously given only to elite cultural forms.

A considerable literature has emanated from two interrelated sociological camps. In 1976 a special issue of American Behavioral Scientist appeared, introducing an approach to the study of culture entitled "production of culture." In his "prolegomenon" Richard A. Peterson notes that earlier distinctions between "high" culture and "mass" culture (recast by Peterson as "academic" and "commercial") have inhibited researchers' ability to compare cultural forms. Applying this approach to the study of art, DiMaggio and Hirsch define their subject as follows:

> "We will define 'art' to include not only the so-called fine arts, but also popular culture, design and the institutional networks which produce art and connect publics to producers... Our topic thus encompasses a few things which everyone would consider art (painting, music, ballet, sculpture) and others which are aesthetic only secondarily (televised football games, commercial design, decisions by the Federal Communications Commission, and the like)" (1976: 74).

The reasons for defining art so broadly are these:

> "The strategy facilitates the search for communalities shared by several artistic media. It bypasses the debate...over the relative merits of high art and low. It also encompasses the general observation made by Becker (1974) that art media do not impose or constrain a particular division of labor in the production process" (1976: 74).

A "production of culture" approach to studying art draws upon industrial and organizational sociology, focussing on "the processes by which elements of culture are fabricated in those milieux where symbol system production is most self-consciously the center of activity" (Peterson 1976:10).

The work of Howard S. Becker and his students contribute additional insight into the organization of cultural production. Becker's theoretical framework is somewhat different from "production of culture." Becker applies methods from the sociology of work and occupations to studying art:

> "I have treated art as the work some people do...I have found it natural to use the style of analysis I and many others have used in analyzing other kinds of work and work settings. That has inevitably meant treating art as not so very different from other kinds of work, and treating people defined as artists as not so very different from other kinds of workers, especially the other workers who participate in the making of art works" (1982:ix-x).

Becker's analysis focusses on what he calls "art worlds," comparing the social organization of production across a variety of media. (For a treatment of the "artworld" concept by philosophers, see Danto, 1964 and Dickie, 1975.) Such an investigation proceeds as follows:

> "We do not start by defining art and then looking for the people who produce the objects we have thus isolated. Instead, we look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art; having found them, we look for all the other people who are also necessary to that production, gradually building up as complete a picture as we can of the entire cooperating network that radiates out from the works in question. Thus it is perfectly possible, theoretically and empirically, for there to be a great many such worlds coexisting at one time. They may be unaware of each other, in conflict, or in some sort of symbiotic or cooperative relation. They may be relatively stable, the same people continuing to cooperate in much the same way over some period of time, or quite ephemeral, coming together only on the one occasion when they produce a particular work. People may participate in only one world or in a large number, either simultaneously or serially. Only aesthetic or philosophical prejudice, not any scientific necessity, requires us to choose one of the existing worlds as authentic and dismiss the others as less important or less than the real thing" (Becker, 1976:42-43).

Again, art is broadly defined, here, relying on producers' definitions. In his 1982 book Art Worlds Becker admits to somewhat less certainty about what, in fact, should be considered art and hence studied:

> "...it is not clear what to include in an analysis of art worlds and what to leave out. To limit the analysis to what a society currently defines as art leaves out too much that is interesting: all the marginal cases in which people seek but are denied the name, as well as those in which people do work that outside observers can see might meet the definition but whose makers are not interested in that possibility...
>
> As a result, I have given much attention to work not conventionally thought to have artistic value or importance. I have been interested in 'Sunday painters' and quiltmakers as well as in conventionally recognized fine art painters and sculptors, in rock-and-roll musicians as well as in concert players, in the amateurs not good enough to be either as well as the professionals who are. In doing so I hope to let the problematic character of both 'artness' and 'worldness' permeate the analysis, and avoid taking too seriously the standards of those who make the conventional definitions of art for a society" (1982:37-38).

The literature generated by these two approaches to studying art has yielded valuable analyses and comparisons of the social organization of activity surrounding a variety of cultural products (cf. Bystryn, 1978; Christopherson, 1974a and 1974b; Faulkner, 1973a; Hirsch, 1969; Kealy, 1979; Levine, 1972; Lyon, 1974; McCall, 1977; Peterson, 1975; Rosenblum, 1978a and 1978b; Sinha, 1979; Zolberg, 1980). Yet, despite the rich array of data, little conceptual clarity about "artness" and "worldness," to use Becker's terms, has resulted. As Becker has written, defining art has been problematic. In order to circumvent the elitist attitudes of many earlier writers and analysts, sociologists have cast a large net, drawing so-called "popular" or "mass" culture products into the same analytic frame as "high" culture. The implicit notion, that each of these art forms is good in its proper context, is democratic. But most people continue to recognize a difference between the Beatles and Beethoven. The relativism of these approaches obscures that "difference," producing the kind of definitional uncertainty Becker refers to.

In this research I will attempt to describe the specific features which accrue to an activity once its practitioners call it art, attending to the dissimilarity between art activity and other kinds of cultural activities not labelled art by their respective participants. Becker (1976) stated the criterion that practitioners must call what they do art in order for that "world" to be the object of study. However, in Art Worlds (1982) he has decided, instead, to go the route taken by DiMaggio and Hirsch. Becker assumes the task of defining art so that much of what he considers "interesting" may still be included in his and students' researches, whether or not creators themselves consider their activities to be art.

Rather than follow the heuristic definition of art set forth by these analysts, the study which follows will use Becker's earlier criterion. The label "art" is honorific -- few people invoke it with reference to what they do. The ability to say "I am an artist" or "I make art" requires a level of self-assurance perhaps imparted by art school training, apprenticeship, friendship with other artists or the like. The conditions enabling someone to call himself "artist" require further examination.

I take a communications approach to studying art, drawing upon Worth's notion of "ethnographic semiotics":

> "ethnographic semiotics is about how actual people make meaning of their symbolic universe. How they learn to make meaning. How this differs from group to group, from young to old, from context to context, and from culture to culture" (1977:4).

The concern with meaning is not limited to the interpretation of specific texts or objects but rather with how people act as an aspect of their differing symbolic universes. I am concerned with elucidating the patterned conventions of behavior viewed within the social context of a particular symbol-sharing group.

Herein, art is viewed as a socially constructed system of values, norms and behaviors. Art is a social process; art objects themselves are viewed as a component part of that process. In order to shed some light on certain behavioral and institutional concomitants of art, I will be comparing the activity of photographers who are regarded as artists by art world legitimizers, and who call their pictures art with the activity of amateur, camera club photographers who refer to their work by other names, but do not call it art. In addition, I will explicate the formal pictorial codes which relate to the specific social organization of each type of photograph (cf. Rosenblum 1978a and 1978b).

Amateur activity is often maligned, viewed as an incomplete version of what professionals do. Still, many people working nine to five at other jobs devote much of their leisure to amateur theatrical productions, community orchestras, and painting. Photography as a creative recreational pursuit is particularly popular, since operating a camera is perceived to be a simpler way of making pictures than drawing or painting. As Worth found when teaching filmmaking, students who felt they had no skill or talent at drawing were enticed by a technological device that bypassed those "requirements" (Worth and Adair, 1972:19-20).

Perhaps because of the ease of making pictures with cameras and the pervasiveness of photographic imagery, the boundary between fine art photography and other kinds of photographic activities -- family snapshots, travel photography, commercial photography and amateur photography -- has been carefully constructed and fastidiously maintained. Photography is different from other art media. Neophyte photographers can (and sometimes do) make pictures which look the same as those made by skilled fine art photographers. Pianists, conversely, cannot play Chopin without first acquiring considerable skill at the keyboard. Inexperienced painters do not have the level of hand-eye coordination or knowledge of the tools of the medium required to produce the kinds of pictures made by painters who have spent time developing such skills.

Due to the mechanical nature of the medium, photography seems to present a unique situation. The ability to create photographs is accessible to anyone who can afford to own and operate a camera. Therefore, in addition to distinguishing their work from commercial and journalistic uses of the medium, fine art photographers have had to distinguish themselves from non-professionals. Non-professional photographic activity assumes varied forms. Snap-shot or "home-mode" photography (Chalfen, 1975); Musello, 1977) is situated within the context of the family, serving to document and shape those events considered important to family members. Amateur photographers pursuing a creative hobby as members of camera clubs (or without formal associational ties), engage in a different type of photographic activity. Amateur photography can be conceived of as a middle-ground between art and the home-mode. Devoted amateurs often exhibit considerable technical competence. Like artists, camera club photographers make pictures for exhibition. Camera club judges, like art critics, evaluate pictures' aesthetic and technical merit. Camera club pictures are treated by viewers as aesthetic objects which require appreciative responses (see Gross, 1973). However, camera club photographers view their own activities as distinct from the activities of artists. Club members, aware that their pictures receive no legitimization from art world gatekeepers, seem to feel uncomfortable referring to themselves as artists or their pictures as art works, no matter what judgments they may make as to the relative quality of their pictures. Camera club photographers share a different pictorial code and different aesthetic values than contemporary fine art photographers.

The boundaries between different realms of photographic activity may shift. In constructing the art history of photography, pictures made for non-artistic purposes have been re-defined and incorporated, extending the roots of art photography (see Phillips, 1982). Art historians have embraced photojournalists like W. Eugene Smith, and documentarists (for example the Farm Security Administration's photographic team). Fashion photographers may publish photo-art books. Art photographers utilize advertising images.

Recent art photographers have adopted the idiom of family photography. Winogrand, Friedlander, Arbus and Frank borrow from the pictorial codes of the home-mode, creating what art critics and historians have labelled "the snapshot aesthetic." When pictorial elements are borrowed art photographers transform them. Hence, snapshots, meaningful while embedded in a specific familial context, become "a metaphor for the fragmented, elusive quality of modern life" (Phillips, 1982:59) when made by artists for public viewing.

Although artists have drawn upon snapshot photography, this practice does not generally extend to borrowing from camera clubs. Perhaps because of the close historical relationship between camera club amateurs and the fine art movement, and amateurs' treatment of camera club photography as an aesthetic activity, artists have shunned camera club photography.

While artists may cross the boundaries between art photography and home-mode, journalism, and advertising photography, incorporating these codes and thereby transforming them into art, the boundaries between art and camera club photography have been maintained. This research compares photographic activity which is institutionally legitimized and labelled art, with photographic activity treated as an aesthetic pursuit separate from the art world. Through observation and interviews with photographers the boundaries which separate camera club and fine art photography are examined. By focussing on these boundaries, this research attempts to elucidate the shape assumed by photographic activity when it is legitimized as art, distinct from popular uses of the medium.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Literature directly relevant to this study falls into three categories: leisure research, sociology of art and sociology of photography.

1. Leisure research

Leisure researchers dealing specifically with amateur art activity have looked at participation in music (Kaplan, 1955; Barzun, 1956b) and theater (Stebbins, 1979). Kaplan and Stebbins provide sociological definitions of "amateur" as it relates to a professional counterpart in art and in other pursuits.

Kaplan (1960) cites a number of elements that make art an important concern to those studying leisure. He notes the variety of art forms available, the diverse ages served by art, the range of art styles and skills and the differing costs of participation. Kaplan also writes: "artistic activity is already an accepted 'good' in society" and "art provides a common social value that serves to create friendships across lines of origin, faith, creed, color, material possessions or schooling" (1960:202). The extent to which art is, in fact, an accepted "good" across these lines needs to be investigated. (I would guess that this holds true across somewhat narrow social class groups.) According to Kaplan, the fundamental distinction between professionals and amateurs is this:

> "the professional painter, composer, performer, playwright, actor, dancer, director, sculptor, writer, or architect is entirely committed to his act as work as his major objectively identified role in society" (1960:204).

Additional concomitants of his social role exist. Members of the professional artist's social circle accept his role and attribute authority to him because of "recognized technical knowledge." By comparison, the amateur is not viewed as an authority. Unconstrained by occupational exigencies,

> "He is free to choose his own and can perform -- or refrain from performing -- as he feels. Dedicated to freedom, yet entering into his activity with enthusiasm, he can be expected to contribute to new ideas. In this sense, the problem of every professional artist is how to find a balance between freedom from his circle as an amateur in spirit at the same time that he is supported by it as a professional in occupation" (1960:204).

Professionals must expose themselves to professional critics who evaluate their work. Amateurs need not, although evaluative mechanisms for non-professional activity do exist. (The mechanisms operating among camera club photographers will be discussed fully.) According to Kaplan, professionals occupy a "key status" in their particular area of specialization, thus they are idenified by that status regardless of other activities or interests. Finally, society's "conception of the person" attends the social role of the professional artist. Kaplan characterizes this as follows:

> "To have become established with the key role of artist means to be associated with a history of artistic and economic independence and, indeed, a struggle for independence that is far from solved in our own society" (1960:205).

The historical relationship between professional artist and amateur in the U.S. differs from European traditions. As Kaplan points out, three European sources of patronage -- the wealthy, the church, and the state -- were not initially available here. He argues that the growing body of amateur participation and a related growth of audiences helped to establish an American art institution (cf. Richardson, 1963). The importance of amateur activity for the growth of professional fine art photography will be treated in detail in Chapter Four.

Introducing his study of amateur activity, Stebbins (1979) cites the lack of precision surrounding the use of the term "amateur," both in everyday parlance and sociological thought. Stebbins constructs a definition, drawing upon the little existing writing on the topic (philosophical essays, biographies and autobiographies, some sociological writing), his own experience as an amateur athlete and musician, and discussions with amateurs in a variety of other activities.

"Amateur" is defined in terms of Stebbins' "professional-amateur-public system." According to this definition, in order for an amateur activity to exist, there must be a professional work role which is the counterpart of that activity. Stebbins offers this example: we cannot identify any such work role as a professional canoeist. Hence, someone interested in canoeing calls himself "canoeist" not "amateur canoeist."

Like professionals, amateurs serve a public: an audience for amateurs' products exists. Amateurs invoke standards of excellence set by their professional counterparts; they know about professionals' work and are aware of its superiority to their own. Generally, some monetary and organizational relations exist between amateurs and professionals. Amateurs often constitute a core of the audience for professional work. Additionally, professionals often educate, train, direct, coach, advise, organize and/or perform with amateurs. In order to make a living, professionals need to spend time polishing their technique, and may develop a particular specialty. For example, an actor may specialize in only comedic roles, while an amateur may want to try his hand at many different kinds of parts. By comparison amateurs may have a broader historical and intellectual foundation, since they can afford to devote time to reading about their avocation in addition to taking part in a broad range of related activities. As an audience for professional work, amateurs provide constraints -- they are a stimulus for good performances, exerting pressure on professionals to avoid an over-emphasis on technique or superficialities. Finally, professionals often start out as amateurs, and at later stages in their careers, they may return to the amateur ranks. These features comprise the "professional-amateur-public system of functionally interdependent relations" (Stebbins, 1979).

Stebbins also lists social-psychological attitudes separating amateurs from professionals.

1) Confidence: amateurs experience self-doubt concerning their performances, whereas professionals may experience nervousness, but have a sense of self confidence which amateurs lack.

2) Perseverance: professionals know they must stick to their pursuits despite adversity, and a professional subculture assists them through rough spots. Amateurs' discouragements are comparatively unbuffered.

3) Continuance commitment: professionals make social, financial and temporal investments in choosing a particular social identity. Amateurs have a "value commitment" but not a continuance commitment.

4) Preparedness: professionals demonstrate a greater preparedness to perform than amateurs.

5) Self-conception: professionals and amateurs conceive themselves in these terms. The content of their conceptions, writes Stebbins, requires research.

Hobbyists differ from amateurs, according to Stebbins' definition. A hobbyist's activities take place outside of a professional-amateur-public system. Hobbyists do not interact with professionals, in fact their avocations may not have any professional counterpart. One type of hobbyist is the "folk artist." These practitioners do not interact with either profesionals or amateurs. They

> "perform or produce strictly for their own enjoyment and perhaps that of others in the same community, while making their living in some other fashion. They know little about professional standards of music, art, or theater, although they may unwittingly meet some of them. Having no contact with a particular P-A-P system, they contribute nothing, as a rule, to any of its component groups, including its public" (1979:35).

Stebbins divides the field of amateurs into groups representing two levels of involvement: "participants" and "devotees." The amateur who is "mildly interested, but significantly more so than the dabbler" (1979:35) qualifies as a participant. Participants outnumber "devotees" who are defined as follows:

> "They can be distinguished operationally by the amount of time they commit to practicing, rehearsing, performing and studying in accordance with the accepted professional norms for these sorts of activities" (1979:35).

Stebbins also distinquishes among "pre-professionals" (amateurs who intend to become professionals), "pure amateurs (who never aspire to professional status, or have failed in the attempt), and the "post-professionals" (retired from their careers but continuing to participate on a part-time basis).

I will be using Kaplan's and Stebbins' ideas as "working definitions," comparing my own findings on the relationships between amateur and fine art photographers to these models. Camera club photographers fit somewhere in-between Stebbin's amateurs and hobbyists. Camera club photographers reject the aesthetic values of most professional art photographers. They "produce strictly for their own enjoyment," yet they are aware of professionals' standards. The oppositional relationship between camera club amateurs and fine art photographers may be unusual, a result of the ease of acquiring competence in the medium.

In a study entitled "Aging and the Artistic Career" (Hearn, 1972) first-career and second-career artists' later years are compared. Hearn suggests that art activities help retirees adjust to their new situation by providing a new reference group and new social contacts, within the framework of a gratifying, socially valued activity. Hearn's "second-career" artist corresponds roughly to Stebbins' definition of the amateur devotee. These artists show an interest in a particular pursuit sometime around their 20s (later than for first-career artists), but put off full-time involvement until familial responsibilities have been fulfilled. Retirement becomes the beginning of a fulfilling, creative life (rather than the end). Since most camera club members are elderly (late 50s and older) and many have retired, discussions of the functions served by such participation are germane to this research. The importance of the different age-grades which appear here will be pursued in the course of data analysis.

2. Sociology of Art

Sociologists studying art have begun to delineate the process and organization of the art institution and it's role in society. In Tomars' (1940) early contribution to the field he studied "the relation of one part of the social structure (the institutions of art) to the whole social structure, "examining art as a "social product" and a "social process."

Three types of social groups are discussed in order to illuminate how changes in social structure relate to changes in art institutions. These groups are the community, the class, and the association. Communal art is defined as non-professional, produced by the group as a part of daily life. As communication and mobility between groups increase art styles change. According to Tomars in complex societies one finds an increased emphasis on formalism, resulting from greater contact and diffusion because "art is wrenched from its context of social meaning and re-interpreted formally" (1940:137).

With a stratified class structure, "fine art" develops as a mark of status for art consumers. Upper class members do not produce art although through patronage they influence its form. Tomars argues that under such conditions art styles increase in complexity because "complexity serves the function of display as that which is even more distinct" (1940:170). In a competitive class system (defined as a system in which social mobility is achieved through wealth and individualism) new markers of class distinction must continually be invented as old forms are adopted by other, non-elite groups. Cycles of fashion determine the accepted art forms. The process by which certain art forms come to be considered pre-eminent is discussed by Tomars as follows:

> "this process, natural enough in a competitive society is hastened and intensified by interested parties. The upper class is not left to choose its new fashions freely; it is guided by various groups and individuals to whom it turns, bewildered in matters of taste -- for the upper class is in large part newly made, lacking the cultivation that may come from long leisure. But these arbiters of taste thrust fashions upon the elite for reasons of their own. Among these arbiters may be the artists who have arrived, the aesthetic elite (finanically high in status) who often strive desparately to maintain their eminence, attempting to keep ahead of the fashion by leading it lest they be left behind. But chiefly these interested parties are representatives of economic associations to whom art is their business: impresarios, producers, managers, dealers, publishers. They select the artists who are to be given a hearing on the stage, concert hall or exhibition room; they sell art works to the wealthy, obtain the patrons and patronesses for the concert or exhibition, launch the fashion and publicize it through well organized machinery for publicity" (1940:197).

The criteria of superiority in a competitive class system become novelty, rarity, and, since the novel and the rare are more costly, expensiveness. It follows, as Veblen argues in The Theory of the Leisure Class, that handmade goods are considered superior because they are costlier and rarer. Works of art serve as status markers because they are handmade (cf. Berger, 1973; Benjamin, 1936). (This has been a problem which fine art photography has had to face since photographs are arguably made by machines.) Rarity as an aesthetic value may be difficult to apply to art made by living artists, since more works are presumably forthcoming. Tomars suggests that artists compensate through originality and novelty in art styles. If an artist is known as the initiator of some new movement the value of his work may increase.

Tomars argues that in modern industrial societies audience and artist have drifted apart, no longer directly responsive to one another. Specialization of roles within art worlds removes the ability to make aesthetic judgments from the audience, and to some extent from the artist. Both are dependent upon arbiters of taste, the art dealers and critics who deal with art as a commercial commodity and as an economic value. Art styles must change with the prevailing fashions if artists are to succeed. Aesthetic success comes to be equated with commercial success, and formalism predominates.

Albrecht (1970) in his introduction to The Sociology of Art and Literature discusses an approach viewing art as a social institution. He sees the art object as "an essential link in an extensive network of social and cultural relations" (1970:7). The elements of the structure of art as an institution are described as follows:

"1) Technical systems, including raw materials (paint, words, junk), specialized tools, techniques and skills, inherited and invented.

2) The traditional forms of art, such as the sonnet and novel in literature, the song and symphony in music, the easel picture and mural in painting or combinations in opera and in the dance. Such forms always assume the existence of specific content and meanings changing through time.

3) Artists, their socialization and training, their roles, careers, associations, and modes of creativity.

4) Disposal and reward systems, including agents and patrons, museums with their personnel and characteristic activities,

> personnel, equipment and organizations, governed by special norms and values.
>
> 5) Art reviewers and critics, with their typical outlets and forms of expression and their professional associations.
>
> 6) Publics and audiences, from "live" ones in the theater, concert hall or museum, to millions of television viewers or "unknown" publics who read or listen in private.
>
> 7) Formal principles of judgment, the aesthetic and extra-aesthetic bases of judgment for artists, critics and audiences.
>
> 8) Broad cultural values sustaining art in society, such as the assumption of art's civilizing functions, its ability to refine the emotions, overcome prejudice or produce social solidarity" (1970:7-8).

Albrecht's outline provides a clear delineation of the social and cultural components of the institutional structure of art. Emphasizing the complexity of the interconnection of these elements, Albrecht adds,

> "They involve not only one simplified set of relations but distinct networks of relations and processes within and between areas, which need to be articulated in detail as part of the total operations of the institution" (1970:8).

The distribution systems of art worlds have received much attention from sociologists. Since it is frequently argued that art objects are similar to other luxury consumer goods which serve as markers of high status, the economics of the art marketplace becomes a focal point for studying the creation of aesthetic value. In fact, Levine makes this recommendation, in order to measure an artist's success:

> "the objective, or socioeconomic, measure of success, rather than any aesthetic one, is the most useful guide for the

sociology of art..." (1972:315-316).

Writing on the relation of patronage to artistic style, Henning (1970) argues that art's role as a commercial product is traditional. However, the recent development of the art dealer as a mediator between the artist and the patron has reduced the direct influence of patrons on style, resulting in stylistic diversity.

> "The individualism which leads to such great diversity of styles is endorsed by the dynamics of the modern art market; a fact which is often obscured by the romantic haze which still surrounds the arts. The position of the dealer and the critic between the artist and the patron, however, has modified the dynamics of that relationship. Of the three ways mentioned in which art styles are influenced by patronage, only selection plays a major role in the "fine arts" today, selection by art dealers and critics first, however, rather than directly by consumers. Works of art and artists are often selected therefore on the basis of their potentialities for promotional purposes rather than the satisfaction of deep-lying psychological needs of an important patron group" (1970:360).

In Art as Experience Dewey echoes Henning:

> "...works of art are now produced, like other articles, for sale in the market. Economic patronage by wealthy and powerful individuals has at many times played a part in the encouragement of artistic production...But now even that much of intimate social connecion is lost in the impersonality of the world market. Objects that were in the past valid and significant because of their place in the life of the community now function in isolation from the conditions of their origin. By that fact they are also set apart from common experience, and serve as insignia of taste and certificates of special culture" (1934:9).

Much of the "production of culture" studies which have appeared since the late 1960's deal with the relations between the economic structure of distribution systems and cultural products. For example, Peterson and several co-researchers have been studying the transformation and commercialization of a folk form -- country music. A series of published articles look at the role of commercial radio and the movie industry (seen as two sides of the same coin) in shaping an evolving musical form (cf. Peterson, 1978; Peterson and DiMaggio, 1975). In painting, Bystryn (1978) discusses the role of the gallery system in promoting a new avant-garde style: Abstract Expression.

Increasingly, the marketplace has become a focal point in sociological treatments of art. In counterpoint to this trend McCall (1977) studied the social organization of an art world for which the traditional distribution system did not exist. Rather than gaining prestige through gallery affiliations and the attention of local critics, St. Louis artists' status is affirmed through academic positions and University gallery and art school exhibitions.

McCall argues that St. Louis has no art marketplace. This notion is interestingly problematic. New York City is viewed by art world personnel as the locus of the art market in this country: the most prestigious galleries and museums are located here, respected art critics are in-residence and important art magazines emanate from New York publishers. By comparison the institutional structures existing elsewhere are viewed as regional approximations. Success in another city is a stepping-stone to success in New York (cf. Levine 1972; McCall, 1977; Rosenblum, 1978). McCall's contention that St. Louis has no art market may be misconceived. Rather, it may be more accurate to say that a national art market, headquartered in New York

City, co-exists with regional markets whose structure and organization vary.

According to McCall (1977), St. Louis is "only marginally an art market."

> "St. Louis has few dealers, fewer commercial dealers' galleries, and no gallery district. The St. Louis art museum seldom exhibits and does not collect local contemporary art. There are few private collectors in St. Louis, and fewer who buy local work.
>
> Artistic value is created socially by alternative means. Art schools and their faculties take the place of dealers, collectors, museums and critics in the local production of art, the creation of artistic value and the determination of artistic status" (1977:33).

Because there is little institutional support for their work, St. Louis artists are forced to compete with "picture painters" for exhibition space, critical attention and buyers. McCall draws clear distinctions between artists and picture painters.

> "The conventions of artmaking and presentation are very different in high art and picture painting worlds...The most visible difference between individuals who paint pictures and those who purport to make art is the content of the things they make. Artists conform to the current conventions of artmaking; picture painters do not" (1977:38).

While picture painters try to "recreate nature or make it more decorative," artists attempt "to create a new vision of reality," that has "never been made before."

McCall makes further distinctions between them. Artists emphasize the length of time required to produce art works: "artists believe that making 'art' should take time." Artists include conceptualizing the work as part of the time spent. Artists emphasize "the idea rather than on its execution," while the reverse characterizes picture painters' approach. According to McCall, "the picture painter claims to have a more or less unique skill rather than a new vision." McCall sees the distinction between "art" and "pictures" as analogous to that of art versus craft. Pictures are useful -- they decorate walls and provide pleasure -- art is not. This distinction seems somewhat sloppy. Art, too, can be decorative and pleasurable. Art can be a useful investment, or a conversation piece or a status marker. Such useful/useless dichotomies usually fail to account for different levels of function (cf. Glassie, 1972).

Like camera club members, picture painters belong to "art associations" which conduct monthly meetings at which speakers address the group, or club members exhibit their work in contests. According to McCall, membership in those associations identifies the picture painter as an "artist" to outsiders. Picture painters sell their work at art fairs and at "galleries" -- frame shops which sell decorative knick-knacks.

McCall's separation of artists from picture painters corresponds with the point of view taken here (except for the somewhat derogatory and cursory treatment of picture painters). McCall carefully reserves application of the term "art" to products which emanate from a high art world:

"In cities without a high art world, art works -- things --

> may be produced, but high art is not. An art world often found in such places is the world of picture painters" (1977:37).

However, terminological confusion often results from the attempt to maintain this conceptual separation. Worth breaks up the visual symbolic environment into three related domains: 1.) popular culture, which includes "the mass media and mass pictorial communication in general;" 2.) the "world of 'high culture' and 'art'"; and 3.) "our personal use of visual-symbolic forms," such as clothing, home decoration or "urban design" (1981:200-201), but these categories do not seem to provide any more comfortable a fit. Picture painting and art, fine art photography and camera club photography, amateur and professional are separate but related social activities. Finding appropriate terms for them proves to be difficult.

McCall writes that members of the picture painting world do not treat what they do as art:

> "The picture painting world in St. Louis does not create artistic value because painters do not conform to or do not know high art conventions. Picture painters do not intend to make art; they intend to make pretty pictures or other decorative objects, with a high degree of skill. Individuals who deal in pictures do not conform to the conventions of art presentation, and the clientele of picture painters does not intend to buy art" (1977:42).

If participants do not treat their activity as art it would make little sense for the researcher to do so. Calling picture painting (or, in the case of this study, camera club photography) art doesn't make it more valuable or more worthy of attention. It does place it in a frame that may not be recognized by its participants. Part of the task of this research will be to shed some terminological as well as conceptual illumination onto a rather murky area.

3. Sociology of photography

Most of the social science literature concerning photography has been concerned with how researchers can use photography to augment their projects (Becker, 1974; Collier, 1967) or presented the results of these attempts (see, for example, Wagner, ed. 1979). Less has been written about people doing photography. An important literature dealing with snapshot or "home-mode" photography has arisen (Chalfen, 1975; Musello, 1977). In addition, two sociologists have recently published studies of fine art photography and photographers.

In his article "Making Art with Machines: Photography's Institutional Inadequacies" (1974a), Richard Christopherson examines the reasons why fine art photography is a low status occupation vis-a-vis other fine arts. Christopherson interviewed twelve San Francisco Bay area fine art photographers and draws his conclusions from this data. He lists five "institutional inadequacies" from which art photography suffers. First, there is a shortage of critical and art historical writing on photographic art. One cannot make a living as a photography critic alone as is possible with painting criticism. Thus, the people who write photography criticism are, themselves, fine art photographers as well. There is no separate institutional role for critics. Second, there is a shortage of schools teaching art photography, so there is a shortage of teaching positions available to photo-artists. Third, a lack of exhibition space, both in galleries and museums makes it difficult for photographers to get public exposure and to sell their work. Fourth, photographs are inherently reproducible, therefore, the value placed on the single original work of art cannot be applied to photographs. (Photographers may compensate by printing limited editions and/or destroying their negatives, thus escalating the value of existing prints.) And fifth, the audience for art photography is limited. Other art photographers constitute the largest segment of the viewing public. As Becker (1975) points out, these institutional inadequacies are increasingly being remedied. In recent years as photograph-collecting has become more popular, so also have museum photo shows, photography galleries, and studies of photography.

In a second article published in 1974 Christopherson discusses how fine art photographers distinguish themselves from other photographers, in order to gain legitimacy as artists. According to Christopherson,

> "A fundamental problem for fine art photographers is to distinguish themselves from this morass of photographic folklore, somehow to separate themselves from all these common men who know how to make pictures with cameras, and to convince us all that what they do is 'special'" (1974b:127).

Art photographers de-emphasize what they perceive as being important to other kinds of photographers. The role of technique in making photographic art is subordinated, and the camera itself is devalued.

> "An amateur is likely to buy an expensive camera because he wants to make better pictures; the artist-photographer is likely to deny that the kind of camera has anything fundamental to do with the value of the photograph produced" (1974b:132).

Christopherson adds that, in fact, serious photographers do own very good, expensive equipment, but that

> "The strong tendency to deny the importance of any particular camera is an obvious way to separate the type of photographic work they feel they are doing from the work of the camera-freak" (1946:132).

Christopherson mentions "camera clubbers" in particular as a group which competed with art photographers for museum space and art world recognition. He writes that "fine art photographers themselves tend to view camera club work as a form of artistic kitsch" (1974b:133). According to Christopherson, art photographers have edged out "camera clubbers'" claim on art world legitimization. (I'm not sure that camera club photographers have ever been engaged in a competition for a place in the art world. The evolution of separate photography worlds is more complex than Christopherson's portrayal.) Both groups have not been able to co-exist as legitimized art producers:

> "To the extent that fine art photographers have been granted status in the art world, camera clubbers have been excluded...the social definition of one variety of work as art means the elimination of other groups which might make the same claim" (1974b:133).

In order to maintain their legitimization as artists, photographers don't do commercial work or if they must, it is treated as separate from their art work. Art photographers don't make snapshot documents of real events and people: their pictures concern ideas (cf. McCall, 1977; Rosenblum, 1978). Christopherson lists three additional criteria for artistic legitimization. These suggest that the art photographer must behave like other kinds of artists. Photographic work must be seen within an art tradition which includes work done in all media, it must be exhibited in galleries, museums and journals appropriate to art works, and the artist must see his own work as evidence of personal talent or genius.

Christopherson's work provides a useful starting point, examining the social concomitants of transforming photography into a fine art. However, Christopherson's depiction of the relationship between camera club work and art work fails to represent its complexity. Furthermore, maintaining the unflattering image of the "camera-freak" camera clubber does little to explicate that activity (cf. Peterson, 1983).

Barbara Rosenblum's study (1978a and 1978b) of news, advertising and fine art photographers examines the relation between the social organization of the production of photographs and photographic style. Rosenblum found a clear relationship between the mode of production and pictorial style for the news and advertising groups. Here, occupational requirements demand a specific kind of photographic product. Fine art photographers, in contrast, are not constrained by the same kinds of work conditions. A different set of controls shapes art photographers' work:

> "The fine art photographer's freedom to select and produce imagery is narrowed when he takes into account the preferences and purchase patterns of gatekeepers in the market. To the extent that the photographer treats them as a reference group...and orients his own work to their preferences, the photographer is constrained by the market. The marketplace, then, is a major source of control which feeds back to the photographer and exerts pressures on him to produce pictures in certain given directions and traditions, thus affecting his imagery" (1978a:432).

Rosenblum describes the market as "highly competitive," with many more photographers making pictures than there are exhibition spaces or purchasers. Specific gatekeepers -- curators, "key" gallery directors, critics and "important" collectors -- "define the fashion through their own exhibitions and purchases" (1978a:433). There is a tendency toward conservatism here. Well-known photographers' work are shown in one-man exhibitions and purchased by collectors because their reputations have been established, and the value of their work has been affirmed. Young, new artists are considered too risky to be given this kind of attention. Thus according to Rosenblum, "the economics of the art world has the latent consequence of maintaining the dominance of several photographic traditions..." (1978a:434), and those who work within these conventional traditions reap the rewards of the marketplace. Producers of images which differ from the prevailing styles have difficulty getting their work shown.

> "Generally photographers get shows when their work has been defined as an extension of some already existing tradition in fine arts photography" (1978a:435).

Rosenblum concludes that while news and advertising photographers are constrained by the exigencies of production, fine art photographers are constrained by the exigencies of distribution:

> "In sum, the market may be see as a source of control through the creation of boundaries, definitions and meanings. Constraints on photographers to produce work within a few established traditions arise from market allocations of rewards. In other words, the market determines definitions of fine art photography by virtue of what is selected for inclusion" (1978a:434).

Rosenblum discusses the socialization process whereby photographers assume the artist's role. Interview data reveal art photographers' ideas about their work and about creativity. In addition, Rosenblum describes the organization of the fine art photography world. The valuable data and insights yielded by this study will be drawn upon in the course of this research, providing an added comparison to the data presented here.

CHAPTER 3

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

The Problem

I have outlined some of the conceptual and terminological difficulties accompanying the study of art. This research attempts to tackle the "problematic character of both 'artness' and 'worldness'" (Becker, 1982:38) by approaching this dilemma from the viewpoint of communication theory.

In his preproposal for studying the "vidistic environment" of a community, Worth suggested taking a different perspective on "the world of culture and its art context and products" (1981:201). He wrote:

> "We are arguing that before one can understand 'painting' one must understand 'pictures,' before one can understand 'architecture' and 'sculpture' one must understand 'houses' and 'statues.' Questions about cinema, the art of the film and video, need prior understanding of movies and the tube" (1981:201).

Drawing upon Hymes' discussion of the "ethnography of communication" (1964), Worth's proposed unit of analysis is not the product but "the context -- the community and the community members' interaction with visual-symbolic events" (1981:202).

Birdwhistell discusses the importance of studying the social contexts of communication:

> "As our studies approach the point where we must deal with social meaning, we need clear statements regarding the structure of the social contexts of communicational occurrences. It is difficult, if not impossible, to answer the question: What does this symbol or that gesture mean?

> Meaning is not immanent in particular symbols, words, sentences, or acts of whatever duration but in the behavior elicited by the presence or absence of such behavior in particular contexts. The derivation and comprehension of social meaning thus rests equally upon comprehension of the code and of the context which selects from the possibilities provided by the code structure" (1970:96).

In this research I examine a medium of symbolic communication -- photography -- in order to understand how the social context of the use of that medium shapes its social meaning. By comparing the activity of camera club photography with photographic activity which is institutionally legitimized as art and referred to as such by its participants, I will attempt to describe the distinctive features of "artness" as a communicational system.

Communication has been defined broadly as "a structural system of significant symbols (from all the sensorily based modalities) which permit ordered social interaction" (Birdwhistell, 1970:95). Gross has defined artistic communication as

> "a form of culturally determined symbolic behavior in which an artist creates or arranges object(s) and/or events purposefully so as to imply meaning(s) and emotion(s) according to the conventions of a symbolic code, and these objects/events elicit meaningful inferences in the artist himself and/or in others who possess at least minimal competence in the same cultural mode...For artistic communication to occur it is not necessary for the artist and audience to coexist in either time or space. However, according to this definition it is necessary that, to a significant extent, they share a symbolic code" (1973:115).

Sharing a symbolic code has important social structural implications as Warner writes:

> "The reciprocal exchange of symbols which have a common significance for each member involved in the exchange holds

> the groups together; but the fact that they share the symbols only among themselves and cannot do so with others creates an exclusiveness and inclusiveness that strengthens the solidarity of the group. Since these characteristics are present in each symbol-sharing group, they clearly contribute both to each group's solidarity and to the maintenance of the society's heterogeneity" (1953:61-62).

In addition to symbol-sharing which creates social structural diversity, Warner asserts that a realm of public symbols (e.g. the communications of the mass media) provide at least a minimum of cohesiveness, bringing together a plethora of social groups.

DiMaggio's and Useem's analysis of 230 audience studies conducted by U.S. arts organizations echoes Warner's ideas. They conclude

> "Available studies repeatedly and consistently demonstrate that the ranks of those who attend museums and theater, opera, symphony and ballet performances are dominated by the wealthy and well-educated, most of whom are professionals and managers. By contrast, the popular arts, such as jazz, rock music, and the cinema, are consumed at comparable rates by all social classes" (1978:156).

These data suggest that participation in traditional fine art activity may promote solidarity among symbol-sharing members of upper class strata, while participation in modern, commercial cultural activities would not foster a similar kind of exclusive in-group identity. DiMaggio and Hirsch go further to suggest, as did Veblen (1899), upper and upper-middle class members with insufficient economic capital "will accumulate cultural capital as an alternative strategy for maintaining and advancing their position in the class structure" (1978:154).

Photography, a fledgling art additionally impeded by its technological nature (cf. Christopherson, 1974a and 1974b), likely has a somewhat different sociocultural profile. Prices for photographic art have been inexpensive, especially relative to other visual artworks, until recent years (see Phillips, 1982). Hence collecting of art photography has been an activity accessible to a broader socioeconomic spectrum. As the social and economic value of photographs has risen (a trend which Freund (1974) attributes to the popularity of _amateur_ photography), the institutional structure which supports photography as a fine art has been built.

Throughout its history, photography has been characterized by a level of self-consciousness not found with other art media. As Jeffrey writes:

> "This sense of a high calling also accounts for the incessant wrangling which is such a distinguishing feature of photographic affairs around 1900. There were certainly some dilettantes involved in photography at that time, but the principal figures were absolutely in earnest. For the most part they seem even more earnest than their contemporaries in painting and sculpture; for they were, in terms of the larger art world, an excluded sect, often relegated to the industrial sections of major exhibitions and forced to contend with jury selection by painters and sculptors. Hence the foundation of so many photographic magazines at this period, of which Stieglitz's immaculate _Camera Work_ is deservedly the most famous. Hence, too, the ethos of parochialism and intransigence evident in photography ever since" (1981:967).

In order to secure the position of photography as art, distinctions between that branch of photographic activity and all others have been created and strengthened (cf. Christopherson, 1974b). The historical circumstances surrounding the movement of art photography away from camera clubs, well documented by art historians, makes the comparison of fine art and camera club photography an ideal locus for studying art as a communication system. In this research I will investigate the boundaries constructed between fine art and camera club photography which are expressed and maintained by members of each group, in part, through their talk about photography. In observations I have focussed primarily on activities performed publicly -- meetings of the camera club, group photographic outings, photographic exhibits or "salons," and special events, opening receptions at art photography galleries and museums and public forums dealing with issues germane to art photography. Observations oriented me to the activities of each group and shaped the questions I chose to ask photographers. Data gathered through observation aided my analysis of interview material, providing a basis for interpreting photographers' reports about their activities. By investigating the boundaries between camera club and fine art photography, I will be examining how institutional legitimization as "art" shapes the features of photographic activity.

Methodology

Data for this research were gathered in Philadelphia from Spring 1979 until August 1982. A variety of methods were employed: observation, participant observation, interviews and document analysis. In March, 1979, my husband, Michael Griffin, and I joined the Miniature Camera Club of Philadelphia (MCC), after several visits to club meetings. "Family memberships," composed of husband and wife, account for over half of the photographers who belong to the club; as a pair we were accepted as a sociable unit, interested in friendships as well as pursuing photography. Michael and I introduced ourselves, at our initial visit to the club, as students from the Annenberg School of Communications engaged in a research project concerned with amateur photography. We explained that we were studying amateur photography because we were avid photographers ourselves, interested in discovering more about the importance of pursuing photography as a hobby. We were viewed with some suspicion at first, and we received questions about our "paper" well into the second year of our membership. However, most members seemed to accept us as co-amateurs with somewhat esoteric academic interests.

The dissertation research which Michael and I have pursued takes different routes, although we have both utilizied the Miniature Camera Club as one data-gathering site. While I have been concerned with the distinctions between amateur and fine art codes of photographic activity, Michael has concentrated on the relationship between the growth of the photographic industry and the evolving aesthetic code of camera club photography. Once an important source of consumers for photographic materiel, the industry kept close ties with camera clubs, introducing new equipment, film stocks and the like, in programs presented at camera club meetings. Although the importance of the organized amateur market has diminished, the photographic industry played an important historical role in shaping the aesthetic values and the pictorial code shared by MCC photographers. Michael's dissertation research attempts to elucidate the historical contributions of the industry to camera club codes and the social organizational structure which supports the continuity of the codes.

During the course of our membership we attended club meetings and special events (exhibitions, outings, dinners), and participated in club photography competition. In addition, we volunteered jointly to fill the position of "club historian," organizing historical materials collected by club members, producing a short written history for distribution to the group. As a member I attempted to limit my participation in club affairs to a level at which I would be considered active, but not outstanding. While entering club competitions, I did not attempt to become a ribbon winner. Instead, I assumed the role of a relative neophyte so that, for reasons in addition to my youth (and gender, among printmakers), advice could be readily offered and sought. Michael, too, attempted to maintain a level of activity which demonstrated his interest in photography, without foregrounding his presence.

Finding a comparable setting in which art-photographers could be observed proved difficult. Art-photographers do not belong to formally organized associations resembling camera clubs. However, artists are informally associated. As Hearn writes:

"The data clearly show that our artists in each field are

> aware of each other, socialize to some extent, offer an informal contact network...and generally offer aid and comfort to one another. Either they have worked or exhibited together or are members of common artistic organizations" (1972:360).

Philadelphia galleries devoted to showing photography serve as meeting places for local photographers. Oftentimes photographers stop by the galleries to visit the director, the staff, or the local critics, collectors or photographers who might also be there. Exhibit openings provided a framework within which the public interactions of art photographers could be observed. I attended all exhibit openings and public events at Philadelphia galleries and kept field notes from January 1981 through August 1982.

My position vis-a-vis the art photographers was very different from my relationship with camera club photographers. While membership in the club may be secured by paying yearly dues, one cannot easily claim membership in the social network of art photographers. Facilitating my entrance into the research situation, I have in the past been cast in the role of art photography student. In addition to courses in New York City, while I was an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, I studied with a photographer who is locally known as an artist. Through her introduction (I was referred to as one of her former students) I began to contact other art photographers in Philadelphia. Rather than present myself as a photography student, a role which would give my position a predetermined shape, perhaps eliciting a habitual response-set, I represented myself as a social scientist, knowledgeable about photography, doing research on art photography.

In addition to observations, I conducted formal interviews with 10 camera club photographers (these augment informal interviews collected during club activities) and 19 fine art photographers. All but two were conducted at the interviewees' homes and/or studios. Camera club interviewees were chosen to provide a cross section of types of participation: all were active members, some primarily as administrators, others as slide makers, printers, nature, travel or pictorial photographers. Members representing the mainstream of club aesthetics and values are included, along with members whose interests lie at the club's boundaries.

The sample of fine art photographers was generated through photographers' recommendations. I began with my former instructor, asking for a list of photographers whom she would judge to be interesting to interview. After each session ended I asked interviewees to recommend others. By so doing, I constructed a picture of the social network of Philadelphia art photographers, in addition to building a list of interviewees. To avoid photographers' idiosyncracies of choice, all those interviewed were named by at least two others, and all had exhibited their photographs publicly at least once in the Philadelphia area. Art world criteria for legitimizing photographers as artists are unclear and, to some extent, guarded. I relied upon multiple recommendations by photographers choosing interviewees who met these criteria: acknowledgment as an artist by other photographers and acknowledgment by local gallery directors through exhibit sponsorship.

Interviews for both groups generally lasted three to four hours (one, with an art photographer, lasted six hours); I took notes and tape recorded each session. A focussed interview format was followed. Questions which served as a starting point for discussion appear in the Appendix. At the conclusion of interviews with art photographers I requested a copy of his/her resume. Most photographers kept up-to-date resumes on hand. These provide additional data on the shape of artists' reputations and figure importantly into the analysis.

Several kinds of written material are pertinent to this research. As historian I had access to past and current camera club documents. I have collected issues of the MCC newsletter, the Mica Clarion, dating from its inception in the mid-1950s. Membership lists, club minutes for several years and annual salon catalogs are also examined. The Photographic Society of America Journal, a national periodical by and for camera club photographers is reviewed for relevant material. The Philadelphia Photo Review is a tabloid, published during the last six years, which covers local and regional fine art events. Records of gallery exhibitions, price lists and local reviews have also been examined. Numerous collections of art photographers' writing exist, including manifestos, statements of personal aesthetics, and critical discussions. The art history of photography, not originally pursued by other art historians, has been written primarily by art photographers themselves (cf. Christophersons, 1974a). These histories often reveal the attitudes of art photographers and the shape of their perceptions. Where relevant, these documents will be brought to bear on the analysis that follows.

At the end of each interview, subjects were asked to judge a series of 10 photographs, chosen to represent the aesthetic range of each group (see figures 1-10). Typical examples of camera club portraits, nature photographs, travel and pictorial subjects are included along with a selection of abstract, formalist, colorist and "snapshot aesthetic" photographs. Reactions to these pictures helped to elicit the aesthetic preferences of each group, while giving an indication of the boundaries between them.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF CAMERA CLUB AND FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY POPULATIONS AND RESEARCH SITES

Camera Clubs and the Development of Fine Art Photography

In 1839 Daguerre made public the daguerreotype process, setting in motion what became the popular pursuit of photography. Early amateurs using this process were, for the most part, science teachers and their students (Taft, 1938). The introduction of the collodion process and the popularity of stereographs swelled the ranks of amateurs. (The British photographic press in the late 1850's called stereographs, quite popular with a large audience, "stereoscopic trash." Jeffrey (1981:38) contends that stereography produced a "withdrawal into High Art.")

As the popularity of photography grew so did the number of photographic societies in the U.S. and Europe (Black, 1887; Taft, 1938; Newhall, 1964). Among the members were both amateurs and professionals (portraitists and stereographers), a convenient arrangement for the latter, who were often paid to teach the beginning enthusiasts (Taft, 1938:204). In addition to sociability, these organizations produced advances in photographic practice, due to the shared expertise of members within and among clubs:

> "The amateurs in these societies took their labors quite seriously -- regular meetings were held, usually monthly,

> their difficulties discussed at length, suggestions made for improvement, and tests and experiments planned. In fact, it can be said that for many years these organizations were largely responsible for any growth in the art" (1938:204).

As Stieglitz (1899) wrote:

> "Let me here call attention to one of the most universally popular mistakes that have to do with photography -- that of claiming supposedly excellent work as professional, and using the term amateur to convey the idea of immature productions and to excuse atrociously poor photographs. As a matter of fact nearly all the greatest work is being, and has always been done, by those who are following photography for the love of it, and not merely for financial reasons. As the name implies, an amateur is one who works for love; and viewed in this light the incorrectness of the popular classification is readily apparent."

"Art photographers" first appeared around the turn of the century. According to Jeffrey:

> "Prior to 1890 declared artist-photographers were few in number; after that date they appear in quantity, all over Europe, and in the United States. In Britain James Craig Annan was a major innovator. After 1900 the best known British photographer was Frederick H. Evans, a former bookseller who became known for his pictures of landscape and medieval architecture. For the most part these artist-cameramen were amateurs: Charles Job, a specialist in pastoral landscape, was a stockbroker; Alexander Keighley owned a woolen mill; Joseph Gale was an army officer, and Reginald Craigie a clerk in the bank of England" (1981:88).

Photography's transformation into a fine art resulted from the diligence of camera club members.

> "There were other amateurs whose concern for photography went even deeper. They passionately believed it to be a fine art, deserving of recognition. With vigor and dedication they not only explored the aesthetic potentials of the camera, but crusaded for their cause. As amateurs they were not burdened with financial responsibilities, and could ignore limits selfimposed by professionals. They were free to experiment, and they had the imagination and the will to break accepted rules. In Europe and America they

> banded together in clubs and societies, and through exhibitions and publications demonstrated their belief. Their style became universal; for a quarter of a century they dominated artistic photography" (Newhall, 1964:94).

A club, oft mentioned in the art history of photography, is described as follows:

> "In 1892 some of the most innovative art photographers in Britain, impatient with sharp-focus traditions, founded The Linked Ring. This was as bizarre as any of W. S. Gilbert's inventions; it featured a 'Controller of the Exchequer,' and a 'High Executioner' and 'Deputy High Executioner' -- in charge of annual exhibitions. It was a gentleman's club which eventually admitted women in 1900, and it staged important international exhibitions, or salons from 1893 until 1909" (Jeffrey, 1981:90).

One of its members, Alfred Stieglitz, did much to advance the position of photography as art in the U.S. and in Europe. An active amateur photographer, Stieglitz joined the Society of Amateur Photographers in 1890 and edited the journal The American Amateur Photographer. When the Society merged with the New York Camera club Stieglitz was elected its vice-president and edited the club's journal, Camera Notes. Stieglitz was active in promoting exhibitions of photographs "of the highest quality."

One such exhibition was an international salon held in Philadelphia in 1898, sponsored by the Photographic Society of Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. This was the first time a photographic exhibit was co-sponsored by a fine arts academy. The aesthetic standards for selection were high -- the best photography of the American School was showcased -- but the number of photographers represented was low. Doty (1960) reports that camera club members clamored for greater exposure, asserting that the salons had been dominated by a small clique. There was opposition to pictorialism and according to Doty some thought that photography "was being imbued with 'a little too much art'" (1960:25). In 1901 standards were relaxed by the Society allowing greater participation and as a result "all the recognized pictorial photographers" refused to participate. Thereafter, viewing the work as "second-rate photography" the Pennsylvania Academy ceased its involvement in the Salon. According to Doty, following the demise of the Philadelphia Salon, Stieglitz "realized that the high standards and desires that he held for photography as a means of expression could no longer gain support through the camera clubs" (1960:26). (For an interesting contradiction, see Peterson, 1983.)

In 1902 Stieglitz arranged an exhibition of the work of the "Photo-Secessionists," a newly formed group of the best art photographers, brought together by him (see Stieglitz, 1903, for a Photo-Secession manifesto). Newhall quotes him:

> "In Europe, in Germany and in Austria, there have been splits in the art circles and the moderns call themselves Secessionists, so Photo-Secession really hitches up with the art world" (Newhall, 1964:105-6).

The Secessionists, like members of The Linked Ring, attempted to "hitch up with the art world" by making photographs that looked handcrafted instead of machine-made. They called this "pictorial effect." Photographers strove to undo the clarity and reproducibility which photographic technology offered and opted instead to make images resembling drawings or etchings.

> "During the years of training in the camera clubs and photographic societies, those photographers now allied with the Secession had worked toward a photography that went far beyond commonplace record, to expressions of beauty and spirit...It was quite frankly patterned after the styles of the currently venerated painters, especially Whistler, Corot, and members of the Barbizon School, Millet in particular" (Doty, 1960:28).

Stieglitz created photographic institutions where none had existed. In 1902 he began publishing Camera Work, a journal devoted to criticism and to reproductions of "the best examples of all schools, both American and foreign..." (Stieglitz, quoted in Doty, 1960:33). Sekula testifies to the importance of Camera Work, writing:

> "Through Camera Work Stieglitz established a genre where there had been none; the magazine outlined the terms under which photography could be considered art, and stands as an implicit text, as scripture, behind every photograph that aspires to the status of high art" (1975:39).

Stieglitz opened the "Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession" in 1905. On the gallery walls, as on the pages of Camera Work, he juxtaposed photographs with avant-garde paintings by Matisse, Picasso, Cezanne, Picabia, Severini and Marin, explicitly linking photography with the modern movement in art.

Members of the New York Camera Club felt slighted by Stieglitz. Some members viewed his campaign as elitist (cf. Newhall, 1964). In 1902 he was asked to resign as editor of Camera Notes, and in 1908, amidst considerable furor, headlines on the front page of the New York Times read "Camera Club Ousts Alfred Stieglitz."

> "He had been asked to resign from the club, but upon inquiring of the charges found that the officers were unwilling to state any specific reason. There ensued a bitter quarrel, and the Camera Club was soon split into factions for and against Stieglitz. Eventually the officers of the club, apparently motivated by sheer jealousy, were forced to retract their charge. But it was too late. Almost forty members resigned in a gesture of loyalty to Stieglitz" (Doty, 1960:49).

This schism propelled the development of art photography in the U.S., separate from camera club photography. Since the turn of the century the institutional structure of the art world of photography has been built and a communicational system established in contradistinction to all other forms of photographic activity and, particularly, to camera club photography. From the invention of a new technology and a new symbolic medium of communication an art form emerged.

Miniature Camera Club

Thirty-five milimeter photography was introduced in 1924 with the first Leica camera. This new format provided an important advance: new lenses with larger apertures allowed photographers to work unaided by flash in "existing light," utilizing faster shutter speeds to freeze motion. In 1932 the new Contax camera offered a rangefinder viewing system and the single-lense-reflex camera followed soon after. Amateur photography expanded with appearance of the "miniature camera" and 35mm photography. During the 1930s organized associations of amateur photographers mushroomed. Amidst this activity the Miniature Camera Club of Philadelphia was founded in March 1933. At the end of that year the Photographic Society of America (PSA), the umbrella organization of amateur camera clubs in the U.S., was born and made its headquarters in Philadelphia. In its first year 51 clubs had joined PSA; by 1938 its member clubs numbered 373. In 1978, PSA counted 1265 camera clubs among its membership.

In its early years MCC photographers shared a keen interest in new technological developments. Representatives from manufacturing firms often visited MCC. Programs were given by such companies as Bausch and Lomb Optical, Graflex Corporation, Redpath Labs of the Dupont Film Company, Leitz, Ziess and Eastman Kodak. In addition to technical programs, MCC hosted prominent pictorialists like Adolf Fassbender and Dr. Max Thorek. (For a discussion of the luminaries among camera club pictorialists see Peterson, 1983. His description of early club activities is valuable as well.) Programs concerning photographic aesthetics were common. Print exhibits hung in the club rooms were subject to regular critiques. During question-and-answer periods club members shared their expertise.

During the 1930s and 40s the membership of MCC swelled. _The Camera: The Photographic Journal of America_ reported camera club news in its "Current Events" column and in April 1936 this item appeared:

> "About a dozen new members were added to the [MCC] roster, putting the club further ahead in their position as the largest miniature camera club in the U.S., if not in the world."

Due to overcrowding MCC issued guest cards, limiting the attendance of any non-member to twice per year.

MCC photographers share in a tradition of active participation and leadership in amateur photography. In 1935 the club sponsored the First Philadelphia National Salon of the Miniature Camera, hung at the Philadelphia Art Alliance. The next year the Art Alliance went on to sponsor its own salon, while MCC hung its subsequent salons at the galleries of the Free Library of Philadelphia. (In 1959 and thereafter, prints were hung in the club's own rooms, while entrants' slides travelled to different locations around the city.) In 1941 the Salon became international in scope attracting the work of amateurs world-wide.

In addition to these salons, the Women's Committee sponsored the First Annual National Photographic Salon for Women in 1937 and again in 1938 and 1939. The Philadelphia Salon was held for the last time in 1968. There were no longer enough members who wanted to make the substantial investment of time and effort required to sponsor the event.

The feverish pace of the club's early years has abated, but MCC members still maintain an active schedule. The description which follows is based upon observations since I joined the club in March 1979.

The purpose of the Miniature Camera Club, stated in the 1981-82 program, is as follows:

> "...to promote the art and science of photography....We, at Miniature, offer the prospective member an opportunity to join

> with others of similar interests, to pursue a fascinating hobby and find stimulation with friendly and competent amateurs."

Meetings are held at the Engineers' Club at 1317 Spruce Street on the first three Thursdays of each month, from September through May. Meetings begin at eight p.m. Some members, representing the sociable core of the club, gather at five in the Engineers' Club bar, to drink cocktails and enjoy conviviality. The group moves to the dining room at 6:30 and dinner is served. At 7:45 they climb the staircase leading to the meeting rooms of the Engineers' Club. Other MCC members have begun arriving by this time. They stand in the ante-room greeting their fellows (or, on competition nights, they sort their slides into awaiting trays) and filter into the meeting room by eight. The president calls the meeting to order: announcements are made, ribbons from previous competitions are distributed and then the program commences.

Program topics vary. Guest speakers are often invited to present a slide show, generally one of two kinds: an instructional show detailing a photo technique, such as "Close-up Photography Made Easy;" or a travelogue, an edited sequence of slides culled from the pictorial record of a vacation trip, accompanied by a spoken or tape-recorded narration. As in earlier years, a manufacturer sometimes speaks to the group, although such programs are presented no more than once per season. During 1981-1982 Spiratone, Inc.'s slideshow "Photographic Fantasy with Creative Front Lens Attachments" was screened (and met with some disappointment). Occasionally prominent club members, asked to judge an extra-club competition, will do so before the assembled group. The focal events are club competitions, judged by well-respected photographers from other local camera clubs or from PSA headquarters.

Following each meeting, at about 9:30, refreshments are served. Members congregate in the ante-room, eating the homemade "goodies" brought by one of the women, and sip instant coffee or tea. By 10 o'clock the group has thinned out; only a few avid conversants remain.

During the season MCC sponsors several outings to camera-worthy sites in the Philadelphia area. Following the day's picture-taking the photographers head for a nearby restaurant, previously chosen by the outing committee, to relax, dine and discuss events of the day. In previous years outings have taken MCC members as far as Europe on club tours. (Camera outings are a tradition among amateur photograph groups. See Taft, 1939 for descriptions of early excursions.)

MCC holds two banquets yearly. The Christmas Dinner celebrates the holiday season, and a member's travelogue is customarily shown for the group's enjoyment. The end of the year is marked by the annual President's Dinner which includes the presentation of the season's awards and an exhibition of the best photographic work entered in competitions during the year.

MCC is one of twenty-eight camera clubs in the Philadelphia area which constitute the Delaware Valley Counil of Camera Clubs (DVCCC), founded in 1958. The Counil organizes local inter-club activities:

an annual competition, photography workshops and the like. The DVCCC also presents awards for service to the organization. Many MCC members have been so honored.

The Photographic Society of America provides another layer of activity for active camera club members. Although MCC is a member club, individuals must join PSA to participate in the activities offered and to receive the Journal, which provides monthly listings of salons here and abroad in addition to its regular articles. PSA sponsors competitions and workshops, circulates travelling exhibits, slide shows and instructional programs to clubs, and organizes a picture trading network through which participants' work is judged or critiqued by others. An array of activities awaits PSA members. PSA also gives service awards: service to PSA and service to photography. Close to one-third of the MCC membership belongs to PSA. These individuals bring PSA news to the club, and recruit new members from the MCC ranks.

As of January 1982 the club lists 97 members: fifty-eight men and thirty-nine women. Twenty-five of these are "family memberships" -- husband and wife. Spouses often join the club for sociability alone. They do not take pictures but accompany the photographic spouse to meetings, banquets and on outings to share in the company of the members. Sometimes this spouse will take an active part in other facets of club life, for example, chairing the hospitality or banquet committees. Or active participation may mean assisting a busy, prominent spouse in the execution of his or her duties, as in the case of a wife who helps her husband in his role as a competition committee chair. Just less than half of these couples demonstrate an equal level of involvement in club activities. Almost all members of the club are aged fifty and older. Many have retired, devoting much of their newly acquired leisure to photography.

The club is governed by elected officers and assistants appointed by the president to head committees. The nominating committee presents a recommended slate to members, who rubber-stamp the candidates. A program chair organizes the agenda of meetings for the year, the outing chair plans group trips, competition committee chairs oversee the exhibition of pictures during contests, award ribbons, and keep count of members' exhibition scores. The property committee takes responsibility for the care of equipment -- slide projectors, light boxes and such -- and sets up the meeting room for the evening's program. The Mica Clarion committee publishes the MCC newsletter monthly during the club season. Members of the Honors Committee serve a three-year term and preside over the bestowal of coveted club service awards.

Philadelphia Art Photography

The activity of photography in Philadelphia revolves around two sites: the local galleries which exhibit photography and art schools which offer a photography curriculum. In 1974 Philadelphia's first gallery devoted exclusively to photography, Photopia, opened at 4th and South Streets, in the heart of an area resembling New York City's bohemian Soho. In the 1970s photography became fashionable with print prices escalating, and in 1977 Photopia moved uptown to the affluent Rittenhouse Square area. The gallery was renamed for its owner: the Mancini Gallery. In 1979 a second photography gallery opened its doors across the street from Mancini and was also named for its owner, Paul Cava. The Photography Place "a center for photographic interest" moved into town from an outer suburb in 1978 and took up residence in a newly purchased brownstone three blocks away. The Photography Place combined teaching with operating a gallery until 1980, when an entrepreneur bought the building and established a new gallery there, called The Photography Gallery. The Photography Place is now housed on the upper floors of the building where classes are taught and small-scale exhibits are presented.

These four exhibit spaces fall into two classes. Mancini and The Photography Gallery dealt in the work of proven photographers whose pictures fetch prices in the thousands. The Mancini Gallery's card stated:

> "With more experience than any other photography gallery in the area, Mancini Gallery offers the expertise necessary for sound advice in the acquisition or appraisal of rare photographic prints."

Paul Cava Gallery primarily showed the work of "contemporary" photographers, younger artists whose names have not yet been spoken by art historians. Most of the photographers represented by the Cava

Gallery live in Philadelphia. In February 1982 the gallery closed; Cava could not meet his overhead costs through print sales, since prices for contemporary prints are relatively low. As a result, he has become a private dealer.

The Mancini Gallery and the Photography Gallery closed as well, in fall 1981 and May 1982. Mancini now deals privately in Philadelphia but still maintains his Houston gallery; the Photography Gallery branch at La Jolla, California, remains open. In the wake of these occurrences the Photography Place began exhibiting photographs by local artists in a small "gallery" which doubles as a lounge space for their close quarters.

In her obituary for the photography galleries the Philadelphia Inquirer's photo-critic wrote:

> "...the loss of the three galleries will be felt. It will mean fewer photographers coming to town, fewer gatherings where interested people can exchange ideas, fewer forums for critical and public response, and fewer opportunities for young collectors to refine and develop their knowledge and taste."

Available space for photography exhibitions in Philadelphia has diminished drastically. A few galleries which show photography in addition to other art media will likely assume a more important role. (Unfortunately, an investigation of the changes wrought by the galleries' closings was not within the scope of the present research.)

Interconnecting affiliation with local galleries and art schools shape the photographic art world in Philadelphia. The Photography

Place, community colleges and local art centers provide opportunities for teaching jobs but the most prestigious institutions with photography curricula are the Philadelphia College of Art, the Moore College of Art, and the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. The University of Pennsylvania employs one instructor in photography to teach three courses. Although there is no curriculum per se, a position at the University is considered to be a "plum." All of the photographers interviewed for this study have taught locally (many have been graduated from local art schools as well), but only five have secured academic appointments above the rank of instructor.

Photographers, solitary in their work habits, develop colleagial relations with their fellow faculty members. Most Philadelphia photographers have travelled among institutions taking short-term teaching positions. By doing so they add to their acquaintance with other photographers. Tyler and Philadelphia College of Art form the matrix of photographic activity. Faculty members at the Photography Place and photographers unaffiliated with any teaching center are less well-known to other Philadelphia art photographers.

These educational institutions run galleries at which student and faculty work is exhibited. Faculty status at the art schools, the Photography Place or University of Pennsylvania gives photographers access to exhibition spaces, and art photographers' first shows are frequently staged at these galleries.

Despite the fact that art photographers do not belong to any formal organization resembling the camera clubs, affiliation with galleries and academic institutions organizes what can be loosely termed the "photographic art community." Through their affiliations, art photographers establish contacts with other photographers (cf. Hearn, 1972) and participate in formal and informal art world events, such as exhibit openings, workshops, conferences and private parties and social events. These institutions provide locales which allow observation of certain public aspects of art-photography activity.

CHAPTER 5

DOING PHOTOGRAPHY

Until the turn of the century no clear distinctions between camera club and art photography existed. Camera club members were devoted to the pursuit and advance of photographic art. Today the photographic activity engaged in by artists and camera club members assumes different forms. Interesting similarities between these groups do exist, yet the *esprit de corps* of each aims at maintaining its singularity. This chapter presents an analysis of data collected during interviews with camera club and fine art photographers (interview schedules appear in the Appendix) and through observation of photographic activities. I will be describing the activity of photography as it is manifested by each group.

Recruitment and Training

Picture-taking is commonplace among members of our Western industrialized culture. Cameras easy enough for the novice to use come in a variety of styles and a wide range of prices. Children receive cameras as gifts and learn to picture significant people, places and events on film in preparation for the family albums they will construct as adults. Similarly, art and camera club photographers report being introduced to taking pictures in the "home-mode" (cf. Chalfen, 1975 and Musello, 1977). They begin by documenting their travels or taking pictures of family members and friends. Sometimes a parent or sibling is a particularly active photographer, encouraging the participation of other family members.

As interest shifts from home-mode picture taking to the process of making pictures many photographers join camera clubs. A camera club's roster of activities helps to organize what might otherwise be sporadic, unfocused photographing. Involvement in a club heightens photographers' concern with technique, evidence of competence in the medium. Camera clubs are viewed as a locus of shared photographic expertise and photographers join in order to partake of that expertise and improve their own abilities.

Art photographers travel a different route. Prior to the late 1950's photography curricula were not offered at most art schools, hence some art photographers (particularly the eldest) have received no formal instruction in the medium. However, among the current generation of art photographers (as represented by my sample) a BFA or MFA are important credentials to hold. Attendance at art school draws the photographer into a network of associations with other artists, photographic or otherwise. Among the photographers interviewed, those who received the most attention at Philadelphia galleries and were well-known by their peers were either recently graduated from local art schools or currently employed as faculty members.

While camera club members value the technical knowledge they gain through their club affiliation, art photographers' training emphasizes the conscious development of an individual aesthetic. Photographers are taught to "think" and "see photographically" (for a detailed discussion of art school socialization of photographers see Rosenblum, 1978b). Photographic technique itself is devalued, except for color printing and uncommonly used, anachronistic printing processes like gum bichromate, cyanotype, palladium and platinum. Despite renewed interest, a display of technical skill in these processes still takes a backseat to the aesthetic which informs their use. Conceptual process takes precedence over technical application.

Equipment

In accordance with their devaluation of technique, art photographers also de-emphasize their equipment (cf. Christopherson, 1974b). Walker Evans' response to a Dartmouth College student while he was artist-in-residence typifies art photographers' attitudes. Asking what camera he used to make a picture, Evans' response is described as follows:

> "After a pause Evans said he rather resented the question, that it was like asking a writer what typewriter he used. His clear implication was that the tool mattered little, that the artist's intelligence and skill were everything" (Thompson, 1982).

The equipment an art photographer uses must be reliable. The artist must understand it well so that its use becomes tacit, otherwise technical considerations intrude upon conceptual formulations. The camera is "a tool, like the sculptor's chisel;" it is "part of the larger matrix of the means to making an image." Artists interviewed insisted that their equipment requirements are extremely simple, and contrasted themselves with "equipment freaks." One photographer who admitted to owning five or six cameras said that his friends think he's "gadget-happy." A photojournalist-turned-artist told me he doesn't talk about equipment because it's boring, but for photojournalists and freelance photographers equipment is important because "it gets you in."

Denying the importance of their cameras, some artists use the "Diana." Made of cheap molded plastic, this camera was "blister-packaged" and sold for $2.95 in supermarkets and drugstores prior to the 35mm photography boom about ten years ago. Because of the poor quality of its lens, the Diana produces soft-focus pictures. Photographers may even construct their own lens-less pinhole cameras, also yielding soft-focus photographs. Art photographers authoritatively demonstrate that the artist's ideas supercede his tools by using the Polaroid SX-70, marketed as a snapshot camera which bypasses all technical manipulations necessary for shooting and processing film. All the photographer need do is aim the SX-70 and press the shutter-release -- the camera will deliver a print which develops almost instantaneously before the photographer's eyes.

Despite testimony that their photographic outfits are extremely simple, art photographers own a good bit of equipment. Besides darkroom equipment, summarily discussed during interviews, the photographers own an array of cameras: ranging from a small format 35mm to large format 8 x 10 view cameras. Most have settled on large formats (2 1/4 x 2 1/4 to 8 x 10); their Leicas and Nikons, active during school years and early in art careers now lie in semi-retirement. Artists buy the best equipment: Leicas and Hasselblads, among the most expensive cameras made, head many lists. Some photographers using 4 x 5 and 8 x 10 view cameras own a "Deardorff" -- an expensive handmade wood-frame camera (there is reportedly a two-year wait to buy one new) which photo dealers call "elite" and "a class item to have."

Camera club photographers are generally regarded as "camera-freaks" by artists (and by researchers: cf. Christopherson 1974b and Becker, 1982); however their outfits seemed no more expensive than artists'. MCC members use 35mm cameras almost exclusively. (Only a few members report owning larger format cameras.) The brand names vary -- club photographers tend to own less expensive cameras overall than art photographers, although Nikon and Leica are well represented. Most club members own two 35mm camera bodies, enabling them to shoot with different film stocks or lenses simultaneously. While artists rarely mention them, club photographers report owning four or more different focal-length lenses, including a macro lens for close-up work, a wide angle lens, a zoom lens and a telephoto lens (with focal-lengths ranging from 200-400mm).

Art photographers assert that they don't like to talk about their equipment. MCC members revel in such discussions. At club meetings photographers compare notes on equipment, use of filters, the performance of different film stocks or printing papers. They rely on each other for information which helps them choose among the array of photographic material offered on the market. They enjoy owning and using photographic equipment and share that enjoyment in talk.

Christopherson (1974b) writes that

> "An amateur is likely to buy an expensive camera because he wants to make better pictures...[camera club members] are very concerned with camera and particular techniques."

The naivete Christopherson attributes to camera club photographers underestimates them. MCC members, like art photographers, choose equipment reputed to be the most reliable, well-made and durable. Given a choice between a Leica or Nikon and a lesser-reputed, lesser-quality camera, both would be likely to choose the better piece of equipment. Neither does the difference between them lie in the role attributed to their tools. Camera club members, like artists, say that what's important is the person using the equipment. What separates artists from club photographers is the conversational space alotted to equipment and the disdain shown by artists for concern with technique. (This attitude was exhibited consistently to me. Whether or not art photographers enjoy talking among themselves about their Deardorffs is a matter for speculation.) So-called "camera-freak" amateurs do not actually own more equipment than others who spend much of their time taking pictures. Camera ownership marks the amateur as a photographer, an important role he assumes in addition to his profession, hence cameras and accoutrements serve as focal points.

Art photographers deny that equipment is important to them. Perhaps because of the widespread notion that cameras, not artists, make pictures, art photographers show little concern for technical matters, shifting their focus to conceptual problems.

Periodicals and Books

Magazine subscriptions reflect these photographers' approach to the medium. MCC photographers, anxious to better their abilities and learn more about the medium, receive magazines which contain product information and instructions on photographic technique. Peterson's Photographic heads the list. MCC members subscribe to Modern Photography and Popular Photography, although many reported their displeasure with these magazines (some reported dropping their subscriptions altogether). Most of the magazine's pages consist of advertisements and the photographers' work showcased therein don't appeal to camera club photographers: "They show all that contemporary work. I don't understand why anybody prints it." Darkroom is popular among the club's printmakers. PSA publishes the Journal for its members. The PSA Journal contains how-to-do-it articles, chronicles camera club and PSA events, and profiles important photographers. MCC members also buy Kodak photography books, volumes from the Time-Life photography series, other how-to-do-it books, books of nature or travel photographs and, occasionally, monographs on particular photographers.

Artists receive magazines devoted to conceptual, aesthetic and critical issues in photography. *Afterimage*, a tabloid published by the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York, heads the list. Even photographers who report no subscriptions say they read *Afterimage* at the newsstand. Two magazines which include newsy sections reporting on happenings in photography in addition to critical and theoretical articles are popular: *American Photographer* and *Camera Arts*. Many art photographers who teach (or want to) belong to the Society for Photographic Education and receive its journal, *Exposure*. Philadelphia has its own critical tabloid devoted to photography, *The Philadelphia Photo Review*, and many artists receive it. Some art photographers subscribe to journals devoted to all the fine arts: *Art in America*, *Art Forum*, or *Art News*.

Very little overlap in magazine readership occurs between art photographers and club members. Artists' emphasis on ideas over technique, carries through to the kind of photographic (or art) journals read. Among MCC members, the *PSA Journal* is the one magazine about which I heard no complaint. Not surprisingly, its mix of news, instructional articles and discussions of photographic aesthetics harmonize with MCC member's approach to the medium. Like artists, MCC photographers don't like a magazine that's "all ads." Their concern with learning new techniques and perfecting skills is satisfied by the *Journal* and pictures which conform to their aesthetic appear in its pages.

Shooting

How often photographers shoot pictures depends on their job responsibilities. Most of the art photographers I interviewed teach; they shoot in free time not consumed by academic schedules. Their routines vary: some set aside certain days for personal work; others maintain no schedule, shooting when the mood strikes in intensive spurts. Summertime is a particularly productive period.

Camera club photographers' shooting occurs mainly during yearly vacation trips, weekend outings or special events. Many MCC members go on "Thru the Lens Photographic Adventures." The brochure explains:

> "The itinerary, season, timing, accommodation, transportation, meals and leadership of each Thru the Lens adventure are chosen to enhance its photographic possibilities. Small groups and outstanding photographic leadership provide an informal and congenial atmosphere which stimulates the learning experience; instruction and advice are offered, as desired, at all levels of involvement... Often we begin before sunrise and photograph until the light of day has faded; we can rest in the middle of the day when the light is flat, but the special beauty of a scene at dawn or dusk should not be missed."

MCC sponsors photo-outings throughout the club season. Many MCC photographers view these events as primarily social and do little serious shooting. When especially interesting events occur in Philadelphia, such as the Pope's visit, the arrival of the "tall ships" or a festival on the Parkway, MCC cameras spring into action. People seem to use cameras most often for special events and during trips. A tourist with a camera is not remarkable. Only the most serious MCC members go out in public with no prompting other than just to take pictures. Many, however, take pictures around their own homes, out of the public eye.

The shooting habits of these groups are not without similarity. Both for artists and MCC photographers shooting is an individual occupation. (When shooting occurs at camera club outings a photographer absents himself from the group. Many MCC photographers take vacations alone to do their shooting. When travelling in couples, most often only one spouse takes pictures. Although camera club photographers are often accompanied by others, they report that they withdraw from others to do their shooting.) MCC members who are not retired fit their photographic work in around jobs. Artists who teach or make ends meet by doing commercial work must also wait to make their own pictures. Some artists, like MCC members, do almost all their shooting when they travel. One artist teaches in another city during part of the year: he shoots there and does all of his printing upon his return to his darkroom in Philadelphia. Another art photographer has gone abroad to the same country each summer for the past eleven years (he "loves the light there"), printing during the academic year. Another goes to the northwest coast every summer to visit relatives -- he does his shooting there.

For art photographers shooting is just one part of the picture making process -- conceptualizing an approach occupies more time. A photographer said

> "I'm working on photography all the time; very little of it is actually spent shooting."

Feeling the need to always be camera-ready does not mark the mature artist:

> "I feel secure enough now to shoot less often."

Processing

In its early years MCC activities focussed on black and white printmaking. In 1949 the Philadelphia Salon accepted slides for the first time and since the late 1950s the ranks of printmakers have thinned. Today color slides predominate in MCC photography. Busy club members explain they don't have the time to spend in the darkroom. All MCC slide photographers have their film processed by Kodak. A small but active group of printmakers remains, all of whom are men. These club members enjoy doing darkroom work, making color and black and white prints. They form a subgroup and are admired by other MCC members for skills which they themselves lack.

Many of the art photographers interviewed report that they hate working in the darkroom -- they find it boring and repetitive. If, or when, they can afford it artists may use the help of an assisant to set up the darkroom and perform jobs "where decisions aren't important." Assistants make contact sheets, wash and dry prints, flatten them or tone them. One photographer's assistant cooks for him and oversees music selection when he spends lengthy periods in the darkroom. Imminent exhibitions may encourage photographers to employ an assistant to help prepare. Exhibitions require a great deal of preparatory work: selecting pictures, printing and matting.

Any part of the photographic process which requires decision-making or which is seen as a repository of the artist's style is performed by him. All these artists develop their own black and white film. They are reluctant to entrust printing to someone else:

> "if the person can adopt your persona for print style then it's all right;"
>
> "it's okay if I'm there supervising."

Only one photographer allows someone to print for him, but first he makes work prints to select pictures and give instructions to the printer.

None of the artists process color negatives. Timing and chemical temperatures are critical here and artists say they don't have the time or patience necessary. In addition, finances prevent most photographers from outfitting their darkroom for color work. Commercial labs also make color prints for most of these photographers. Only when the bulk of an artist's work utilizes color film stocks do artists print their own pictures. Many art photographers don't know how to process color at all. One photographer reported

> "I've been doing some mural printing using a color material a student of mine has worked with, so he assists me. I didn't see any sense in learning to do it myself."

Camera club members who exhibit prints are required to handle all processing and printing themselves, for both black and white and color. (One MCC photographer skirts this rule by printing from commercially processed color slides.) For artists, the "physicial manipulations" in photography are unimportant. Rather, the emphasis is placed on "the decisions behind it." The crucial aspects of doing photography are those which reflect the artist's ideas and persona: the conceptual formulations which precede shooting, selecting what will appear within the frame's boundaries (the act of releasing the shutter is secondary), and, for most artists, processing film, editing and making final prints. Art photographers working with SX-70 or Xerox deny the importance of all aspects of photography save conceptualization and selecting what appears in the frame.

Exhibiting

For camera club photographers exhibiting pictures takes one of two forms: a program or a competition. Respected photographers, known for their ability to utilize a particular photographic technique, put together shows presenting examples of their work and demonstrating how it was accomplished. An invitation to share his expertise honors the photographer. Camera club photographers who are well-known for their slide shows receive invitations to present their work at meetings held by their own and other local clubs. Participating in competitions provides an opportunity for all camera club members to exhibit their work. Attendance at meetings at which competitions are held outnumbers all others.

Exhibition categories structure members' picture making. Patterned after PSA, MCC uses these categories: nature slides (not prints), pictorial slides -- class A and B, and pictorial prints -- color and black and white. "Pictorial" serves as a catch-all exhibition category. Portraits, still-lifes, nature shots and travel shots all appear here. Because its boundaries are not rigid, this category receives many entries. As a result, pictorial slides, the largest exhibition category, is divided into two skill levels, "class A" and class B." Separate competitions showcase travelogues and photo-essays. These slide shows consist of an edited sequence of slides presented with narration, generally lasting about twenty minutes (hence the necessity of a separate competition night set aside for them). In addition, two "memorial" competitions are held annually, one devoted to landscapes and the other to "ten slides which tell a story." Usually one special "assigned subject" competition is held each year as well. Ribbons are awarded to successful competitors for first, second, third place and honorable mention. "Acceptances" are announced, recognition for which photographers receive no ribbons. The division chairs keep an account of each member's awards in the regular competitions during the club season. Whoever earns the highest score is named "photographer of the year" in his exhibition category.

A prominent photographer who does not belong to MCC judges the competitions. Broad-minded MCC officers have occasionally invited photographers not within the camera club world to serve as judge. Photojournalists, commercial and art photographers have made appearances. Frustrated by the vagaries of idiosyncratic preferences generally demonstrated by all judges, MCC members have chosen to extend their invitations only to photographers within the camera club domain. One experience in particular seemed to be the turning point. The oft recounted story unfolds like this: an art photographer (whose name seems to escape every MCC story-teller) was invited to judge a club competition. As the pictorial slides were projected, an image appeared which was obviously overexposed. The picture was taken at a beach. Many good slides were exhibited, yet the judge finally chose the beach picture to be awarded first prize. When the competition results were announced a wave of gasps and cries of disbelief travelled through the room. Explaining why he chose the slide, the judge pronounced "that the picture really makes me feel the heat of the beach." Since that night no art photographer has been asked to judge an MCC competition. Photographers who have distinguished themselves at their own club's competitions, officers of other local clubs or at PSA headquarters, and photographers known for their travelling program presentations are popular competition judges.

Competition nights typically proceed as follows. Before the meeting begins at 8 p.m., club officers host the judge (and his spouse) at a happy hour and dinner at the Engineer's club, along with the sociable group which regularly meets there. After the president calls the meeting to order and announcements are made, the vice-president is asked to introduce the judge. His qualifications read, he chooses a seat among the members which provides a good vantage point. Pictures are exhibited anonymously so as not to influence the judge (or embarrass neophyte photographers). After a preliminary run-through the judging begins. Judges usually comment upon each picture, however, brevity is appreciated and long-winded commentary soon elicits impatient tongue-clicks and sighs. The judge sorts through the photographs, announcing whether a picture is to be kept "in" or "out" of the final group. (For Class A pictorial slides a judge need not say much in response. These are accomplished photographers so comments are unnecessary -- all that is often heard is a crisp "in" or "out.") Since so many slides are entered, the judge makes his final decision at a light box in the ante-room and returns with the division chair to hear him announce the results. Since there are relatively few prints shown, the judge chooses the winners before the assembly.

Sitting in the darkened room, MCC members watch quietly and politely as the judging proceeds. Not too quietly, however. Part of the fun is to second-guess the judge, make comments on the pictures, and try to guess the photographers' identities. This conversation is conducted in whispers. (When MCC members feel particularly piqued by the judge's selections those whispers may reach a level audible throughout the room.)

Artists do not enjoy the same opportunity to show their pictures.

Gallery and museum walls are the most appropriate places for artists to hang their work and space is in short supply (see Christopherson 1974a, McCall's (1977) discussion of competition between "picture painters" and artists for hanging space, and Levine's (1972) discussion of artists' rejection of certain locales as inappropriate for exhibiting artworks). In Philadelphia, Mancini Gallery and the Photography Gallery showed only "blue-chip" photographers' work. The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania and other fine art galleries have a limited schedule of photography exhibits and the work of nationally-known photographers is represented. Of the Philadelphia photography galleries only Paul Cava regularly showed the work of local photographers. (Prior to changing hands, the Photography Gallery -- formerly the gallery at the Photography Place -- occasionally showed Philadelphians' work. Now the directors of the Photography Place attempt to give local photographers hanging space in their small second-floor gallery.)

An artist's first exhibit is often held at his school's gallery. Thereafter, finding a gallery to exhibit his pictures is a milestone in the course of a young artist's career (see Rosenblum, 1978 on the importance of exhibiting photographs). Artists ascribe different levels of prestige to various exhibition situations. Having a "one-man" show distinguishes an artist to a greater degree than participating in a group show. Exhibiting nationally rather than locally confers greater prestige upon an artist. Exhibiting in New

York City confers still more. Participating in a museum exhibit marks a higher level of attainment. Having a one-man show at a museum in New York City marks the highest. All this is dependent upon the reputation of the gallery or museum as well -- a museum in a small city may be less prestigious than some New York galleries. Some artists say that exhibiting at a place which also shows painting is more prestigious than showing at a museum or gallery devoted solely to photography.

Early in his career, the artist usually solicits gallery directors to show his work. In rare cases a fledging artist's mentor recommends him to gallery directors. One artist interviewed studied with nationally-known photographers Aaron Siskind and Harry Callahan in Chicago from 1956 to 1959. Callahan gave him entree to a friend, Edward Steichen, then the Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art. Steichen purchased ten of his prints for MOMA's study collection, and hung them in a group show there and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The next thing he knew, his name was appearing in the Saturday Review. This photographer receives invitations to participate in exhibitions and can pick and choose among the most prestigious. His "bio" (an artist's resume) includes numerous pages of exhibition credentials.

This kind of personal referral, resulting in a show that established the photographer as an important artist, occurs infrequently nowadays. Since 1959 the community of art photographers has burgeoned and many promising photographers with prestigious academic degrees have been graduated from art schools. The competition for exhibition space is stiff. As a result, artists talk about the need to "push yourself" or promote your own work. That means meeting gallery directors and collectors and showing your portfolio to them. Artists are usually reluctant to talk about this subject. In an extreme case, one photographer I interviewed nervously drank three beers while I questioned him about how he makes his work known to others. Self-confident about his ability as a salesman, he insisted that I not tape-record while he hesitatingly revealed some of his methods.

Photographers who have had some success exhibiting their pictures speak casually on the subject, making statements like:

> "I haven't tried to promote myself or take my work around. It's inappropriate to put your energy into publicity rather than into your art."

This photographer enjoys the fortunate circumstance of having a spouse who runs a well-regarded Philadelphia art gallery and takes care of the promotional work. (Another photographer's parent also owns a respected local gallery.) Photographers who have enjoyed less success acknowledge the need to spend some time showing their portfolios, actively soliciting gallery directors to exhibit the work. While most artists report that this aspect of their profession is anathema, a few of the male photographers discuss it with relish, enumerating the contacts and conquests they've made. They seem to enjoy the business of self-promotion and include it as a topic in the seminars and workshops they teach. One photographer advises his students to start "at the top". He says "anyone can take his pictures to MOMA." Generally, however this kind of attention to business is considered to be unseemly behavior for an artist.

Artists who teach in Philadelphia enjoy some advantages over their non-academic fellows. As one photographer reported,

> "I show my work through the academic network, not the art network."

Photographers employed fulltime on the faculty at Tyler and Philadelphia College of Art frequently exhibit pictures in both schools' galleries and faculty members in Philadelphia receive invitations to show their work in exhibitions sponsored by educational institutions across the country. In this manner, photographers can accumulate lengthy exhibition credentials. These shows "get the work out there," possibly generating other opportunities for exhibiting or publishing pictures. As one artist stated,

> "Any exposure can't hurt (unless it's at a bad gallery)."

Camera club and art photographers do not share equal opportunities to exhibit their pictures. Camera club photographers, free of the commerce of picture sales, have equal access to polite audiences, regardless of their level of skill or their reputations. Because artists sell their photographs the trends of the marketplace effect their fortunes. When economic times are hard young artists find few galleries to show their work: renowned (often deceased) photographers' pictures fetch the highest prices and sales revenues help galleries meet their own costs. If a particular style of photography currently finds favor among collectors and critics, artists whose work takes other directions go unseen. For example, a photographer working in the documentary tradition of Walker Evans and W. Eugene Smith complains,

> "Documentary work hasn't been seen as art; it doesn't command high prices and the [art] establishment galleries don't take chances."

Another documentarist said,

> "If you're just interested in showing your work there are a thousand places. If you need to sell you go to a gallery. Then you have to fit into their aesthetic. It's a con game."

However, artists insist they neither keep up with, nor feel influenced by current aesthetic trends.

> "You have to believe in yourself and believe in the work and just keep at it"

says a photographer. This is an attitude shared by all art photographers.

One alternative to exhibitions exists: book publishing. All art photographers responded that books provide a good format for presenting pictures. Books can reach a larger, broader audience than a show and books endure -- a gallery show lasts only a few weeks and the body of work thus juxtaposed disappears. Unfortunately, high-quality reproductions cost a lot and finding a publisher can be difficult. One photographer "of independent means" gets around the problem by publishing his own books. Photographers interviewed who hadn't yet published their pictures reported they would like to.

Establishing a Reputation

The route by which MCC photographers establish a reputation is well-defined. Those who consistently win ribbons in club competitions earn the respect of fellow photographers. Winners' names appear in the club's newsletter after competitions are held. Carefully kept records track members' scores during the season. At the end of every year awards are given for the highest scores in each exhibition category. The Class B pictorial photographer with the highest score for the year graduates to Class A. Thereafter he will be exhibiting with the club's best pictorial slide makers. MCC photographers enter pictures that have been awarded a prize earlier during the year in a competition for the honor of color print or black and white print of the year, pictorial or nature slide of the year. (So that all club members can compete in this event, photographers may also submit one picture which received no award during the past year.) Occasionally photographers earn both high score and picture of the year in an exhibition category. These members are especially well-respected, as double honors confirm a photographer's ability, past all doubt. A limited group of photographers repeatedly wins top honors from year to year.

Club members who exhibit in salons sponsored by the Photographic

Society of America add another avenue by which respect is earned. PSA awards "stars" for success in salons: exhibitors earn more stars as their pictures receive more salon acceptances. For example, exhibitions in PSA's color slide division need 30 salon acceptances with a minimum of six slides to earn a one-star rating, 80 acceptances with sixteen slides for two stars, 160 acceptances with 32 slides for three stars, 320 acceptances with 64 slides for four star and 640 acceptances with at least 128 slides to earn a five-star rating. Since the color slide division is the most active exhibition category another level of ratings is layered atop the star system. After photographers have earned five-stars, galaxy ratings are awarded for multiple acceptances per slide: for example a tenth galaxy rating requires 100 new slides each with eight salon acceptances. Each time an exhibitor receives an acceptance he must notify the division "compiler," a PSA member who keeps count of exhibitors' acceptances and awards the star ratings when earned. A small group of MCC members exhibit in PSA salons and have succeeded in attaining "star" credentials. In addition PSA publishes a "Who's Who" of salon exhibitors, both nationally and internationally. The MCC newsletter, Mica Clarion, reported, in 1980 for example, that one member ranks twenty-third in the world in nature slides, and fifteenth in the United States.

MCC members whose slide programs or demonstrations are in demand at other camera clubs earn the respect of fellow photographers. These members have exhibited successfully at MCC and actively participate in local inter-club events. Through their acquaintance with photographers at other clubs they receive invitations to judge competitions. These events receive regular coverage in the Mica Clarion: MCC members' activities at other clubs confer prestige upon them and upon the Miniature Camera Club.

Photography means more than just taking pictures to MCC photographers. Each year honors are bestowed upon members who have provided outstanding service to the club. MCC lists six different service awards. Photographers who have contributed to the welfare of the entire club membership compound the respect they earn as individual exhibitors. The DVCC also gives awards for service to the Council and work done to advance photography in the Delaware Valley. An active group of MCC members have participated in the photographic affairs of the Council, and have received service awards for their efforts.

Again, PSA provides another arena in which MCC photographers distinguish themselves for service to the photographic community. Since PSA headquarters is located in downtown Philadelphia, MCC photographers can easily get involved in the organization. One MCC member, recently retired from his occupation, began paying visits to PSA headquarters. On one of these visits he found pages of press releases and literature on new products. Inquiring about them, he discovered that the Journal receives unsolicited literature from manufacturers nationwide, who hope for a review in the magazine. When he heard that no one had time to read through them he volunteered, and now he edits a new products column for the _Journal_. Another club member responded to a call by the vice-president of PSA for a local PSA member to chair the Society's permanent collection committee. These MCC members' names appear in the pages of the nationally circulated _Journal_ and fellow club members respect these credentials.

PSA's activities are overseen by a hierarchy of officers and committee chairs. One MCC photographer, distinguished as a five star exhibitor in color slides, serves as the PSA color slide division chair. Other club members regard this as a particularly prestigious position since election to division chair evidences national recognition. These titles mark camera club photographers as accomplished exhibitors, prominent in the field.

While the path to success is clearly outlined by MCC members, artists are elusive when asked to discuss how photographers might go about establishing a good reputation. Successful artists give few concrete clues as to the course one should follow. They hesitate to discuss such pragmatic issues. While interviewing Chicago painters Levine encountered this attitude:

> "...there is a general conviction among the influential figures in the art world that 'talent will out,' that the truly unusual painter, regardless of who or where he is, will somehow gain recognition because of the striking quality of his work" (1972:304).

Photographers express the same belief as their fellow artists. As one photographer put it,

> "Outstanding bodies of work don't go unnoticed."

Another said:

> "if you do something good people will talk about it; the word spreads."

When asked what advice they might give, they asserted that photographers must spend time developing "a body of work"

> "you need to have something to build it [a reputation] on; you need to create something unique, your own -- something personal."

The recommended time interval varied. One photographer suggested as little as three years, others agreed upon ten.

During this gestational period, they concurred that artists should show their work to other photographers whose opinions they respect. When photographers come to older artists for advice they commonly receive referrals to other artists. This provides an entree to meet photographers and critics who may be able to further their careers. One photographer returned to his alma mater, The Philadelphia College of Art. His mentor, who had received similar treatment as a young artist, suggested that he go to see Aaron Siskind and Peter Bunnell -- highly influential figures in the art world of photography. This photographer, whose "bio" is marked by increasingly prestigious credentials such as one-man exhibitions in Philadelphia, London and New York City, group shows at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, advises that photographers shouldn't show their work publicly too soon. Until mature, artists should show their work informally to other members of the art community.

Photographers agree that "making it" is a struggle, and that adversity constitutes an integral part of the artistic career.

> "You've got to stick to it -- it takes years and lots of rejection."
>
> "The primacy is on paying the dues not on promoting yourself--you have to go back into yourself and find out who's there."

An artist's life is all about challenges according to a prominent photographer:

> "You can't plan it out. Each moment tests you. In art you have to learn to live with intangibles; you can't work out the bottom line as in financial matters with a creative life. You have to earn your keys to gain entry to places, but it's supposed to mean something. How do you know you're good? MOMA isn't a measure of this."

Most photographers warn, "don't become an artist if you want to be famous." Instead, the rationale for adopting an artist's difficult lifestyle should be the need to make art:

> "If you don't have the work why should anyone from New York come down [to Philadelphia] to see me? Without it you're not a photographer. An interest in getting known, into the spotlight for ten minutes -- these aren't the problems of the artist. It's a drive to bring out what's deep inside, not a drive to be a celebrity."

By comparison with their more successful colleagues, the photographers interviewed who had not yet achieved national recognition (or, for a few, local recognition) spoke with relative candor about steps an artist might take to make himself known. Rather than adopt the passive stance of recognized photographers ("good work gets noticed"), these artists are more aggressive. In order to gain recognition they agree that artists need to make themselves visible. This is accomplished through a variety of methods.

All agree, one should "get to know other people in the photography community." Gallery openings provided a convenient arena for such meetings to take place. In addition to photographers, opening receptions were peopled by students, critics, gallery owners and staff members, collectors and photography appreciators. Already well-attended, when local photographers showed their pictures the opening crowds packed the galleries. At the early openings I observed, a gourmet spread of fruits, cheeses, crackers and French bread were served, accompanied by a choice of chilled white or red wine. (A few "street-people" were regular, voracious attenders.) As economic hardships increasingly faced gallery owners only wine and pretzels were offered. Opening crowds seemed conspicuously young after the MCC meetings I had attended. Dressed in the latest fashions (modelled after Vogue magazine or New Wave musical groups), people spent most of their time engaged in animated discussions. As new arrivals were spotted, their colleagues welcomed them into their circles with hugs and kisses. The pictures hung on the walls never received much attention. Perhaps the people in attendance had already been shown the work at school or through private invitations. In either case it is clear that the focus of attention at gallery openings was the people, not the pictures. After an opening reception ended "the parties spilled over." Photographers brought together at the gallery would reconvene elsewhere, going out to dinner or to private parties at photographers' homes. In one photographer's words,

> "there was a whole social circle that gravitated around the galleries."

Most photographers report that they no longer attend openings unless their own or a friend's work is being shown. "When I first came to Philadelphia I went to openings to see people, but I don't go now" is a report often heard. One photographer said

> "I don't go as often as I did -- it's not as important. I only go to support friends, now. In the beginning everyone was trying to scratch out his territory. As your work matures and you move into other areas you don't see other people as frequently."

When photographers want to see the work they go to the gallery at some time other than the opening. In addition to meeting other artists, one photographer reports that he "markets himself" at openings. By meeting collectors, critics and publishers and arranging private showings of his work this photographer says he sells most of his prints through other photographers' exhibit openings.

One gallery in particular was a magnet in the photography community. Paul Cava, committed to showing local artists' photographs as well as more profitable work, received informal visits from photographers, critics and photography-lovers during regular gallery hours. (One MCC member also reported visiting Cava, asking him to explain why he chose to hang the work shown in his gallery.

Unimpressed by the photographs he saw there, this club member reported that no satisfactory conclusions were reached in their discussion. He occasionally visits Cava's gallery, returning disappointed each time.) A photographer told me

> "Cava's was a meeting place. I met alot of photographers there; it became a kind of a club. He had a good library, alot of prints -- I admire him -- he's willing to share his knowledge. Everytime I went there I met someone new. There was always socializing because Paul's a very social person. I met photographers, collectors, groupies, students, teachers...Now I visit him in his living room."

Meeting other photographers in the community expands an artist's access to valued feedback. In addition to helpful criticism which peers can give, alliances with well-known community members can be especially beneficial. As mentioned, younger artists who ask their well-connected colleagues for feedback sometimes receive referrals to gallery directors, important critics or photographers -- members of the art world who may be in a position to advance their careers. By getting to know people in the community, photographers may be enabled to increase their visibility.

Gaining visibility means acquainting community members with the photographer himself, and with his pictures. Photographers list a number of strategies for familiarizing others with their work. Photographers may show their portfolios privately to other community members, but this yields only limited visibility. Exhibiting at a gallery "gets the work out" where the general public, and the art community in particular, can see it. Rather than showing photographs at a gallery which only attracts a small viewing audience, artists should bypass those galleries and aim for the top, suggests a photographer who teaches his students how to promote themselves in his graduate seminars (I will refer to him again as "photographer x").

> "You must believe you can be personally responsible for your destiny -- that you can make a difference in people's perceptions of you, and act on this basis. Determine the upper limits of the profession -- this is where you center your energy. The mileage you get from MOMA is greater than, say, Albright-Knox in Buffalo. You have to establish going to New York and get upper-end credentials that will influence everything below."

Most photographers, however, react with aversion to stories of young photographers who, just out of graduate school, head directly for museum curators with their portfolios. As one photographer said,

> "There's too much promotion going on without paying the dues in terms of work. That's part of the problem with the photography market -- alot of bad work has been institutionalized."

In his seminars, "photographer x" advises students to get extra mileage out of exhibiting:

> "If you're in a group show and they're making a poster, ask if they'll use yours [photograph]! Push in the direction that'll create visibility in the field!"

Other photographers agree that posters publicize the photographer's work to a large audience. A Philadelphia bookstore, the owners of which reportedly collect photographs, sells posters featuring local photographers' pictures. According to one photographer,

> "I had a poster there. My address was on the bottom in small print, and people have been writing to me from all over the country because they bought that poster."

Another device which increases the amount of exposure a show brings is an exhibit catalog. Since gallery shows hang for a limited period of time, in a fixed location, reproduced photographs can reach more viewers.

For this reason, photographers express a desire to publish their pictures. "Photographer x" recommends publishing but warns:

> "concentrate on the most respected journals, rather than *Petersen's Photographic*. Develop a strong self-image professionally. Don't go in as an amateur."

One photographer, following instruction given by California photographer Bill Owens in *How to Publish Your Own Photo Book*, published a book of his own photographs. Although he lost money on the project he sent sample copies to critics at important journals like *Afterimage*, thus keeping them up-to-date on his current work. The less enterprising photographers interviewed await an opportunity to publish their work.

Landing a good teaching job bolsters a photographer's reputation. Like exhibition space, academic positions are scarce, hence teaching jobs also reward the best photographers. The perquisites of teaching are described by a photographer:

> "['Photographer y'] was written up in a major magazine. And she was also featured in the alumni magazine. Anyone who teaches automatically gets a group of devoted followers -- students -- and buyers."

Faculty members also have access to their schools' galleries and to what a photographer called "the academic network" of galleries.

Winning a grant also strengthens photographers' credentials, especially if the award is highly coveted, such as a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship or a Guggenheim Fellowship. As a well-known photographer confided:

> "When I got my first Guggenheim -- I was 35 or 36 -- that gave me the confidence to call myself a photographer."

(In the same breath he spoke of the honor bestowed upon him when he was awarded tenure at his art school.) Photographers' reputations are bettered when their pictures are chosen by curators of prominent collections. Inclusion in collections such as the Museum of Modern Art and George Eastman House marks the photographer as a bona-fide artist.

In this chapter the activities of fine art and camera club photography were examined and compared, based upon interview data and observations. Both camera club and fine art photographers reported that they began taking pictures in the home-mode. As their interests shifted, foregrounding manipulating the medium, these photographers' training diverges. Camera club and art photographers show concern with equipment: both try to buy the best they can afford. But art photographers downplay the importance of equipment and technique in what they do. Magazine and book readership diverges. Camera club photographers expressed most satisfaction with the PSA Journal. Artists read few photo magazines or books. AfterImage was the journal mentioned most often. Shooting activities were similar for these groups, organized around occupational time commitments. Some members of each group shoot only during vacations. Camera club photographers take responsibility for all print production processes, but slides are sent to a lab. Transparencies predominate at the club. Many artists report boredom with print production, highlighting their conceptualization of projects. Channels for exhibiting pictures and establishing a reputation are more clearly defined for camera club members, and more accessible to them than to artists.

CHAPTER 6

PHOTOGRAPHIC AESTHETICS

Rosenblum (1978a and 1978b) argues that the social organization of production shapes photographic style. Her argument is born out here by the divergent photographic aesthetics exhibited by camera club and art photographers. As has been the case with other aspects of the photographic activity discussed herein, the aesthetics of camera club picture making are more clearly defined than for fine art photography. Here I take issue with Becker's statement

> "It's hard to characterize the camera club aesthetic, other than to say that prizes are awarded in a way analogous to the way they are awarded in dog shows: so many points for composition, so many for printing, so many for presentation" (1975:77).

My observations suggest a different characterization. At MCC and other Philadelphia area clubs, judges do not segment their appraisal of photographs into separately scored categories, as described. These elements inform their decisions, but camera club judges react primarily to a picture's overall effect. Judges evaluate pictures according to a consistent, well-defined aesthetic code.

Camera club picture making draws upon the pictorialist tradition of photography from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Peterson writes,

> "The pictorial style of photography emphasizes pure visual appeal, often bordering on the picturesque, in contrast to the documentary, straight and journalistic styles... pictorial photography in all of its phases was dominated by a constant preoccupation with beautiful imagery" (1983:9).

Pictorialist photographers, attempting to convince the public that photography could be art, utilized techniques which made their pictures look more like paintings. Printing processes yielding soft focus effects divorced pictorialist photography from the medium's industrial and commercial uses, as did the adoption of painterly subject matter and compositions.

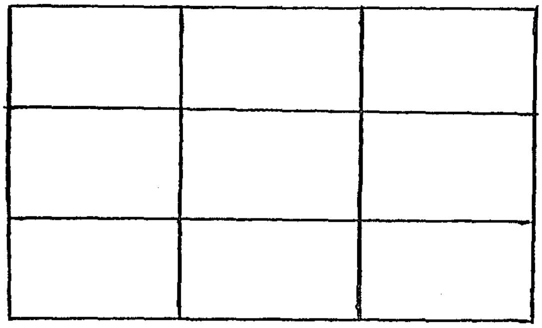
Since the 1960s camera club photographers have updated this tradition by incorporating other photographic styles into camera club pictorialism. MCC members are avid travellers and their pictures show the influence of mass-media travel images as seen in National Geographic, nature magazines and Sierra Club calendars. Portraiture is popular among camera club photographers and the influence of commercial studio work is clearly in evidence. In the "nature" category, the imagery appearing in wildlife books and naturalist magazines is emulated. These styles of photography are assimalated into the camera club style, recast in the mold of pictorialism. MCC photographers maintain an emphasis on painterly compositions and beautiful subjects, but reject the soft-focus impressionism of early practitioners, opting instead for a more modern, realistic pictorialism. This realism falls short of any photo-journalistic influence. While PSA has a photojournalism exhibition category, MCC does not. Pictures which "look photojournalistic" document the harsh realities of daily life, a concern which is important and newsworthy but inappropriate to camera club photography. If not beautiful, a picture should be pleasing to the eye, something you would want to hang on your living room wall.

To be beautiful a picture can show a pretty woman, a child, a cute pet, a landscape or wildlife subject. In other words, a beautiful picture shows beautiful subject matter. If the subject isn't beautiful, a picture can be if the rendition of the subject is beautiful (within limits: a picture of someone suffering due to an automobile accident is unlikely to be considered beautiful, even when rendered with consummate skill). Peterson quotes a turn-of-the-century magazine editor who called pictorialism

> "a thing beautifully photographed rather than a beautiful thing photographed" (1983:9).

Camera club photographers share one stylistic principle with photojournalists. Both require that pictures have "immediate visual impact" as photojournalists say, or, according to MCC members, "a strong center of interest." When many diverse, apparently unrelated elements appear in a frame, camera club members call a picture "distracting," a "hodge podge," or "confusing." Camera club pictures are easily and quickly understood. They are without ambiguity.

A set of visual devices augment the clarity of camera club photographs. In pictures which have a single subject, such as a woman or a wildflower, that subject should not have to compete with anything else in the frame. Hence, when backgrounds are "busy," photographers throw them out of focus, eliminating any distractions. In contrast, for landscapes, where the subject is the whole terrain, deep focus is used and shallow depth-of-field criticized. Compositional arrangements lead the viewer's eye to the "center of interest." Such devices as "leading lines," strong diagonals or S-curves appear often (see figs. 6, 7, 9, 14). Camera club photographers follow a compositional "rule of thirds" (discussed often in Kodak guides) to make their pictures more dynamic. Rather than centering the subject, a static composition, the center of interest is placed at one of the four points of intersection on a grid drawn like this:



To eliminate extraneous elements camera club pictures are tightly cropped, emphasizing the single center of interest. Close-up shots predominate -- a frequent criticism made by judges is "the photographer should have moved in closer." In order to crop their pictures, slide makers purchase special slide mounts in various sizes, giving them the same ability to transform the size of a picture enjoyed by printmakers. Even when an extreme close-up is used, the rule of thirds is followed -- note the boy's eyes placed at the two points of intersection (see fig. 11). Camera club members are unaccustomed to moving close to prints to look at them, and judges usually view slides and prints from the same vantage point. Printers enlarge their pictures to 11 x 14 and 16 x 20 increasing their impact and compensating for the distance at which they are viewed. Photographers flush-mount their prints on heavy cardboard or mat them in shades of white, gray, and black.

MCC photographs are realistically representational. Photographic techniques are employed in ways that render them transparent. Skillful handling of content overrides concern with the medium per se. Anything which focusses attention on the photographer's presence is viewed as a mistake: evidence of artificial lighting such as a shining forehead, a reflection of the photographer in the frame, or a subject's expressions resulting from camera-awareness rather than intrinsic personality. Manipulative abstract pictures appear infrequently. When they do, the techniques most commonly used are "derivation" and "solarization." The process requires a series of printing manipulations resulting in a high-contrast color picture in which unusual colors are substituted for natural appearances (for example in a portrait all light tones might be red and all darks blue, making a red frame, blue hair and shadows). Another abstract technique produces a high contrast black and white photograph. Despite these manipulations the subjects remain recognizable (see figs. 12 and 13). Abstract pictures which disorient the viewer, disallowing any identification of the subject matter, arouse camera club members and judges eliminate such pictures early in competitions.

The code of camera club photography provides structure and continuity for members' activity. The stability of the camera club aesthetic ensures that a picture which won awards ten years ago is still likely to be considered good today. Since the camera club aesthetic limits the range of subject matter and the compositional form which pictures take, MCC members exhibit their expertise through conspicuous skill in realistic representation. Inventing an original or unique expressive style doesn't concern MCC photographers. Success is gauged by the evidence of technically competent performance within the bounds of a specified aesthetic code.

The photographic aesthetic for art photography proves to be less clearly defined. In her discussions, Rosenblum (1978a and 1978b) is unable to describe an "art" style as she does for "advertising" and "newspaper" photography. She writes:

> "The diversity of imagery, therefore, is one obstacle to doing a stylistic analysis because, after all, there is more than one style. In fact, the boundaries of fine arts photography are elastic, although the field is internally differentiated with respect to 'school' or 'tradition.' In a sense, fine art photography may be treated as a large residual category which subsumes a good many types of 'unclassifiable' photographs" (1978b:17).

The stylistic diversity is consistent, however, in that art photographs are fashioned in contradistinction to the codes of mass-produced, non-art, photographic imagery. While camera club photographers (and most other viewers of photographs) attend to the manifest content of an image, art photographers distinguish themselves by concentrating on photographic form, often equating it with the content and meaning of their pictures. The conventions of art photography, comprised of a diverse range of visual styles, are self-consciously distinct from other popular forms of photographic articulation. Artists use the medium in ways that other photographers do not. When artists do borrow from popular imagery like the snapshot, their intentions alter them. Framed as art, pictures exhibiting the "snapshot aesthetic" are distinct from the images found in family albums. Any coherent sense of a fine art aesthetic is best derived from photographers' talk about pictures -- from their ideas about photography rather than from the photographs themselves. Instead of attempting to formulate an all-encompassing visual aesthetic, I will discuss artists' criteria for successful pictures as elicited during interviews for this research. Both artists and MCC members were shown a series of ten reproductions of photographs which I chose to represent examples of the aesthetic code of each group. After giving a general description of artists' aesthetic criteria, I will refer to these pictures explicitly.

Art photographs are personal, expressing the individual viewpoints and life experience of the photographer. Rosenblum (1978b) describes the personal nature of "class crits" in art photography classes she enrolled in. These were a bit like psychoanalysis -- focussing on the feelings of the photographer while shooting, the emotions he can or does express, the relationship of his personality to his pictures. Photographers who fail to "put themselves into their pictures" make cold, emotionless photographs, disliked by artists.

Art photographers want to be aroused when they look at photographs. But rather than "immediate visual impact" artists look for "mystery." This term recurred as a laudatory statement. Ambiguity intrigues art photographers, surprise delights them. One photographer said of his own work, "once the mystery is solved I move on. I need curiosity." The longer artists are engaged by a photograph the better it is. Art photographers react to pictures idiosyncratically: since photographs are highly personal their meanings are not transparent. Artists' interpretations combine highly attributional strategies (Worth and Gross, 1974) with sophisticated formal responses. The most engaging photograph allows the viewer to approach it on a personal level, drawing out meanings which are particularly salient to the individual viewer. In addition, artists' reactions to pictures are based upon changing criteria. Said one photographer,

> "My reactions are intuitive, emotional. You just sort of know. At this time I respond to this, at another time to something else. My criteria change with the picture."

Photographs should elicit novel responses. A photographer complained about my selection of photographs:

> "these pictures aren't worth explaining -- I already know what's in them."

Photographers' responses dealt primarily with the conceptual sophistication evident in the pictures they viewed. Only pictures which seemed solely formal in execution and content elicited responses concerned with photographic technique or skill, and these pictures were considered to be academic and "studenty." Formal criticism was sparse. When attention was given to formal issues, the capabilities of the photographer himself came under scrutiny not the visual elements of the particular picture being discussed. Pictures which pleased artists were said to be "well-seen by the photographer." The notion "well-seen" was defined as follows:

> "It's how the picture's pieced together, what occupies what position in the frame -- how the photographer sets up relationships, the logic or illogic of how things go together."

Another photographer explained "well-seen" like this:

> "They saw it -- photography is about seeing -- others might have passed it but this person's sensibility picked it up. It's the right time, the right place; it all fits. It's coming into contact with your own seeing, being aware of what's around you -- capturing a moment as well as seeing it."

One photographer told me the nicest compliment he ever received came when someone told him that he sees well, saying "you have good eyes." Explaining further, he said:

> "The idea of photography is seeking things of beauty and of interest. I find things that other people would kick aside. That's why I have 'good eyes.'"

This kind of ocular terminology appears often. Rosenblum (1978a and 1978b), discussing her participant-observation as an art photography student, reports that instructors concentrate on teaching their students to "see photographically." Since photography is a medium in which practitioners make images based on visual material already provided, and their manual work is less visible (and considered less important) than the act of looking through a camera's viewfinder, the selection and framing decisions made by photographers when they release the shutter at a particular moment receive the greatest attention. Renowned photographer and aesthetician Minor White discusses the nature of photographic creativity, relating seeing to the creative "state of mind in photography":

> "...the camera lures, then compels a man to create through seeing. It demands that he learn to make the realm of his responses to the world the raw material of his creative activity...the state of mind of a photographer while creating is a blank...It is a very active state of mind really, a very receptive state of mind, ready at an instant to grasp an image, yet with no image pre-formed in it at any time...The photographer projects himself into everything he sees, identifying himself with everything in order to know it and feel it better...afterwards with the prints safely in hand he needs to practice the most conscious criticism. Is what he saw present in the photograph? If not, does the photograph open his eyes to something he could not see by himself?..." (1952; rpt. 1966:163-168).

According to White, "because a man trains himself to see like a camera, it is only more appropriate that he uses a camera to record his seeing." A photographer's eyes provide a channel to his mind, enabling him to transform visual reality into an expression of his experience, through the act of selecting the appropriate moment to release the camera's shutter.

Because expression in art photography is inextricably bound to the identity and personal life-experience of the photographer, the artists I interviewed hesitated to comment on the unidentified pictures I showed them. Many prefaced their remarks explaining that they couldn't really say much about a single picture, taken out of the context of the photographer's body of work. Some asked the artists' names, while others transformed the task into a guessing game, trying to get a bearing on the pictures by situating them within a postulated photographer's oeuvre. Responding to the ideas dealt with in photographs, artists often had difficulty evaluating pictures without some foreknowledge of the photographer's intentions. Artists say that ideas expressed in photographs should convey complex intellectual involvement in the medium. Complex thinking is represented through complex form. Photographs which failed to arouse questions, too straightforward in their articulation, were rejected immediately as inconsequential.

Figures one through ten show the group of reproductions used in interviews with fine art and amateur photographers. Figures two, four, six, seven and nine were chosen to represent typical camera club photographs; figures one, three, five, eight and ten to represent a range of art styles. As I suspected, the responses of artists and MCC members diverge, members of each group rejecting examples of the others' work, to varying degrees.

Figure one turned out to be an interesting elicitor of responses among art photographers. Many of the Philadelphians were schooled in Chicago (at the Art Institute or the Institute of Design) and maintain ties to that city. The maker of this photograph is well known to Chicago photographers and the picture comes from a series made at the north door of the Museum of Science and Industry. Armed with knowledge of the photographer and her intentions, respondents felt more at ease discussing the picture. Artists reacted favorably towards this picture: it "raises questions," it's an "interesting moment" arrested by the photographer, it's dynamic and gives the viewer something to talk about. Most MCC respondents disliked the picture, and many explained their reaction by criticizing the quality of the print: "too dark," "no gray tones," "no whites," "poor placement and planning," too much "like a snapshot," and "the people's feet are cut off." Some MCC members said it might be better were it "a part of a story."

Figure two was generally well liked by MCC photographers. The "quiet mood," "nice colors" and "pleasing pattern" contribute to the picture's success. Formal criticisms were offered: "there's no center of interest" and "the bright leaves at the top draw my eye out of the frame." Artists panned the picture, calling it "hoaky," "pretty," "like muzak," "like wallpaper," "not mind-engaging," "cliche." One photographer exclaimed "I hate it -- it's trite, it's amateur!" Guesses that Eliot Porter had made the photograph were offered.

MCC photographers found figure three to be annoying -- "why would anyone crop the head off?" They suggested cropping the picture differently, at the woman's waist, to make it "more artistic -- about form." A bright spot on the chair "attracts the eye," according to a few respondents, and should be burned in. Overall, the picture was considered "gimmicky," and "commercial," not worthy of serious attention. Art photographers shared MCC members dislike for the picture, agreeing that it's gimmicky -- "it's too easy," "color for color's sake," "not well-seen." Some found it "offensive" and "violent" as well.

Like figure two, artists rejected the portrait shown in figure four because it seemed "cliche" and "dull." Art photographers called the picture uninteresting, meaningless and unintelligent:

> "It's annoying, shows a lack of vision. It's too static, symmetrical. The photograph doesn't reflect the concern or uniqueness of the photographer."

Camera club photographers responded favorably, but added these criticisms: "he's too posed," "it's not believable." One respondent objected to the attention-grabbing highlight on the sitter's cap.

Artist's responses to figure five were divided: some reacted to this picture as they had to figure three, the photograph which shows a woman's red-stockinged legs sitting in a red chair, saying "it doesn't mean anything" and that "the photographer is just playing around with color." Some artists complained that they couldn't tell what was going on; others found this ambiguity intriguing. The picture "raises questions," responded those who liked it:

> "There's a mystery to it. You can project a story into it."

And,

> "The more I look at it the better I like it -- it plays tricks on you. It's ambiguous, mysterious."

One photographer added,

> "Its academically interesting -- it deals with the medium."

MCC photographers unanimously panned the picture. The ambiguity which excites artists annoys camera club photographers:

> "What's he doing? I want to see!"

was the response often heard.

> "What's the black blob on the left? The man is hiding the action. The photographer should have gotten in closer to get his face."

Not only do MCC photographers want to clear up any mystery by seeing what the man is doing, but the photographer quoted above suggests specifying the situation further by giving the actor an identify, showing his face. One photographer, particularly perturbed by the picture said

> "It has no merit. It's a snapshot. My son does better. It's just like the stuff they show in Popular Photography."

Another photographer was dumb-struck, and after a few moments responded, "I don't know what to say!"

Figure six is the one camera club picture receiving a generally favorable response from artists. "It's well-seen," they said. Many photographers called it photojournalistic, the kind of picture that might appear in National Geographic or a 1950s issue of Life. One photographer responded,

> "It's highly formal, an interesting illusion of scale from the difference in orientation. The scale discrepancy is the most interesing aspect. It's ambiguous."

MCC photographers liked the picture too. They responded by saying it has good composition, good lines and pattern. However, they found fault with the print quality: "it's too flat," "it's muddy," "it's dead, needs some highlights," "no sparkle."

Photographers from both groups criticized figure seven, the photograph showing a moth. Artists classified the picture as "scientific photography," a technically competent document of a moth.

> "It's the moth that makes the picture, not anything the photographer did. It's a picture of a pretty moth."

> "It's a document of something beautiful -- but it's a terrible photograph. I can't help students with ideas but I can help them with seeing."

Camera club photographers criticized the picture because of its unnatural black background. Nature photographers attempt to present their subjects as they are found in their habitats. If a studio setting is used, a background that at least suggests the outdoors is preferred, for example, a light blue or green. Furthermore, man's presence evidenced in the frame disqualifies pictures from nature competitions. A photographer pointed out the cut twig, grounds for disqualification, which spoils the picture.

Figure eight drew criticism from MCC and art photographers. Artists called the picture "studenty," holding little meaning for the viewer.

> "It's cold, formal. So what? It doesn't tell me anything about photography."
>
> "Empty. It has no metaphor for other experience."
>
> "It's studenty, and methodical. There's no treat; no surprises."

Camera club members found no "center of interest" in the picture, but said the design or pattern was good. A club member commented

> "I wouldn't do it, but I like it. It's not a camera club picture. If your home was decorated modern and you put it in a silver frame it would look nice."

The reproduction which camera club members liked best, appears in figure nine:

> "What's not to like? It has everything; it couldn't be improved!"

responded a club member.

> "It has a nice S-curve, lovely. I would have liked to take it."

It was called a "competition judge's delight" and a "classic camera club picture." Some art photographers agreed with these last statements but did not speak them with praise. Being "camera club-ish" meant "sugary," "cliche," "pictorial romanticism, nostalgic, cute, familiar" and "corny garbage." One photographer tried to place it in context. His response was,

> "It's 1940s and 50s cornball. Like sentimental ads you'd see in ladies' magazines. It's too clearly organized to be an amateur though -- it's like advertising, something put out by a good art director."

The responses to figure ten made by camera club photographers and artists were diammetrically opposed. The evocativeness which artists appreciate frustrated MCC photographers. They found no center of interest, no subject at all. They called it "confused," "distracting," a "hodge podge." As with figure five, they asked

> "What's going on? I want to see the whole man, his face. What does it mean?"

One club member exclaimed

> "It's trash! Nothing comes out. You can read as much out of it as you want."

The lack of specificity decried by MCC members was praised by artists.

> "The picture is well-seen, thoughtful. It's risky -- it has the most interesting sense of narrative -- the viewer has to put together his own idea."

It was called "the most sophisticated of all" the pictures I showed. Expressions of praise were worded like this:

emotional
intriguing
boldness
mysterious
playful
spirited
alive
risky.

Artists said it was like their own work, and wanted to know who made it. They wanted to see more of the photographer's work:

> "It's the best picture of all. It has more levels of experience."

Art photographers were pleased to come upon this picture at the end of the session. Unimpressed by the other pictures, they were happy to be able to respond enthusiastically to one which excited them, enabling them to talk about what they liked to see in a picture.

Art photographers reject the realistic representation valued by camera club photographers. They view such photographs as dealing with content alone, unconcerned with the expression of ideas, and unintellectual. This view is a misreading of camera club pictures to some extent. While the choice of appropriate subject matter is more important to MCC photographers, their pictures carry a message about the maker's skill. Prizes are awarded to MCC photographers because they demonstrate competence in their use of the medium. Artists' concern with expressing their own ideas rather than allowing the camera to act as a passive recording instrument moves them away from realism. The utilization of the edges of the photograph's frame to cut off figures and objects, a common device among artists, violates commonly held notions about the recording functions of the camera (figs. 3 and 10). Artists construct abstract pictures from identifiable reality by disorienting the viewer, shooting close up, removing the subject from its natural context and rendering it unidentifiable (figs. 16 and 17).

When working in a realistic style artists do so unconventionally, for example, Crane's picture in figure one. The situation utilized here is uncommon -- photographing people unaware as they exit a public building -- and the unfriendly expressions and confrontational mood of the picture conveys the photographer's rejection of conventional use of the camera for portraiture. (See fig. 18 for an example of unconventional representation of the nude.) Novel devices can be injected into realistic photographs, such as handpainting (fig. 19 is a black and white reproduction of a hand-colored image) or "flashlight-drawing" (fig. 20). Such manipulation of realistic images transforms them, yielding ambiguity. A review appearing in the Philadelphia Photo Review praises the work of the photographer whose picture is reproduced in figure nineteen.

> "There is a dream-like quality to the pictures, which results from the hand-coloring. Had these been actual color photographs, the sense of reality may have appeared less elusive. However, the application of color to certain areas, even defying the photographic edge, creates a lusciousness and tactility of surface."

Of that picture the reviewer writes:

> "The most compelling photographs are those that allude to sensuality and reminiscence, awakening in the viewer memories of sublime moments of reverie. In "Rose Valley Light," two women sit on a lace-covered sofa, sipping tea, lost to themselves. One gazes out the window onto a fantasy landscape of pink, green, and lavendar vegetation" (vol. 5, number 4: Summer 1981).

Hence hand-coloring transforms the photograph, making reality elusive, a quality art photographers value.

When traditional realism is an artist's mode of articulation, the subject of the picture is not its content, artists maintain. For example, a photographer new to the Philadelphia area exhibited a series of Italian landscapes at the small gallery at the Photography Place (see fig. 21). A review appearing in the Philadelphia Photo Review read:

> "Carabasi's landscapes are warm in tone and contain a painstakingly precise rendering of detail that softly fades into

> the mists that populate the Italian hills. The light in the image does not model the topography a great deal. Instead Carabasi has designed the image in graphic terms -- using the outlines of hills, fields, roads, and rows of trees to enclose local areas of tone and texture in a complex and controlled composition. (It is tempting, but in the end misleading, to compare this treatment with the extremely linear work of one of Tom Carabasi's favorite Renaissance artists, Carlo Crivelli.)
>
> Through his use of a high vantage point and a long focal length lens directed into -- not across -- the terrain, Carabasi creates a high horizon line that compresses the three-dimensional modulations of the landscape into an inviting tapestry of contours. One particular Italian landscape, however, is very different from the others because of its exceptional strength and energy. In this image Carabasi raises the lens to look out across the expanse of the Italian hills and take in the drama of the sky. Here mass has replaced contour. As a result of this and the richer tone he chose for the print, the image gains in the force and impact with which it expresses the idea of the landscape" (vol. 5, number 4: Summer 1981).

The subject of these landscapes is the design and composition the photographer produces when he selects a specific frame and chooses a particular rendition of spatial depth by his use of lenses. Thus the subject here is not the Italian landscape but the photographer's ideas about how to depict it. When viewers understand the visual problems the photographer has dealt with, the picture's meaning is formalist; content becomes unimportant in the sense that any location, treated similarly, would yield a picture with the same meaning, so long as the same idea motivates the photographer.

I asked an art photographer to explain to me what artists mean when they talk about "ideas." He responded:

> "somebody goes out with a sense of an idea -- 'because I love the light today.' It can be as simple as an interest

> in light and shadow. It doesn't have to be documenting the plight of the poor -- a journalistic idea -- it can be a visual idea. That's where consistency and a sense of accumulated visual knowledge comes, from searching for something you understand well. I understand the Greek light. I understand photographing that landscape and that environment. And once the mystery is solved you move on. I didn't understand it the first few years, but I did it in order to finally understand it. For the moment I don't think I've used it up. It still has mystery. You can be enthralled by something as elementary as light, or form. I don't mean a specific kind of architecture, but what about the architecture and the way the light works on it, or the figure relates to the architecture, or something like that."

The ideas which concern art photographers have to do primarily with their use of the medium -- grappling with the visual problems posed by making photographs. Art photographers respond to pictures formally, discussing evidence residing in the photograph which attests to the artist's conceptual sophistication (or lack thereof) in dealing with photographic articulation. Good work goes further, requiring some kind of active response from the viewer, arousing his emotions and transforming him into a detective who must tease out what is transpiring in the photograph, a challenge to solve the mystery. Artists' aesthetic experiences are complete when both inferential and attributional strategies (Worth and Gross, 1974) come into play, demanding complex, individualized responses to photographic articulations.

Camera club photographers also concern themselves with formal problems, but to a lesser degree. The landscape by an MCC photographer, shown in figure twenty-three, demonstrates a concern with light -- the shadows cast by the trees and the pattern created, and the quality of the sunlight as it reflects off the snow-covered ground. The scene reproduced in figure twenty-four deals with cloud forms and the relationship of those forms to the landscape beneath. Compare this photograph with the landscape in figure twenty-one. The print quality clearly distinguishes the two. The artist, employing a large format camera, produces a highly detailed, sharp print. The MCC photographer shot his picture with a 35mm camera, then enlarged the negative to 16 x 20, yielding a grainy print with considerably less detail. Despite this difference, if we spoke of the camera club picture using the same terms applied to the Italian landscape; attending to the ideas dealt with:

> "'X' raises the lens to look out across the expanse of 'location y' and takes in the drama of the sky. Here mass has replaced contour..."

could we transform it from an amateur photograph to art? (See Peterson, 1983, for a discussion of the ideas embodied by the work of camera club photographers. Is this meant to justify showing amateurs' work at an art museum?) Figure nine, the photograph camera club members called "a classic," bears a striking resemblance to the photograph in figure twenty-five, included in the collection of a prominent New York collector and gallery owner, Lee Witkin, by art photographer George Tice. What separates these pictures so that only one is considered art?

The questions being posed here deal with where the "artness" of a photograph lies. Are these photographs inherently differentiable?

What I would suggest is that artness does not inhere only in objects themselves, but also in audience members' treatment of them. If legitimizers speak of a picture using the same terms commonly applied to art photographs, if a picture is hung in the same places and in the same manner used to hang art photographs, does it thereby become art? The formula specifying the relative importance of objects themselves and viewers' treatment of them has not been written.

The aesthetic codes of these two groups diverges. Camera club pictures are straightforward and realistic. Subject matter chosen is beautiful, pleasing or poignant. Composition follows the "rule-of-thirds" and leading lines and s-curves direct viewers' eyes to a single "center of interest." Camera club pictures show the influence of commercial portraiture and professional nature and news photography. The fine art code is best characterized as being constructed in opposition to popular uses of the medium. Art photographs break conventional rules. Difficult to interpret, good art photographs are called ambiguous and mysterious. Camera club and art photographers criticize the others' work. The aesthetic codes of these groups exist in a relation of opposition.

CHAPTER 7

CONSTRUCTING "ART PHOTOGRAPHY": DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CAMERA CLUBS AND ART

Throughout the medium's history, some of its practitioners have asserted photography's claim to art, in contradistinction to other uses of the medium. Against the background of "professional" photography -- portraiture, industrial and scientific photography, stereographic views and exploratory documentation -- camera clubs were formed in the latter half of the nineteenth century by photographers who wanted to demonstrate that photographs could be as artistic as paintings and sculpture. These photographers invented "pictorialism," a style of picture making which evidenced the intervention of the maker in the photographic process by using techniques which required handwork. Photographers etched their plates, painted and blurred their images, emulating current styles in painting.

Pictorialism arose as a reaction not only to professional photography, but also to the creation of a mass market of snapshooters. Jenkins credits George Eastman with a revolution in photography by reconceptualizing "who was to practice photography."

> "From the time of the introduction of commercial photography in 1839 until the late 1870's, the technical complexities of the photographic process were so great that only professional photographers and a very few avid amateurs chose to pursue the practice. In the 1870s the photographer had, for example, to prepare the photosensitive materials; adjust the camera settings; expose, develop and fix the glass-plate negative; and print and fix the positive paper copy. Twenty years later nearly anyone interested in

> obtaining photographs, regardless of his practical knowledge of optics or of photographic chemistry, could at least press the button on a simple hand camera, remove the exposed film from the camera, and in a few days obtain finished prints from a local photographer or distant factory. The change in the practice of photography from the dominance of the professional to that of the amateur revolutionized both the photographic industry and the social role of photography... The change from professional to amateur predominance not only transformed the photographic industry from one characterized by decentralized, handicraft modes of production in 1879 to one characterized by centralized, mechanized modes of production in 1899, but more important, signaled the emergence of a mass market in photography" (1975:1, 18).

Coincident with the rise of mass amateur photography, Alfred Stieglitz formed his Photo-Secession from the camera clubs. According to Doty (1960) the camera clubs were slow to adopt the pictorialist style and club members accused Stieglitz of inbuing photography "with a little too much art." Camera club salons, held to provide amateurs with access to exhibition space, were considered too popularized by members of the Photo-Secession, the quality of work shown too poor to advance photographic art. In an article advocating the use of the "hand camera" for artistic purposes, Stieglitz characterizes the "state of affairs" at the turn of the century:

> "Photography as a fad is well-nigh on its last legs, thanks principally to the bicycle craze. Those seriously interested in its advancement do not look upon this state of affairs as a misfortune, but as a disguised blessing, inasmuch as photography had been classed as a sport by nearly all of those who deserted its ranks and fled to the present idol, the bicycle. The only persons who seem to look upon this turn of affairs as entirely unwelcome are those engaged in manufacturing and selling photographic goods. It was, undoubtedly, due to the hand camera that photography became so generally popular a few years ago. Every Tom, Dick and Harry could, without trouble, learn how

> to get something or other on a sensitive plate, and this is what the public wanted -- no work and lots of fun. Thanks to the efforts of these persons hand camera and bad work became synonymous. The climax was reached when an enterprising firm flooded the market with a very ingenious hand camera and the announcement, 'You press the button, and we do the rest.' This was the beginning of the 'photography-by-the-yard' era, and the ranks of enthusiastic Button Pressers were enlarged to enormous dimensions. The hand camera ruled supreme" (1897, rpt. 1981:214-215).

Distinct from the use of the hand camera by "every Tom, Dick and Harry," Stieglitz and other pictorialists taking pictures with the snapshot camera made art. Jeffrey discusses work by James Craig Annan and Stieglitz:

> "...pictures existed in nature, but only an artist, sensitive to natural harmonies, could identify them...Both Annan and Stieglitz emphasize that they as artists, have a special relationship with the world of appearances. Annan shows himself to be susceptible to the extraordinary, to moments when commonplace material shows itself in an unusual light. The horse at Stirling and the monks in Venice present themselves thus for an instant only, and only to his eyes. His is a different sort of priveleged vision from that of Stieglitz, which is keyed in to those intrinsic harmonies only manifest, he implies, to a patient and sensitive artist" (1981:100).

As photographic technology advanced, and the kind of manual skills previously required to produce photographic prints were no longer necessary, the distinctions between what artists and other photographers do have been discussed in terms of the artist's special vision and sensibility.

Camera club photographers finally did adopt the pictorialist style. (Peterson's 1983 exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts showcased the work of nationally renowned amateur pictorialists of the

30s and 40s: Adolf Fassbender, Frank Fraprie, Leonard Misonne, William Mortensen, D. J. Ruzicka and Paul L. Anderson.) But another movement was afoot among art photographers. Pictorialism began losing favor among artists and critics. Sadakichi Hartmann, an influential art critic, criticized the techniques of pictorialists early-on. Reviewing a show of Photo-Secession work in 1904 Hartmann wrote:

> "It is only a general tendency towards the mysterious and bizarre which these workers have in common; they like to suppress all outlines and details and lose them in delicate shadows, so that their meaning and intention become hard to discover. They not only make use of every appliance and process known to the photographer's art, but without the slightest hesitation, as Steichen in his "Moonrise" and "The Portrait of a Young Man," and Frank Eugene in his "Song of the Lily," overstep all legitimate boundaries and deliberately mix up photography with the technical devices of painting and the graphic arts" (1904, rpt. 1980:185).

Hartmann claims that only by recognizing and utilizing the properties intrinsic to the medium can photographers advance its position among the arts. He calls this approach "straight photography" and defines it as follows:

> "Rely on your camera, on your eye, on your good taste and your knowledge of composition, consider every fluctuation of color, light and shade, study lines and values and space division, patiently wait until the scene or object of your pictured vision reveals itself in its supremest moment of beauty, in short compose the picture which you intend to take so well that the negative will be absolutely perfect and in need of no or but slight manipulation" (1904; rpt. 1980:187).

Early in the twentieth century, the fine arts underwent a stylistic evolution, resulting in a modern, functionalist aesthetic. Art photographers also experienced a "reorientation in photographic aesthetics..." a "return to the traditions of straight photography" (Newhall, 1982:174), again echoing developments in other art media. 1917 saw the close of Stieglitz' gallery, "291," and the end of the Photo-Secession. In 1932 a new group of photographers rose to preeminence, calling themselves "Group f/64." According to Newhall, these "straight" photographers from California joined together in a reaction against the prevalent pictorialism of the camera clubs. (In San Francisco, art photographers and camera club salon exhibitors competed for exhibition space. (Christopherson (1974b) reports that until 1948 the San Francisco Museum of Art exhibited salon photography.) Newhall writes:

> "It was a violent reaction to the weak, sentimental style then popular with pictorial photographers in California, as seen particularly in the anecdotal, highly sentimental, mildly erotic hand-clored prints of William Mortensen" (1982:192).

and

> "'Pure photography' [so-called by members of f/64] was a reaction to the latter-day pictorialism that followed the demise of the Photographic Salon of London and the Photo-Secession in America; it was a time when the weakest of soft-focus pictures of the most banal subject matter and obvious composition were being widely exhibited and published" (1980:251).

Straight photography represented a polar extreme in its rejection of pictorialism. These photographers allowed no manipulation. They "previsualized" what the finished print would look like -- its composition, form and even tonal qualities -- while looking through the camera's viewfinder. Straight photographs exhibited sharp focus throughout the frame. Photographers desired the greatest possible depth of field and so utilized the smallest possible lens apertures (hence the group's name "f/64") yielding extreme clarity of detail. These photographers used large format cameras and contact printed the negatives to produce a fine-grained image. The photographs, printed on glossy paper, were mounted on white. Any picture "betraying any handwork or avoidance of reality in choice of subject was 'impure'" (Newhall, 1982).

In 1940 art photography reached a milestone with the formation of a Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, establishing the medium as an art form in its own right. The founding of the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, followed soon after in 1949. Since that time the dogma of earlier aesthetic movements in photography has loosened its ties on art photographers, admitting a diversity of styles. Now, straight photography and hand-colored prints, gum-bichromate prints, mixed-media work utilizing photography along with other art processes, abstract photography and photo-collage all hang on photography gallery walls.

Earlier in the medium's history photographers consciously separated themselves and their work from that of commercial photographers and, especially, amateurs, in order to construct an art world distinct from the mass. Due to the invention of simplified photographic technologies which exploded the popularity of picture taking, photographers were faced with a difficult task. They responded by joining together to create identifiable aesthetic "movements," writing manifestos and sponsoring exhibitions. Today, thanks to the insistence of these photographers, an institutional structure supporting art photography has been built up, including exhibition spaces, a critical press, an art history of photography, schools which offer curricula and teaching positions, and an audience for photographic art (cf. Christopherson, 1974a). A single specified style of art photography like pictorialism or straight photography, no longer identifies pictures as art works, their makers as artists. Yet photography still enjoys the popularity and the attention that motivated art photographers to band together, identifying themselves and their work as distinct from all others. Since art photography has come to permit a range of pictorial styles, the means by which artists signal their distinctiveness have altered. Comparing the activity of camera club photography to art photography foregrounds these distinctions. In what follows I will discuss these two types of photographic activity, suggesting the dimensions of "artness" as it is manifested in photography.

1. Art photography is related to other art media.

In order to maintain photography's status an an art form it must bear some relationship to other arts. During the late nineteenth century photographers argued for photography's art status by showing how similar to paintings photographs could look. Using the gum-bichromate or glycerine processes, painting the print's surface, or etching the negative, they produced soft-focus painterly pictures. When painting styles began changing at the turn of the century, photographers adopted an optimistically modernist approach, championing the unique pictorial qualities yielded by the use of a modern machine -- the camera. Collections of photographs are housed at art museums along with painting and sculpture; photography occupies a place in art school curricula.

When asked what they called their occupation, many of the art photographers I interviewed replied "artist" rather than "photographer." They explained that the choice of working in photography was more or less incidental:

> "Photography is an aspect of what I'm doing,"

or

> "Right now my art is coming out in photography."

One photographer described himself as an "artist who makes photographs." Many art photographers report that their closest friends are not photographers (they get bored talking about photography all the time) but other kinds of artists --

> "My closest friends are painters and writers, not photographers."

When I asked art photographers what other kinds of art activities they participate in a frequent response was

> "I go to shows at museums and galleries. Especially in painting and other media."

A photographer told me

> "I attend art openings, but not in photography -- they're too boring."

It is not uncommon for photographers, once they have had a major exhibition of their work in Philadelphia, to quit attending photography shows. Instead, they attempt to keep up with current affairs in other media.

In addition to attending museum and gallery shows, art photographers enjoy seeing films. When time permits, they go to orchestra concerts and to the ballet.

While acknowledging that photography can be art, MCC photographers do not call what they do art. They do not call themselves artists, nor do they relate the work they do to painting, sculpture or other fine art media. MCC activities are divorced from the art photography world. When asked about attendance at photography exhibits camera club photographers mention PSA conventions and workshops at which exhibits of pictures take place in addition to other featured programs. The Wilmington (Delaware) Camera Club holds an annual international salon, and most camera club members travel to the nearby city to see the pictures included in the exhibition. Held in cooperation with the University of Delaware Cultural Affairs Office, the salon is held at Clayton Hall. Prints are hung in the building's spacious lobby while slides are projected at specified showtimes in the auditorium. MCC members also report attending the Delaware Valley Council's Ray O'Day Competition exhibit. This competition is held annually, pitting local clubs against one another to compete for the prestige conferred upon the clubs awarded the best total scores.

In addition to these events, MCC photographers report occasional trips to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, especially when a photography show is held. If they travel to New York City, MCC photographers visit the major art museums there. Few club members go to exhibits at the photography *galleries* in Philadelphia (the ones who have admit to some bewilderment about gallery directors' choices).

Camera club members' activities are limited, by and large, to PSA and club sponsored events. Their hobby consumes much of MCC members' leisure time leaving little free for other kinds of art activities. MCC members, unable to understand the aesthetic concerns or meaning of "contemporary" photography (or modern art in other visual media) feel divorced from the modern art world. Camera club members' favorite photographers are set apart from the contemporary scene. Early camera club pictorialists are admired, and Steichen, Stieglitz, Weston and Adams are sometimes mentioned. The art which MCC photographers relate their work to evokes a different era.

2. *Art photography has a history and a tradition.*

Like other visual arts, photography has a recorded history, and scholars who study it. Little by little, photo-historians are securing academic appointments at colleges and universities. Courses in the "art history of photography" are offered by many art history departments. These courses cover important events and individuals contributing to the medium's current priveleged status. Present commercial, scientific, home-mode, amateur and journalistic uses of the medium receive no attention in these courses (in the 1982 edition of Beaumont Newhall's widely-used history text one chapter covering photojournalism was finally included).

During an interview a photographer told me

> "If you want to be a photographer, you have to understand what it is to be a photographer...To commit yourself to the field is to commit yourself to a growth of understanding of what it has been to be a photographer and what it might be in the future. That is the historical idea of tradition -- you can't deny a background or influences."

The existence of a recorded history of the medium allows photographers to respond to it, drawing upon forebearers' work in the formulation of an individual aesthetic. As Rosenblum (1978b) writes, photographic style is characterized by diverse "schools" or "traditions" which draw upon the aesthetic stance taken by a leading art photographer. The tradition of "straight photography" has its contemporary adherents as does nineteenth century pictorialism. In the exhibition catalog from a show of Philadelphia art photography, held at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art, the curator discusses the work of a photographer who paints her prints (see fig. 19):

> "The use of hand-applied color exemplifies a recent trend in contemporary photography towards the readoption of early photographic techniques and processes and a revival of the artisanal and hand-made" (Marincola, 1980).

An art photographer's work is evaluated within the context of the historical traditions of the medium. Whether or not a photographer adds anything or improves on the tradition he draws upon may be a subject of concern to critics. For example, a reviewer writes about the issues raised by the hand-painted photographs mentioned above:

> "Photography continually strives to revitalize itself. Many contemporary photographers, rejecting the purists' straight print, advocate its extension by manipulating the surface... Modifying the print raises questions about what a photograph should look like. Does the process, however intriguing, disguise otherwise vacuous imagery? Or, does it complement the subject matter and enhance the aesthetic statement?" (Fromer, 1981).

Photographs by Becky Young (see fig. 18) are commonly discussed as comments on the tradition of the nude in photography:

> "Becky Young's first group of photographs of nude women done a few years ago was perhaps the first body of work in the history of the medium to present undressed women as unique individuals to be confronted on their own terms" (Perloff, 1981).

Art photographers may be evaluated on the basis of how their work compares to that of their mentors. Tom Carabasi (see fig. 21) was criticized by a reviewer because his photographs were considered less "powerful" than his mentors':

> "Tom Carabasi, who currently teaches workshops at the Photography Place, studied photography under Emmet Gowin at Princeton. He has also worked and studied with Frederick Sommer. His photographs and his teaching have been influenced by both of these men. Although he is very concerned with art historical and aesthetic issues and has had lengthy exposure to the sometimes opaque metaphysics of Sommer and Gowin, Carabasi's work exhibits little of the allusory power that is so central to the work of his mentors.

> ...It is clear that Carabasi's work makes numerous references to the work of his former mentor but it is equally obvious that the visual affinities are superficial and in no way denote a fundamental similarity in approach. Gowin's Italian landscapes -- for example, his 'Homage to Frederick Sommer' -- though similar in tonal value and the rendering of detail, evince a level of metaphor that is nearly absent in Carabasi's work. Rather than documenting the natural landscape, Gowin's masterful artifice, in an image like Homage..., elevate it to a realm of symbol that evokes the sacred landscape or the medieval theme of the enclosed garden" (Donovan; 1981).

The historical traditions of art photography provide stylistic boundaries within which a photographer develops his own aesthetic stance. Contemporary photographers' pictures are evaluated against the background of the art work of previous generations. Significant innovations or improvements upon the visual articulations made heretofore are extolled by art critics and historians. These photographers receive praise for their contributions to the field. Photographers whose work merely emulates what has already been done may be regarded as competent practitioners, but not as important artists.

The historical tradition which informs MCC photography draws upon the same roots. While modernism influenced the photographers whom history has called artists, camera club members continued working in the pictorialist tradition. (Peterson's exhibit of pictorialist photography from 1932-1946 may well represent the only recent exhibit, by a fine art institution, of work not recognized as part of the mainstream historical tradition of art photography. While art historians often "rediscover" work that was repudiated at one time, it is doubtful that the importance which Peterson attributes to the work will lead to a new chapter in Newhall's text on "later pictorialism.") The work of nationally known camera club pictorialists like Adolpf Fassbender (an associate member of MCC) and William Mortensen as well as MCC's own past greats serve as standards against which MCC photographers evaluate their own pictures.

PSA has bestowed the award "honorary fellow" upon photographers considered to be important by the Society. Included among them were Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen and Edward Weston. Currently Ansel Adams, Beaumont Newhall and Yousuf Karsh are fellows of PSA. The "Progress Medal Award" presented to a "person who has made an outstanding contribution to photography" was awarded to Edward Weston in 1957, Roy Styker in 1958, Beaumont Newhall in 1965 and to Ansel Adams in 1969. Camera club members admire a select group of art photographers from the post-pictorialist era. The monumental landscapes of Ansel Adams conform to MCC photographers' aesthetic criterion that a picture have "immediate visual impact." Adams is the art photographer most frequently praised by camera club members. MCC photographers admire the work of a well-known photojournalist as well-- W. Eugene Smith.

For the most part, however, the historical tradition to which MCC photographers respond is divorced from the tradition of art photography. When I asked who their favorite photographers were camera club members almost always answered with the names of earlier camera club pictorialists, present club members, or members of other clubs whose work they had seen at inter-club events. Adams, Weston and Smith are mentioned but less frequently than photographers who belong to camera clubs. "Contemporary" photographers were never named -- MCC members reject work that is difficult to understand, with disguised meanings, and work with content that is not pleasing to look at. Camera club members maintain a distinct historical tradition.

3. Art photography has its own vocabulary.

Art photographers speak about the medium using a unique vocabulary. Much of this terminology reflects the importance art photographers attribute to their eyes, and extending therefrom to the mind or intellect. A photographer whose work is mature and coherent has developed his "vision." As Marincola explains in the catalog of an exhibition showing the work of "twelve emerging" Philadelphia photographers:

> "This exhibition concentrates on emerging photographers who have been working long enough to have established their own 'vision.' Their work demonstrates a record of growth and an internal definition of issues and ideas" (1980:2).

In order to know when to select the appropriate moment to press the camera's shutter-release, a photographer must have "good eyes" or "a good eye." Marincola writes,

> "The urban landscape has been the territory traditionally staked out by the street photographer, who relies on a 'good eye' and the quick visual reflexes that can make sense out of a seemingly chaotic world of appearances" (1980:3).

As one photographer told me, the nicest compliment he ever received was "you have good eyes." Photographers' favorable responses to pictures I showed them were consistently worded:

> "It's well-seen by the photographer."

A picture which is "well-seen" affirms that the photographer possesses the best equipment -- his "good eye."

An art photographer's pictures document a process of "discovery" or an "investigation" which he conducts. Art photographs are not out there for the taking. Artists utilize reality in order to uncover hidden insights. Their pictures do not reproduce reality; they serve as metaphors for experience. Artists, with the aid of their special vision, "discover" aspects of the visual world unrevealed to those with ordinary powers of sight. Synonyms of verbs like "reveal," "discover," "illuminate," and "investigate" describe art photographers' activities. In his "Statement," photographer Harry Callahan discusses his interests in this way:

> "...I'm interested in revealing the subject in a new way to intensify it. A photo is able to capture a moment that people can't always see. Wanting to see more makes you grow as a person and growing makes you want to show more of life around you..." (1964; rpt. 1981:420).

Robert Asman, a Philadelphian included in Marincola's Institute of Contemporary Art exhibition, published this statement in the catalog:

> "I feel that as an artist I am a filter of my time, events, and experiences whose function it is to present an emotional context by which real experience can be illuminated. It is difficult to do this with just a photograph, but it's worth trying. Masterpieces abound in reality" (Marincola,

1980:6).

Art photography does not communicate straightforwardly. Good pictures are called "mysterious" and "ambiguous." They represent and elicit fantasy. They show an unrepeatable "moment." Laurence Bach's catalog statement recounts a metaphoric surrealist fantasy:

> "These photographs are still-lifes found in a sea of sand. Walking along another beach, I am aware of the relentless sun and how it animates and defines every grain of sand. Within the emptiness of the moment, I fall over an elaborate table, carefully set for one, a feast in this desert. It is archeological, historical and dreamed. Further on, I glimpse a tower, a half-empty waterglass, baroque chairs, a beautifully wrapped package of unknown contents, and a solitary friend sunbathing. I quietly pass in expectation of more but find nothing. Retracing my steps for a closer examination of the past, I am accutely aware of a remarkable change. All of the remembered markings are gone. Only a maze of rocks remain, each individually etched and splendidly luminous, as if each grain of sand had grown into a towering boulder in place of the object I discovered earlier. The rocks are placed in a sea of sand and continually ripple and echo. They possess an order, an exactness and tranquility, which is startling and inhuman. Each rock is unearthed, examined, recorded, wrapped and saved. Another glance and it all disappears. I continue walking" (Marincola, 1980:8).

(See figure 22 for an example of Bach's work.) Peter Sasgen, a Philadelphian represented in the show, discusses the evolution of his nudes from straightforward description to "mysterious" pictures, in his catalog statement:

> "Many of my portraits started out as direct and uncompromising descriptions, later evolving into images that bear no relationship to the people depicted [see figs. 26 and 17]. Nudes that originally addressed the camera with candor become participants in the investigation of ambiguous yet explicit events.
>
> As these two groups of photographs merge, they draw

> attention to their own mysteries. How those mysteries are confronted and solved depends on the changing experiences of picture-making" (Marincola, 1980:20).

Art photographers are not judged on the merit of single images but, instead, on the basis of "a body of work." When asked how an art photographer establishes his reputation interviewees replied that an artist must spend anywhere between three and ten years undergoing a maturation process while he "produces a body of work," which, at the end of that period, he shows to gallery directors, curators and artists. When deciding whom to represent in the Institute's show, Marincola reports:

> "In the process of selection, the concept of the 'body of work' as defined by Harry Callahan was brought to bear; most of the artists work in series which coherently and consciously examine various photographic concepts" (1980:3).

While this is not intended as an exhaustive lexicon of art photographers' use of terminology, the vocabulary discussed here represents key terms. Words which reflect a preoccupation with sight identify photographers who conceive of themselves as artists. Discussions of processes of discovery and a concern with the inversion of photography's realism -- its mystery -- mark an artist's universe of discourse.

Camera club photographers do not share this lexicon. Talk about photographs is modelled to some extent on the responses of judges during club competitions. MCC members first react by saying whether they like or dislike a picture. Then club members explain their response. Explanations are usually based upon the photographer's demonstrated competence. MCC members analyze photographs technically: over-, under- or proper exposure, color saturation, composition, strong or weak center of interest, distracting or busy, good contrast, flat, or too gray. In competitions, judges who need to justify not liking a picture often say something like "it's good but it's not as strong as the other pictures in the competition." Like artists, MCC photographers value pictures which "tell a story," but the telling that camera club members appreciate is done in a straightforward, unambiguous manner. When MCC members like a photograph they call it "good," "nice," "pleasing," "beautiful," "lovely" and may add to the compliment, saying "I'd like to hang it on my wall."

Compared with artist's talk about photography camera club members speak simply and plainly. If an MCC member was called upon to prepare a statement about his work, to appear alongside it, his remarks would most likely be non-metaphorical, less explicitly personal; he would discuss the equipment and techniques used, detailing how the pictures were made, and mention his favorite subjects. Through their discussions of the medium and their work, artists build a shield protecting themselves from too-easy penetration. They become, like good pictures, mysterious and indirect.

4. Art photography's subject is ideas.

Distinct from other uses of the medium, art photography deals with ideas rather than content. Artists say they spend as much or more time conceiving the work to be done as they spend engaged in the physical processes necessary to produce a photographic print. An art photographer is judged on the merit of his conceptualization: recall the reviewer (Fromer, 1981) who queries whether Steinhauser's technique of hand-painting her photographs disguises "otherwise vacuous imagery." Steinhauser is praised because she "successfully integrates content and style" creating "dream-like" pictures which "allude to sensuality and reminiscence." Frequently artists' ideas concern creating pictures which stimulate, arousing the viewer's emotions.

Most successful art photographers make pictures which comment upon the medium itself, and by doing so they also position themselves within its aesthetic traditions. Discussing Becky Young's nudes (see fig. 18) and comparing them to Sasgen's, Marincola writes:

> "Portraiture and the human figure are classic photographic subjects which endure for younger photographers. Becky Young's recent series of nude group portraits explore the subtle dynamics of inter-personal relationships...
>
> Nakedness in Young's work is a metaphor for disclosure or relevation, but in Peter Sasgen's photographs it is more often a means of concealment, a mask, or a kind of erotic armor [see fig. 17]...the portraits and figure studies are non-objective, that is, they reveal less about the personality of the sitter and more about the intensity of the photographer, so that the two seem not accomplices but adversaries. Out of this struggle emerge difficult but compelling images."

Both Young and Sasgen concern themselves with traditional conceptions of the nude, violating viewers' notions about how naked people should be shown by artists. As Sasgen writes:

> "Photographic portraits full of 'character' have never particularly interested me. Neither have nude 'studies' which avoid the compelling aspects of naked flesh. Attempting to capture truth or universal beauty would seem to be an exercise in futility" (Marincola, 1980:20).

Young characterizes her approach as follows:

> "When I began photographing nude women, I defined them classically as pure form. Subsequent work moved from the nude to depicting women without clothes in their own environments" (Marincola, 1980:28).

Many art photographers utilize content to express their ideas about photography. Although Newhall asserts

> "Concern with subject matter is paramount in much recent work that stresses the banal, the commonplace, and even the abnormal" (1982:281).

I would argue that the portrayal of commonplace subject matter comments upon conventions of artists' use of photography, not a concern for subject, per se. The so-called "snapshot aesthetic," for example, demonstrates artists' rediscovery of shared everyday experience, transforming commonplace imagery into commentary about artists' ability to find important meanings in what seems banal, by use of special vision. Making use of the commonplace violates traditional notions about appropriate subject matter for art, and questions the limitations formerly imposed on artists' purview.

When discussing the work of Philadelphian John Carnell, a photographer who "acknowledges the influence of the 'snapshot aesthetic' on his work" (Marincola, 1980:4), critics ignore his mundane subject matter attending, instead, to formal aspects of his pictures (see fig. 27). Writes Marincola:

> "Carnell is seeking forms which can contain and structure the emotional energy of color while utilizing its particular capability to render reality as descriptively as possible" (1980:4).

A reviewer who promotes documentary work because of its communicative nature, praises Carnell's work for its similarity to documentary but then discusses it in primarily formal terms:

> "His series of large color prints from 4 x 5 negatives balances the ambiance of small town America with a taut formal substructure that is at once logical and light hearted. Despite the seemingly surface artiness of these pictures, Carnell's style approaches the documentary. This lends substance and depth -- and a grounding in reality -- to photographs that could have easily lacked these qualities. The repetition of forms -- pumpkins, hay bales, flowers, tractor wheels, beach chairs, whirligigs -- that is the hallmark of these pictures serves to unite the picture plane while the actual objects themselves still convey the essential information necessary to understand the environment. This is an accomplishment of intelligence" (Perloff, 1981:4-5).

When artists take the banal and commonplace for subject matter, such scenes are invariably transformed by the artist's work upon them, into images which become mysterious anad inexplicable because they have been extracted from context and placed into the unanticipated role of an art work.

Camera club photographers do not attempt to articulate personal ideas through their use of the medium. Rather, MCC photographs convey a message about group membership by making pictures which show they share a consistent symbolic code. MCC photographs are not about ideas; they demonstrate the photographer's competence and skill in articulating the visual tradition of camera club pictorialism. When camera club photographers discuss their pictures, they concentrate on technical and formal issues: how well the slide is exposed, how contrasty a print looks, whether or not good color saturation appears, how well composed a picture is and whether or not it contains a strong center of interest, or how much appeal the subject has. MCC members don't discuss the emotions a picture arouses or try to explicate its meaning. Recall the tale about an art photographer who judged an MCC competition: he awarded first place to an "overexposed slide" because he said "it really makes me feel the heat of the beach." He may have been aroused by the picture, but MCC members, attending to the improper exposure, did not share in his experience. The aesthetic response of camera club members is elicited by different stimuli than artists'.

Camera club pictures, like art photographs, comment upon the medium itself, but the statements made differ. While artists attempt to stake out a recognizable position, adding novel response to the traditions of the medium, camera club pictures declare their unity with history, upholding the pictorialist tradition and extending it onward with little change.

5. Art photography is innovative.

Artists expressed their negative reactions to pictures I showed them, saying, "I've seen it before." Artists draw upon tradition, integrating elements from the work of previous generations into their own pictures. However, photographs do not reproduce earlier work. Weston's pictures of peppers, for instance, were considered groundbreaking, but if a modern art photographer made portraits of vegetable forms he would be called a "Weston imitator," and his work would be dismissed. Artists contribute innovations to photography, improving upon, or adding to preceding traditions. Thus an artist may revive an old technique, using it in a distinctive manner, or invent something new.

A Philadelphia photographer represented in the Institute of Contemporary Art exhibition, Martha Madigan, employs a technique dating from the late 1830s called "photogenic drawing" invented by William Henry Fox Talbot. (A similar process was also used in the 1920s by "modern" artists Man Ray and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Man Ray called his pictures "rayographs," Moholy-Nagy's were called "photograms.") Marincola describes Madigan's work:

> "The Patriarchal Tools series of photograms...are exposed outdoors in direct sunlight for periods ranging from a few hours to two days. The images that remain on the pages are records of physical impressions made by time, while they explore what for Madigan have been presistent themes: the dualities of the random versus the controlled, nature versus culture, male versus female, conscious versus unconscious " (1980:4).

Laurence Bach's photographs (see fig. 22) exemplify what Marincola calls "a recently revived interest in the genre of the fabricated photograph or the studio set-up," (1980:4) which, she says, may be "a reaction to what many consider to be the played out hand of straight photography or the gimmicky faddishness of the 'snapshot'" (1980:5). Bach's work, according to Marincola, "represents, in part, a new approach to formalism."

Instead of updating techniques used by earlier artists, photographers may adopt an approach to the medium which utilizes methods not heretofore considered to be artistic. The "snapshot aesthetic" borrows from conventions of home-mode photography (e.g. haphazard compositions, commonplace subject matter) and photographers working in this style have borrowed home-mode equipment (e.g. the Polaroid SX-70 and the Diana). By introducing non-art elements into their photography these artists produce novel, even renegade work. Art photographers also borrow from other media to produce innovative work. One Philadelphia photographer incorporates diverse materials into her photo-montages (see fig. 28). She writes:

> "The images and words are largely drawn from media sources...newspapers, magazines, children's workbooks, etc. These are collected, categorized and then selected, copied, altered, repeated, eventually becoming structural elements in the work. In the process, a language or an iconographical understanding emerges" (Marincola, 1980:12).

In his review of the Institute's show Perloff calls this artist's photographs "one of the most complex bodies of work being produced in contemporary photography" (1981:5). Innovative photographers may invent entirely new photographic techniques. Lebe's pictures provide an example (see fig. 20). The process is described in the Institute's exhibiton catalog:

> "He...has also investigated a number of unusual processes, and in the Light Drawing series, as the name suggests, has developed a technique for literally drawing with light. These images are made in a darkened room; the camera shutter is held open, and as if it were a pen holding a cartridge of light instead of ink, a flashlight is utitlized to trace the outlines of the figures as well as other objects in the room. The tracing shows up as lines of light on the printed images" (Marincola, 1980:3).

Perloff calls Lebe a "photographic free spirit," and his work "lively and beguiling." The result of the process is, according to this reviewer

> "a combination of the photographic and the cartoon-like, but with the evocation of the symbolic function of masks and the power of electricity -- or the human aura, if you will. There are references to human ambiguities, male sexuality, the relationship of man and environment, and the rigor of self-analysis" (Perloff, 1981).

Camera club photographers do not produce innovative pictures. MCC photographers maintain a keen interest in technological innovation -- new equipment, devices or processes which improve their pictures or make picture taking easier, but these innovations aid in the production of camera club-style photographs. Glassie's distinction between "elite art" and "folk art" illuminates the distinction made here. He writes:

> "While the elite artist may be willing to risk his standing to appear ahead of his time, it is only a rare folk artist who strives for innovation; his replication is an affirmation of a tradition" (1972:259).

Infrequent innovations introduced by MCC photographers do not violate the conventions of camera club pictorialism. One club photographer, reading the PSA Journal, discovered a technique for making startling floral pictures. The photographer fills an aquarium with water and submerges blossoms in the water. Air bubbles form around petals, stems and leaves which, when properly lit, sparkle, creating a dazzling effect. When first exhibited in a competition, one of these pictures elicited an excitedly favorable response, and the judge awarded the photographer a first place blue ribbon. Another photographer learned the technique from her and his pictures also won top competition honors. After the initial excitement subsided, however, the photographers quit making them and these pictures disappeared from club competitions.

6. Art photography is personal.

An art photographer criticizing the camera club aesthetic said to me:

"Those people don't put themselves into their pictures."

Art photography is personal. Pictures express the life experiences of their creators. Artists intend to share their visual experience of the world with sophisticated viewers looking at their pictures, however they do not expect viewers' interpretations to be isomorphic reflections of their input. The viewing experience, too, is considered highly personal. Viewers draw meaning from art photographs based upon their own life experience. Art photography elicits emotional responses and encourages its audience to create scenarios from visual stimulus offered by pictures. Whether or not the artists' and viewers' ideas coincide is of less importance than the work's success in stimulating thought, raising issues and provoking ideas. Discussing a group of pictures he made, Harry Callahan wrote:

> "These pictures of weeds in the snow are desired to express feeling more than anything else and if they convey feeling to you I'll be ever so pleased...
>
> Photography is an adventure just as life is an adventure. If man wishes to express himself photographically, he must understand, surely to a certain extent, his relationship to life. I am interested in relating the problems that affect me to some set of values that I am trying to discover and establish as being my life. I want to discover and establish them through photography. This is strictly my affair and does not explain these pictures by any means. Anyone else not having the desire to take them would realize that I must have felt this was purely personal. This reason, whether it be good or bad, is the only reason I can give for these photographs" (1946; rpt. 1966:40-41).

Many artists pursue photography because they feel enriched by it. Involvement in photography contributes to the artist's self-education. Appearing before a student audience at the Rochester Institute of Technology, art photographer Garry Winogrand was questioned about the meaning of a particular picture. The exchange went like this:

> "Q:...Now, it might be due to my own ignorance or something, but could you give me like a straight answer as to what you're trying to say in that photograph?
> A: I have nothing to say.
> Q: Nothing to say? Then why do you print it?
> A: I don't have anything to say in any picture.
> Q: Why do you print it if it has no meaning?
> A: With that particular picture -- ah, I'm interested in the space and I maybe can learn something about photography. That's what I get from photographs; if I'm lucky I can learn something.
> Q: Then you're trying to reveal something about space?
> A: I'm not revealing anything.

> Q: Then what do you think is the purpose of the photograph if you're not revealing anything?
> A: My education.
> Q: Then what's the purpose of that? That's what I'm trying to find out.
> A: That's the answer. That's really the answer..."
> (Winogrand, 1970; rpt. in Petruck, 1979:119).

In an interview with a Philadelphia photographer, conducted during an exhibition of his work in Brussels, Belgium, the questioner asked "Do you consider yourself an artist?" The answer given echoes Winogrand:

> "Yes, I do, because I put something of myself into everything I do...In a sense anyone can be an artist. All it takes is an internal commitment to what one is doing. It's an intensity that makes a person flow through whatever he's involved in...That's why I like photography; I get intense about it whether I'm doing work for myself or for others. And part of that intensity is learning, all the time learning. That's what makes a true artist, the desire to learn. He learns about himself, his art, others, the world, while he keeps on asking questions. All of what he has learned will show through his art" (from an interview conducted by Paul Palmarozza, September, 1977, reprinted and distributed by the artist).

(See fig. 29 for an example of work exhibited by the artist at the time when this interview was conducted. The photograph in figure 29 is part of a series titled "A Letter to My Mother.")

Photographers pursue their art because they feel compelled to express themselves and because they learn in the process. Art photographers also derive pleasure from their involvement in image-making. (This pleasure must be deep-felt. Photographers' talk is pervaded by warnings that one must "pay the dues" for living an artist's life, a life marked by uncertain fortune, frustration and hard work. For these struggles to be worthwhile one would expect that artists experience great self-gratification when they make photographs.) In her statement which appears in Marincola's exhibit catalog, Judith Steinhauser writes of the feelings aroused when she makes photographs:

> "I derive enormous pleasure from the process of creating these hand colored images, by extending the photographic process in a tactile, sensual way. Everything in the photograph comes alive and I experience a sense of immediacy and discovery which I do not feel when working with standard color photography. All these pleasures are greatly enhanced in the large-scale photographs because the image seems to surround me...
>
> It is obvious that I use a great deal of traditional feminine imagery. I love all those flowers. To me, they symbolize openness and warmth, and it delights me that they come in such a variety of forms and colors. In moving away from a classical, camera rendering which stresses clarity, strength, and function, I feel much closer to what draws me to make photographs" (Marincola, 1980:22).

Because art photography is viewed as an expression of the personality and life experience of the creative artist, the photographers I interviewed were reluctant to discuss the photographs I had intended to use to elicit elements of their photographic aesthetic. Viewed singly, abstracted from the context of an artist's oeuvre, these photographers had no foreknowledge of the makers' intentions or approaches to the medium. They tried to guess the makers' identities in order to situate their responses. The interpretive strategy used by the artists interviewed was to identify a picture ("that's a Barbara Crane," in the case of figure one) and then to discuss that picture in terms of the artist's stated intentions: "I know her work; it's confrontational, violates your personal space -- I like it." Without any knowledge of a picture's creator viewers can respond formally, performing a visual analysis or viewers may respond by attributing meanings to the picture, drawing from their own personal histories. But acquaintance with a photographer's stated intentions and with additional examples of his work yields a fuller understanding. (Perhaps this explains the profusion of published "statements" by art photographers.) Artists prefer to look at a series of pictures so that they can infer the problems being dealt with as well as make personally-motivated attributional interpretations (see Worth and Gross, 1974). Ironically, artists seem to have as much difficulty deciphering unfamiliar art photographs as camera club members. However, artists are aware of the personal nature of their photographs and hence, they know why these barriers exist. Camera club viewers are stymied without understanding why they should have such difficulties. Understanding art photographs requires some acquaintance with their creators. To some extent, art photography focuses on photographers rather than photographs. Art photographs assume the identity of their creators.

Art photographers demonstrate membership in their symbol-sharing group by making personal pictures which are often ambiguous, resisting easy interpretation. Art photography stresses the individual, the remarkable group member who makes a singular contribution to the medium. In contrast, camera club photographers demonstrate group membership by making pictures which reflect a stable aesthetic.

Camera club photographers' ideas do not enter into discussions of picture-making. Their photographs demonstrate technically competent, skillful reproduction of the camera club code. Individuals are rewarded for conformity rather than innovation.

While art photographers prefer knowing the identity of a picture's creator before responding, camera club pictures are judged anonymously. At club competitions and in PSA salons, photographers' names are kept secret until judges have made their final decisions. Prizes are awarded on the basis of correspondence to the code. The complexity of intellectual processes contributing to the picture's form are not at issue, and knowledge about the photographer is irrelevant. It may be argued, in fact, that camera club pictures do not convey explicitly constructed messages. Rather, MCC photography is characterized by a high degree of formalism. The meanings of camera club work are expressed in the choice of a traditional aesthetic and, through that choice, a rejection of the values of the art world (and of commercial photography).

7. Art photography is a lifestyle.

More than being personal, an expression of the individuality of a creator, art photography is a style of living which compels, and sometimes, controls the artist. The process of picture making becomes equated with the artist's physical states. Intense concentration and fatigue signal the artist's success, in this account written by Aaron

Siskind:

> "In 1943 and 1944 a great change took place. This great change was not the result of any intellectual decision -- and this is very important -- it was the result of a picture experience which almost surprised me as to its meaning. That is what changed my course from documentary photography to something new...
>
> I worked very systematically: every morning I would take twelve sheets of film and shoot six pictures. I found a very interesting thing: it was an exhausting way of working. I would take those six pictures in perhaps two to three hours. I moved very, very little and sometimes would take all six pictures within the area of a block. And it was fantastic -- when I got through I was worn out. And I did nothing!
>
> Something was going on. The important thing was that although these were pictures of objects, these were pictures with terrific emotional involvement. What evidence did I have of that? I had the evidence of being tired. Of being glad I was through. I have comical evidences of terrific absorption. I smoke all the time, and I remember once a guy tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Hey Bud, you're burning up' -- I was under the cloth with my cigarette. I was unconscious of anything but the picture taking. Those were good conditions that everyone should work under" (Siskind, 1963; rpt. 1980:305).

Artists get lost in their work; they give up control to the process itself, which leads them through to the birth of an artwork. David Lebe, the inventor of "light drawing" (see fig. 20), discusses his loss of self in the process of artistic creation:

> "At times it seems to me that my work follows its own course, and it is all that I can do to keep up with it. Sometimes I think that I am more surprised at the results of my labors than my audience is.
>
> I have never "previsualized' an image that has materialized satisfactorily in the same form. An image forms itself or leaves a trace that I find satisfying only during the actual experience of making it. This perhaps explains why I have chosen to work in a way where I give up control: methods

> such as photograms, light drawings, and pinholes, where the results cannot be accurately predicted and the experience of making the image is extended" (Marincola, 1980:16).

For Lebe "the experience of making the image" comes to the fore, and his pictures serve as records of his participation in the creative moment.

The artist's lifestyle is set apart from others'. Most people seek the security of a steady job, yielding a steady income, which enables them to distinguish themselves through "conspicious consumption" (Veblen, 1899). Artists reject the norm, weathering the uncertainty of an artistic career, which gives no promise of success or comfort. As I was told frequently by art photographers:

> "You don't go into it because you dream about getting famous. It has to be what you believe in -- you need to have to make photographs. If you do it to become famous it's not going to be real."

A photographer characterized an artist's life in this way:

> "The creative act is quite different from most of our other acts; maybe this is why we sometimes talk about the artist as being anti-social or alienated. In so many of our social institutions we want order, responsibility, dependability. To do that demands one kind of organization, and the great thing in the arts is, one, the play of chance, and the breaking away from the routine.
>
> Sometimes the greatest thing happens when you have nothing to do, but when you have a list of things that you do, then you're so busy moving from one thing to the next and doing it properly...When you go to do the dishes you want to get through it one, two, three, without breaking them or wasting any water. Art isn't like that -- that's not the kind of thinking you have in the creative area...
>
> When a creative person finds out -- that's what they are, they can't be anything else -- and you learn to live with it. You find a way. Callahan and Siskind used to say 'you

> can't plan it out,' and I didn't understand, then. Each moment tests you, tests your intentions... When I saw Siskind and Callahan in Chicago they were scraping. Their kids didn't go to private schools. Siskind had no running water in his darkroom. Aaron was driving an old beat up car and they were always working... You learn to live with a lot of intangibles...
>
> You don't get recognized overnight. There're no easy returns. Anytime you're trying to go for any insight or fine quality it's a long, long struggle. It may take you four years to make a book and somebody comes along and reads it in three hours; someone else pages through it in fifteen minutes... If you really want to do something that has some value to it you're going to have to set other things aside. If this is really what you want to do, if you think working in photographs is terrific and there's a communication that when you go out and start handling cups or start looking down the streets and things happen and you get excited by them and you see that excitement developing and going on and on and on and you can be critical and you can doubt and you can be high, all of those things mixed together, then it's a living thing and then you should be damn thankful that you can do it. So it's your secret, so the rest of the world doesn't know it; but I'll tell you if the rest of the world knows it, you won't go on and do it because they're going to bother you so much."

In order to attain the satisfaction and gratification artists derive from their work, they must be willing to sacrifice the comforts due to people who live in an affluent society. (For a few artists who hold academic positions, this may be less necessary. They can depend on their income from teaching, and selling prints augments salaries. Very few photographers can support themselves through print sales alone. For full-time artists who can't teach full-time, the sacrifices required are substantial.)

Camera club photographers invest less thought and emotion in their picture-making. Amateur photographers work at other jobs and do not sacrifice their standard of living to their art. Rather, MCC members get involved in photography to fill their leisure time. Often photography extends the enjoyment of vacation travel or augments bird-watching or naturalist interests. Some MCC photographers simply enjoy owning and manipulating photographic equipment. MCC photographers don't take pictures because they feel driven to do so; they don't need to take pictures -- they enjoy it. Camera club photographers experience none of the struggle, frustration or sense of alienation discussed by artists. If they did they would find another avocation. MCC photographers like to make pictures and to demonstrate the skill they have acquired, and the technical advances they've made by exhibiting photographs in competitions, winning ribbons and sharing their expertise with other club members. Photography is not a lifestyle for MCC photographers. It is a part of their leisure activity, a serious avocation which reflects their affluent lifestyle, rather than structuring it.

8. Art photography is public.

Although art photography is highly individualized and privately motivated it simultaneously occupies a position in the public arena. Art photographs are made to be exhibited in art museums and galleries, to be bought, sold and collected for their monetary, as well as aesthetic value. Maquet writes that in Western societies art objects are identified, in part, by their access to the marketplace:

"Art objects circulate along a special commercial network;

> they are commodities bought and sold on an organized market. In our society a first criterion, crude but fairly accurate, of art, is access to the art market. Objects belonging to that network are art objects" (Maquet, n.d.: 4).

Art photographers' reputations are determined, to some degree, by the prices their pictures fetch on the art market. Photographers whose work has been repeatedly exhibited in prestigious galleries and museums price their pictures higher than their less celebrated colleagues. Only these few photographers can earn a living from their pictures. A photographer I interviewed, now retired from teaching recently sold a large "composite" piece to a museum for somewhere near $15,000 (the photographer did not wish to reveal the exact price).

Art photography has seen a variety of trends appear and vanish since the medium has become collectible and viewed as a good investment. Snapshot styles, serial imagery, photo-montage, multiple exposures, abstract photography, and recently, "studio set-ups" and hand worked photographs have all received attention from gallery directors, critics and collectors. Despite the fact that making a particular style of photograph, at a time when it is in vogue, could increase a photographer's recognition and fortunes, the artists I interviewed all said they never respond to current trends. Following trends denies the importance of the artist's own ideas:

> "It's not a real expression of the person's ideas. It's not art, not growth-producing. Very few people can see something new, innovative and pure. Those who can aren't affected by trends in photography -- the rest reflect trends."

> "I avoid it. I don't pay any attention. Current ideas are

> vital, but I avoid fadism -- that's death. There's no penetration. 'The look' doesn't encourage anything new or innovative. You can tell when someone's done this. Art doesn't lie when you can read it."

Rather than attempt to emulate the current fashion, art photographers steadfastly uphold the integrity of the individual artistic career. Artists assert that in order to persevere, weathering the uncertainty which faces them, artists need to feel confident, to believe in what they are trying to do. Artists who cater to the tastes of others violate all notions of the artist's role and the nature of his work. Even though art operates in the public domain, it remains personal.

Antithetical to the aims of art, artists hesitate to discuss financial matters. They maintain a cloak of secrecy, shrouding their route to success, and deny any ability to advise others pragmatically. "Do good work and it will be seen," say art photographers. Attention to and discussions of "making it" in the art world conflict with artists' views of their pursuit -- making a living from your art is unimportant (and impossible, say some). Artists do it because they feel compelled. Artists build a sense of mystery around their work, as well. When presenting photographs during slide lectures, artists stand mutely by their podiums, often saying only where a picture was taken or giving its title. At a conference held in Phildelphia, attended by many of the art photographers I interviewed, Lee Friedlander silently presented his recent work. Antagonism between panelists and the audience began to develop. Friedlander was asked why he hesitates to answer questions about his pictures; the interrogator called him irresponsible. Coolly, Friedlander replied that he is uninterested in discussions -- he doesn't like talking.

Perhaps artists' unwillingness to share their expertise and their aesthetic theories stems from the competitive nature of the art market: photographers must compete for scarce exhibition space and for critical attention in a medium where practitioners abound. Photographers protect their position in the art world by shielding themselves from inquisitive viewers. Camera club photographers, isolated from the art market and unaffected by contemporary trends, willingly share their expertise with other club members, discussing tehniques they use, their equipment, or anything else in which they excel. Photographers join camera clubs in order to learn from fellow members. Guarding techniques would be viewed as an affront to the group.

Camera club photography is public only insofar as pictures are made to be shown in club competitions and PSA salons. Camera club members make pictures for a small, cohesive, identifiable audience. Pictures rarely travel outside the club, unless photographers present their slide programs to other camera clubs or to local community groups such as occupants of retirement homes, patients at VA hospitals and the like. MCC photographers can anticipate the reactions of club members to their pictures and they know what judges like to see. The paths of camera club and art photographers rarely cross. MCC photographers insulate themselves from contemporary photography and the galleries that show it. They call their own work pure, made to show, not to sell, like other photographers' work. Distinguishing themselves from other photographers MCC members proclaim: "we do photography for the love of it; the others do it for the money."

Art photography represents a distinct arena amid widespread popular activity in the medium. Art photography is related to other art media. Art photographers' concerns are the concerns of visual artists in general. Art photography has a written history, providing a tradition. Against this background, current photographers contribute innovations to the field. The subject of art photography is ideas: art photographs do not deal with their manifest content but with artists' ideas about the capabilities and special attributes of the medium. Art photography is a personal expression of the individual artist, so much so that art photography becomes a "way of life." Despite its personal nature, art photography is public. Art photographs are made to be sold, and hence are subject to the constraints of the art market. These characteristics distinguish art from camera club photography. Framed as self-expression, shrouded by ambiguity, art photography denies the ease of making pictures with cameras. The complexity of art photography's messages, impenetrable without knowledge which resides outside the image (information as to the artist's identity, the particular problems concerning him/her, acquaintance with the photographer's "body of work") inverts other uses of the medium. Most photographs carry messages which are easily interpreted when situated within a specific context, such as the newspaper page or family album. Art photography violates common expectations concerning the accessibility of the medium. Art photography, as a communicational system, has been constructed in contradistinction to all other uses of the medium.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

Photographs are used as mementoes of the past, collected in photo albums documenting family histories. They chronicle our travels, providing evidence of a visit paid, reminding the traveller of "what it was like to be there." Photographs appear in our daily newspapers, as impassive carriers of information. They illustrate textbooks and instructional manuals. Photographs sell consumer goods. They inform, persuade, amaze and arouse viewers. The many varied functions of photography have been obstacles to the acceptance of the medium as a fine art. Perhaps no other art medium has, simultaneously, so many non-artistic uses.

George Eastman's clever promotional slogan "You press the button, we do the rest" attests to the ease of making photographs. The photographic industry has continually attempted to increase its market by introducing innovations which simplify picture-taking and picture-processing. The "Kodak," invented by Eastman, changed notions about the shape of the photographic market. A mass amateur market was built by inventing a system which no longer required the photographer's participation in the print-production process. Thirty-five millimeter cameras and safe photo-flash equipment unencumbered picture-takers; the invention of the flash-bulb (replacing explosive _blitzlichtpulver_, or flash powder) and the reduced bulk of the so-called "miniature" cameras increased photographers' mobility. Together these innovations helped free photographers from the professional studio, increasing amateurs' access to the medium. The 35mm camera has undergone successive "improvements" yielding a camera which requires photographers to do nothing more than select the moment to press the shutter release. Other popular cameras requiring little photographic expertise, like the Kodak "Instamatic" or the Polaroid Land camera, have helped transform public perceptions of the medium. Once the hobby of scientists and inventors, a pursuit requiring labor, skill and perseverance, photography has become everyman's medium.

In order to elevate photography to the status of a fine art, concerned photographers have been compelled to distinguish art photography from all other uses of the medium, both popular and professional. Since art is often conceived of as requiring special skill accompanied by rare talent, the pervasiveness of photography and the belief, conscientiously propagated by the photographic industry, that good photographs can be easily made by anyone who cares to do so, have hindered photography's acceptance as art. The history of fine art photography can be viewed as a chronicle of successive attempts to divorce arists' use of the medium from all others'.

Camera clubs, once the locus of most photographic art activity, have received little attention from art historians. With the increasing popularity of the medium and swelling numbers of camera club members around 1900 (continuing into the 1950s) self-proclaimed "art photographers" broke away from the amateur clubs. The photographic salons sponsored by camera clubs were considered too popularized, the juries too lenient. The purposes of the clubs--to encourage and sustain members' interest in the medium, to share and improve technical expertise, to provide all members with an opportunity to show their pictures, and to promote the medium through increased membership--came to be viewed as inimical to art photography. Camera club photography and art photography have evolved into separate activities. MCC members and art photographers I interviewed repudiate the other groups' pictures, photographic skill, their intelligence and their sincerity.

Camera club photographers, as represented by members of the Miniature Camera Club, produce pictures evincing considerable skill in the medium. Their pictures resemble those seen in nature or travel magazines, on Sierra Club calendars, and at the commercial portrait photographer's studio. Emulating their pictorialist predecessors, camera club photographers seek subjects which are beautiful, inspiring, or at the very least, pleasant to the viewer. Camera club photography is non-provocative, unambiguous and highly conventionalized.

Despite their skillful renditions of some commercially marketed styles of photography, camera club members do not usually sell their work: they remain adamant amateurs who take pictures "for the love of it." MCC photographers assert that they alone are photographic "purists," and their pictures never need enter into nor show the influence of the photographic image-market.

Membership in camera clubs serves multiple purposes. For retirees, involvement in club activities helps to fill in and organize newly acquired leisure-time. Novices join clubs to learn photographic techniques from their fellow members. At MCC, photographers have specialties; club members draw upon the expertise of those who are accomplished in the areas which interest them. (One member is known for his talent as a color printer, another is skilled in taking photographs of insects which he "raises" to photograph.) Club competitions provide a forum for feedback to picture-takers as well as a guaranteed audience. At competitions, pictures which might otherwise have gone unseen are made use of. MCC members can earn respect and admiration through success in competitions and through service to the group. And, photographers join camera clubs so that they can share their enjoyment with others.

Camera club photographs emanate from a stable pictorial code. Photographers are judged on their technical mastery of the medium, their ability to compose pictures according to specific rules and their choice of appropriate subjects. Camera club pictures are marked by their conformity. The work of respected MCC photographers looks alike; their pictures are not primarily intended as individuals' self-expressions like art photographs. However, this conformity carries the message that these photographers share traditional aesthetic values, which offer stability amidst the flux of modern living. Like linguists' notion of "phatic" functions of language, camera club photography serves to promote social cohesion among group members who share its code.

In contradistinction to commonplace notions about the transparency of the medium, art photography is solipsistically personal, often interpretable only with the aid of the artist's statement about the work or some knowledge of the "school" of photography or movement he identifies with. Art photographers say that art deals with the individual's ideas. Ideas may concern a particular message the photographer wants to convey, or frequently (and sometimes simultaneously), ideas reflect his thoughts about the medium itself. Thus photographs may represent the artist's ideas about light, about the boundaries of the frame or about a particular genre, like the landscape or the nude. Often art photography serves therapeutic or educational ends. Artists may attempt to work out psychological problems through photography. Many artists add to their life-experiences, further educating themselves by continual involvement in the medium.

Among art photographers self-reflexiveness is highly valued and good art photographs are called mysterious, ambiguous, surprising. According to artists, photographs which are easily penetrated evince a lack of personal input. Unlike camera club photography, art does not involve conscientious reproduction of an easily identifiable, stable pictorial code. Art photography, is described as a reflection of its makers' intellect and thus cannot be constant. Work which duplicates itself provides evidence of an artist's lack of growth. Artists must be innovative to succeed in photography.

It seems that the meanings of art photographs can only be interpreted by those who have some foreknowledge of the picture-maker, or by viewers who can situate a picture within the context of a current "school." Few people share the symbolic codes of art photography: artists and students dominate the audience. Because of art photography's explicitly personal nature, its codes can only be shared by a select elite. By creating an aesthetic inaccessible to the mass of photographic consumers (and producers), art photography has evolved into a symbol system which requires special training unavailable to casual viewers, as well as an investment of considerable time and energy in order to acquire appreciative competence (Gross, 1973). Transforming photography from a medium accessible to a mass audience into an exclusive symbolic code links it with other fine art media. Painting, sculpture and drawing, media which do not proceed from camera-made images of reality, require representational skills involving sophisticated hand-eye coordination. Public perceptions of the difficulty involved in acquiring these skills discourages popular participation. In order to serve as a marker of elite class status and a high degree of educational attainment, fine art photography, like other fine art media, must maintain its distinctivness from popular codes of symbolic communication.

Although both art and camera club photographers come from middle and upper-middle class families, certain social features of the two groups diverge. MCC members, ranging in age from about 45 to 75, are either well-established in their careers or have retired. Their social class trajectory is stable. Membership in the camera club reproduces established patterns of class values. Artists, however, experience social mobility by means of their special occupational status. Social theorists have argued (see for example, Berger, 1973; Bourdieu, 1980) that art is often used as cultural capital in order to assert or strengthen a claim on elite status. In their study of art audiences, DiMaggio and Useem found a divergence in social class membership between consumers of "high" arts (the audiences for theater, symphony, opera, ballet and art museums) and consumers of popular cultural forms (jazz, folk or rock music and cinema). Art consumers can change their social class allegiance and perhaps elevate their social status by actively assuming the role of audience member for "high" art forms. Hauser (1974; rpt 1982:140) writes that artists themselves have no class "commitment" but rather, they have a class "affinity." As the creators of objects and events valued and consumed by members of the upper classes, artists lay claim to elite status, with or without the level of wealth and educational attainment which generally accompanies upper class membership.

For art photographers, social mobility may be achieved through recognition in the marketplace. Showing photographs at respected galleries and art museums leads to an artist's inclusion in important photography collections. The more artists exhibit their work at the "right" places, the higher the prices their pictures command. Increased availability of prestigious academic positions attends this commercial establishment of credentials. Validation in the art marketplace secures the photographer's identity as a successful artist among members of the art world, and demonstrated competence in manipulating an elite symbolic code may confer special status priveleges upon successful photographers.

The aesthetic codes of camera club and fine art photography reflect the social trajectories of each group. MCC photographs represent a pictorial code which has altered only slightly since the late nineteenth century. (The major change in current camera club photography, a movement towards less of the handicraft involvement shown by earlier amateurs, results in large part from the industry's continual emphasis on the ease of making pictures and the subsequent development of equipment and technologies which require minimal input from the photographer.) The continuity of the code, and the emphasis on aesthetic conformity parallels the group's social stasis. In contrast, art photography is represented by a variety of pictorial codes. Art photography draws upon prior visual styles, but unless innovations are made photographers go unnoticed. Not grounded in a stable value system, art photography is subject to the flux of fashion and the vagaries of the marketplace. Many styles and techniques can be assimilated by the fine art code. The lack of "class commitment" attributed to artists (Hauser, 1974) is paralleled by the multiform aesthetic code of fine art photography.

The relationship between camera club and fine art photography may usefully be compared to that between folk and fine art. Stebbins' (1979) notion, however, that folk artists "know little about professional standards" and have no contact with a "professional-amateur-public" system does not apply in the case of photography. Because skill in the medium can be easily acquired, without requiring instruction from legitimized professionals (such as artists, commercial or news photographers) highly competent photographers can make pictures without direct influence from professionals. Camera club photographers know about professional standards held by art photographers but choose to reject them, substituting their own aesthetic code.

Glassie's (1972) discussion of the pervasive treatment of folk art products as "substandard but charming," clumsy, or crude renditions of legitimized art forms corresponds to writing about camera club photographs, as well as art photographers' views on MCC work. This viewpoint is too simplistic, as Glassie suggests. The theoretical distinctions Glassie makes between folk and elite art relate to the distinctions between camera club and fine art photography found in this research. Glassie defines art as "the artifact produced out of the maker's aesthetic, out of, essentially, his desire to please himself and his audience" (1972:266). He writes further:

> "...the folk object, unlike the popular and elite object, is not part of rapidly changing fashions; the establishment of the folk nature of an idea is the demonstration of its persistence through time..." (1972:258).

Like folk art, camera club photographs are traditional. Camera club photographs echo Glassie's descriptions of folk art:

> "...Western folk art, whether oral or material, is characterized by repetition, by forms that are composed of repeated motifs, by forms that exhibit overall symmetry, by forms that are memorized and repeated. Repetition proves the absence of mistake and the presence of control--control over perception and expression, control over concept, technique and material" (1972:278).

Camera club photography may be considered "folk art," although some qualifications seem necessary. Common conceptions of "folk" are violated by camera club photography. This activity, engaged in by urban, middle-class men and women, is not insulated from popular and fine art uses of the medium. However, as Glassie points out, "today most art is produced within the socioeconomic frame of the West," and commercialized products like African airport sculpture are folk art. Despite prevalent commercial influences, aesthetic products which express established traditions may still be considered folk art. Camera club photography has incorporated into its aesthetic code aspects of commercial photography (drawn primarily from professional portraiture, travel, nature and news photography) and of fine art photography. These elements are extracted and assimilated into the camera club code which draws primarily from the pictorialist tradition in photography.

The club context for this photographic activity provides a stable symbol-sharing community which nurtures and maintains traditional aesthetic values. The club sets explicit standards which creators and appreciators share. The audience for camera club pictures is self-contained. MCC photographers make pictures with other camera club members in mind. By comparison, art photography is loosely organized. Aesthetic standards are variable, and audience members are ill-defined. Art photographers make pictures for themselves perhaps because a characterizable audience is hard to envision.

Clubs devoted to aesthetic activities abound. In Philadelphia, while engaged in some initial fieldwork, I located several art clubs. MCC previously held its meetings at the building owned by The Plastic Club, a women's art club. Housed on the same street was a men's club called the Philadelphia Sketch Club, described by a member as a club for "working artists." I also visited the Da Vinci Art Alliance, a men's and women's club in south Philadelphia. These clubs sponsor exhibitions of members' work in various art media -- painting, sculpture, collage and mixed media, and photography. Within urban settings these and other kinds of clubs may represent a matrix of organized folk art production, sustaining traditional aesthetic values, existing separate from fine art worlds. The role of formally organized clubs in maintaining and transmitting certain aesthetic values should be examined.

Camera club photography is an aesthetic activity lacking institutional legitimization as art. With the elaboration of an institutional support structure for fine art photography, camera club pictures now travel a separate route. Camera club photographs do not hang at art galleries or fine art museums (with the exception of Peterson's unusual show of early camera club pictorialism at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, which included no current camera club work). They are not reviewed by art critics or collected by connoisseurs.

The particular tension existing between camera club and fine art photography may result from the nature of the medium itself. Camera club photography diverges from fine art in terms of its folk characteristics, differing processes of legitimization and distinct aesthetic codes. In other respects, these activities may appear to be very similar: art and camera club photographers use cameras to create objects which they treat as aesthetic. Each can be highly skillful in manipulating the medium. The distinctions between camera club and fine art activities have been constructed, in part, by obstructing accessibility and reserving art photography for a select group. As Warner suggests, the fact that group members share a symbolic code among themselves and "cannot do so with others creates an exclusiveness and inclusiveness that strengthens the solidarity of the group," contributing to the society's heterogeneity (1953:162).

This research has focussed on the distinctions between camera club and fine art photographic activities, elicited through discussions with photographers and observations of organized events. The dynamics of social legitimization which separate these activities have been probed. Further research is required to build upon the foundation begun here. The specific process by which photographers attain art world sanctions need examining. Art photographers are secretive about such issues--they either guard this knowledge or are unable to specify the processes. How to establish a reputation and make a living doing art photography seem to be considered inappropriate topics for discussion. Recruitment and the mechanisms through which photographers emerge as artists remain undefined. In order to situate these activities in social structure, the social positions of participants need to be elucidated. Whether or not the particular kinds of distinctions found here extend to other art media needs examination. Are the kinds of distinctions which have been created between art and camera club photography specific to the medium? Amateur photographers without formal associational ties have not been studied here. Their relationship to art photography, and the shape of this more individualized activity requires investigation.

Sociologists' (e.g. Becker, 1982; DiMaggio and Hirsch, 1976) and philosophers' (e.g. Danto, 1974; Dickie, 1975) recent practice of grouping together many varied forms of symbolic behavior, calling them "art," and making comparisons among "art" forms, blurs distinctions recognized among creators and audiences. The notion that art, in fact, exists at all social class levels (albeit manifested in different forms) may be questionable. The amateur photographers studied here self-consciously avoid calling their photographic activities art. They know that other photographers, whose pictures follow aesthetic codes foreign to camera club members, command attention from the art world while amateurs do not. Camera club photographers view their own activities as aesthetic, but do not call it art. They reserve that label for legitimized photographic products, or for more traditional art works like paintings and sculpture. Whether or not they like "art photography," camera club photographers recognize the importance of institutional legitimization.

Grouping together diverse cultural activities obscures the distinctive nature of the communication behavior which gives rise to art objects. The attempt to assign equal value to them fails to recognize the social reality of their separation. Equating social structurally distinct realms of symbolic behavior reproduces elite values by implying that when reconceptualized as art, other kinds of aesthetic activities deserve our attention.

The implications of this research lead to the conclusion that visual codes should be studied as situated within the context of social use, viewed as part of a larger matrix of communication behavior. Worth's (1981) notion of an "ethnographic semiotic," focussing on how "actual people make meaning of their symbolic universe," takes the social context of visual communication as the appropriate unit of analysis, allowing us to study visual communication as a socially embedded process. This reserch, like the research of other students of culture, proceeds from the assumption that amateurs' aesthetic activities, exemplified by camera club photography, merit the same attention which has been bestowed upon art. The viewpoint expressed here has been that both require attention because they are distinct communication systems, serving different social groups, perpetuating separate cultural values. Only by studying both, as distinct but interrelated systems of symbolic communication, can we begin to shed light on the social processes whereby certain activities receive legitimization as art and the social significance of that legitimization.

ILLUSTRATIONS

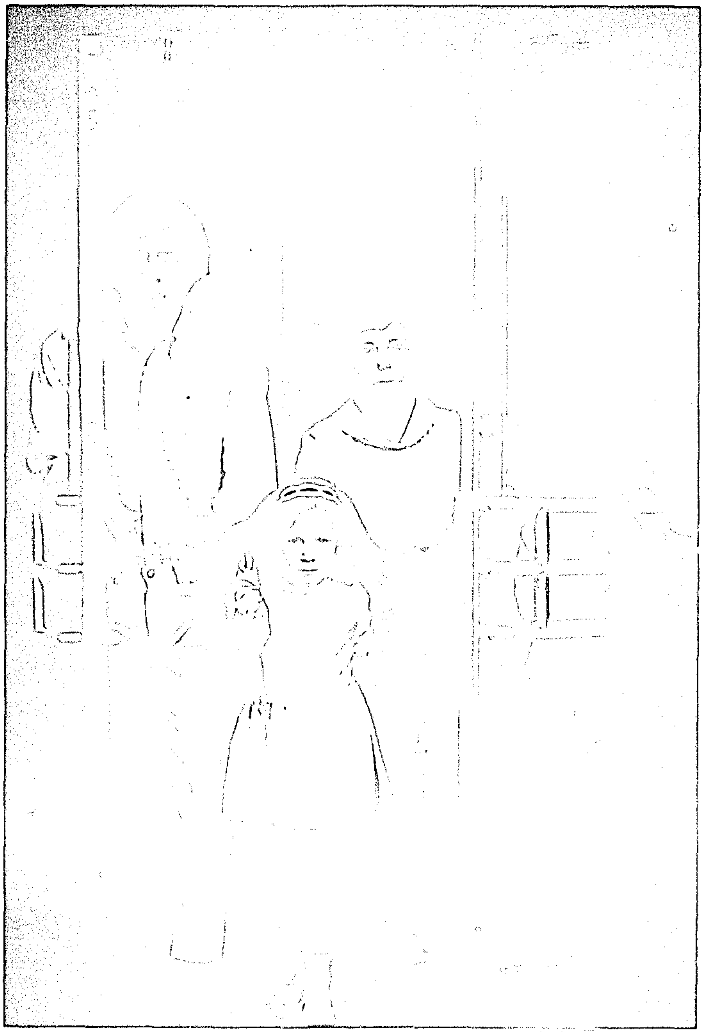


FIGURE 1. This photograph was made by Barbara Crane as a part of a series of shots showing visitors passing through the north doors of the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. The group of photographs is called the "North Portal Series." Many Philadelphia art photographers I interviewed were familiar with Crane's work and recognized this picture as a part of her oeuvre.

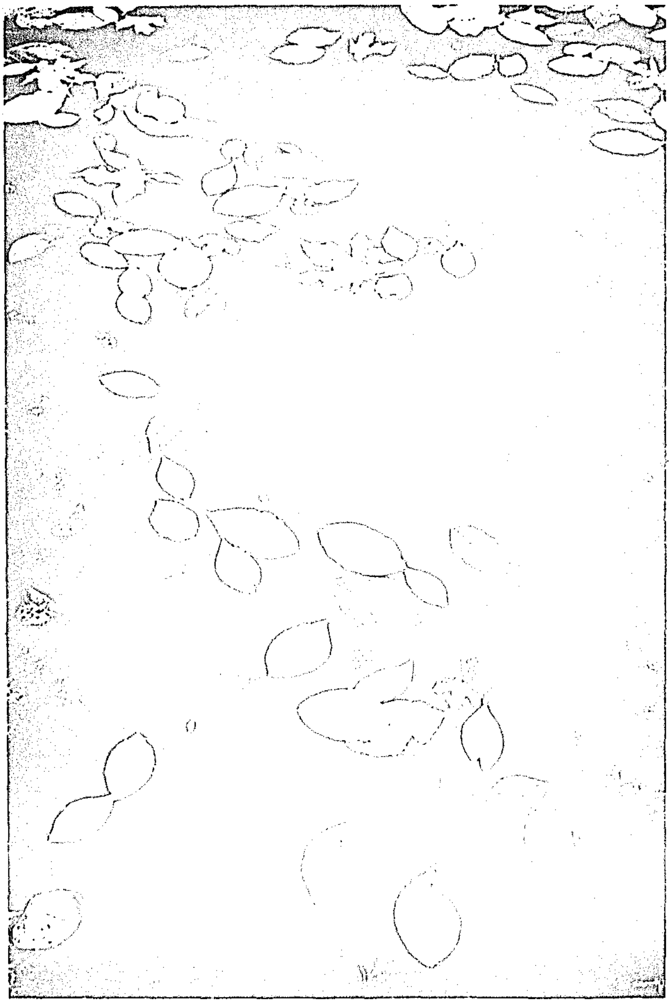


FIGURE 2. Drawn from the 1980 Sierra Club calendar, this photograph exemplifies the "nature" or "pictorial" pictures made by MCC members. However, camera club respondents faulted the picture for lack of a "strong center of interest."

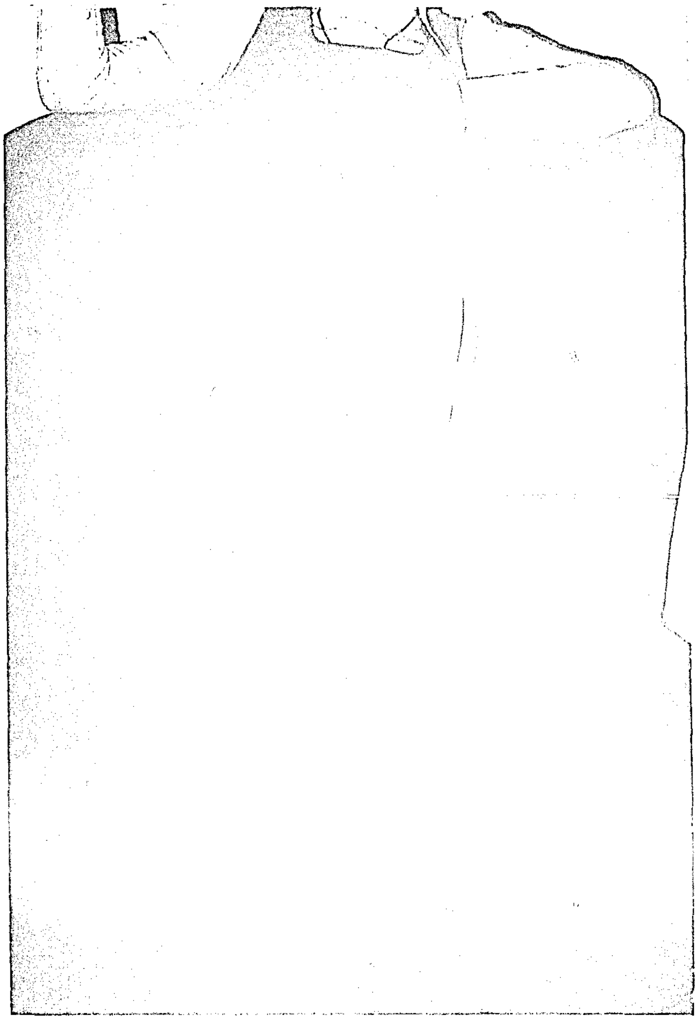


FIGURE 3. Cropping off the sitter's head violates the aesthetic code of camera club photography. I chose this picture as an example of fine art photography, but artists' responses tended to be unfavorable: they called it "trendy" and "commercial." Photograph by Robert Walker.

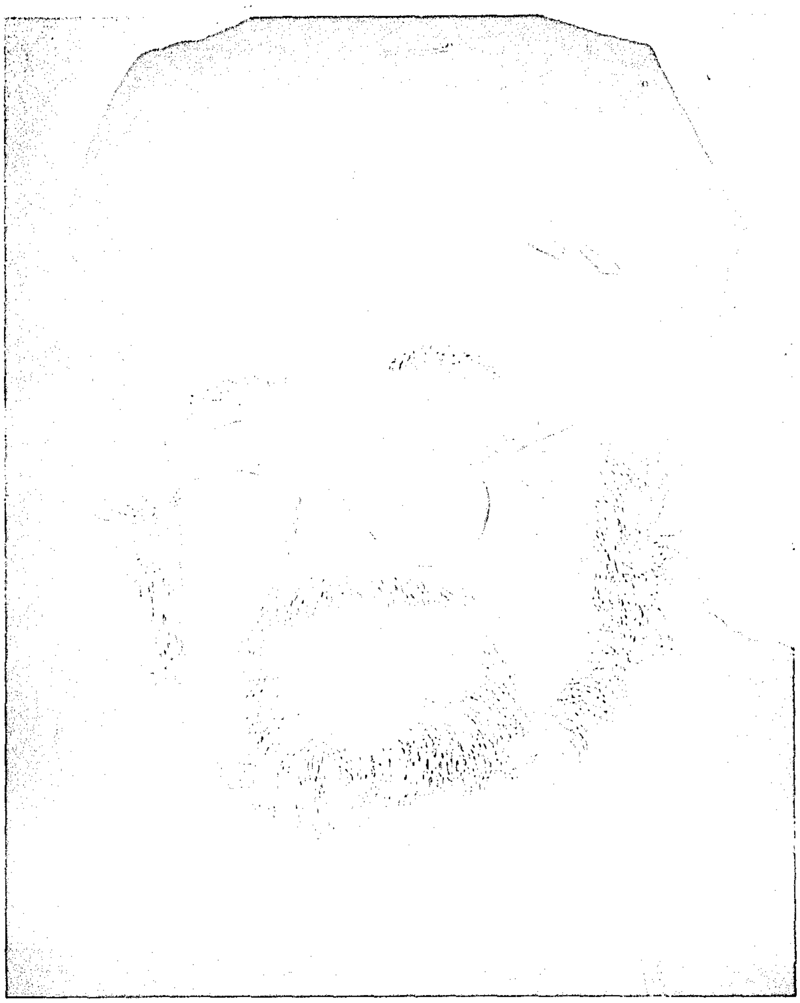


FIGURE 4. Portraits are popular among MCC photographers. Successful portraits like this one resemble those produced by commercial portrait photographers. Art photographers said this portrait doesn't reflect the individual concerns or the uniqueness of the photographer. They called the picture "dull," "cliche," "cute." From the PSA *Journal*.

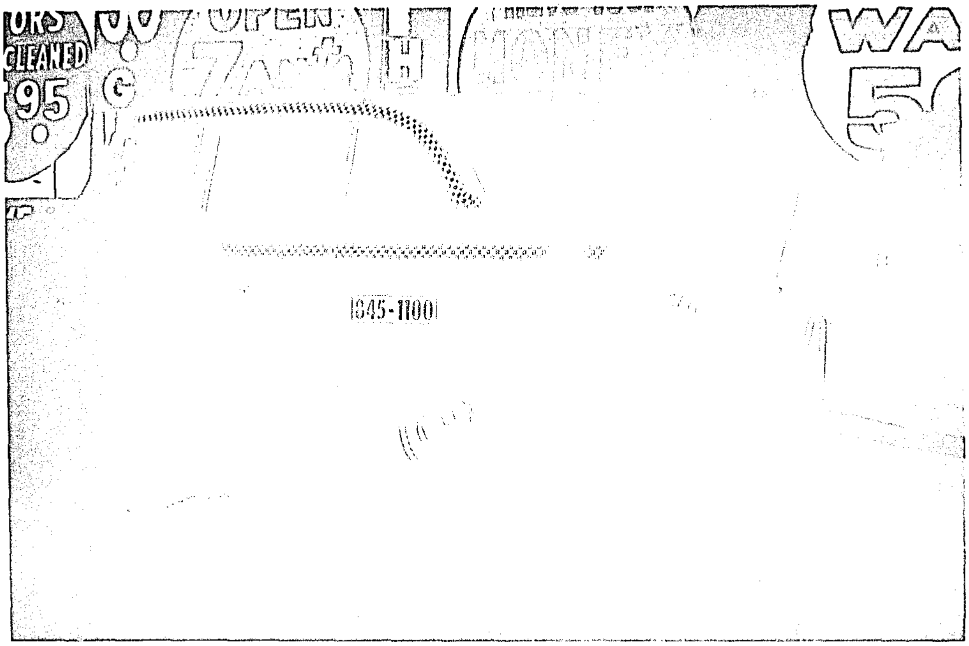


FIGURE 5. Art photographers praise this picture because of its ambiguity or mystery. The viewer must study the picture in order to explicate the activity shown and the photographer's message. Because the picture requires input from the viewer it is "engaging." MCC photographers reject it for the same reasons it receives artists' praise. Photograph by Stephen Shore.

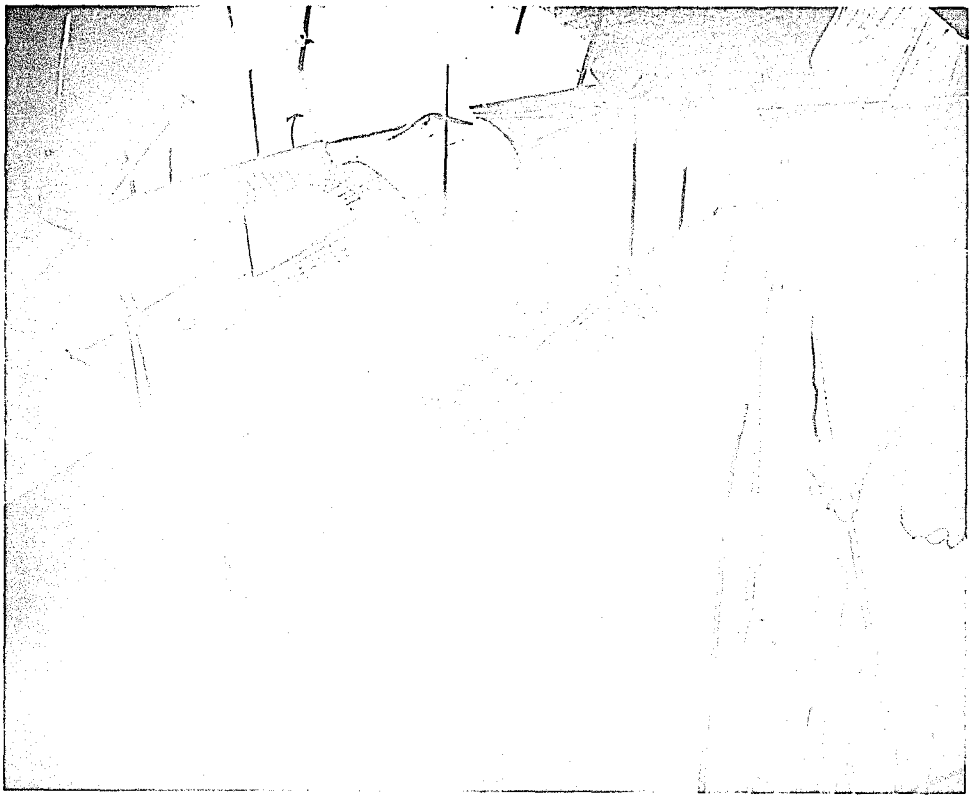


FIGURE 6. Much of camera club picture-taking occurs during vacations. Many MCC photographs how foreign landscapes, unfamiliar life-ways, and non-caucasian peoples. This somewhat abstract composition found favor among both MCC and fine art photographers. From the PSA Journal.

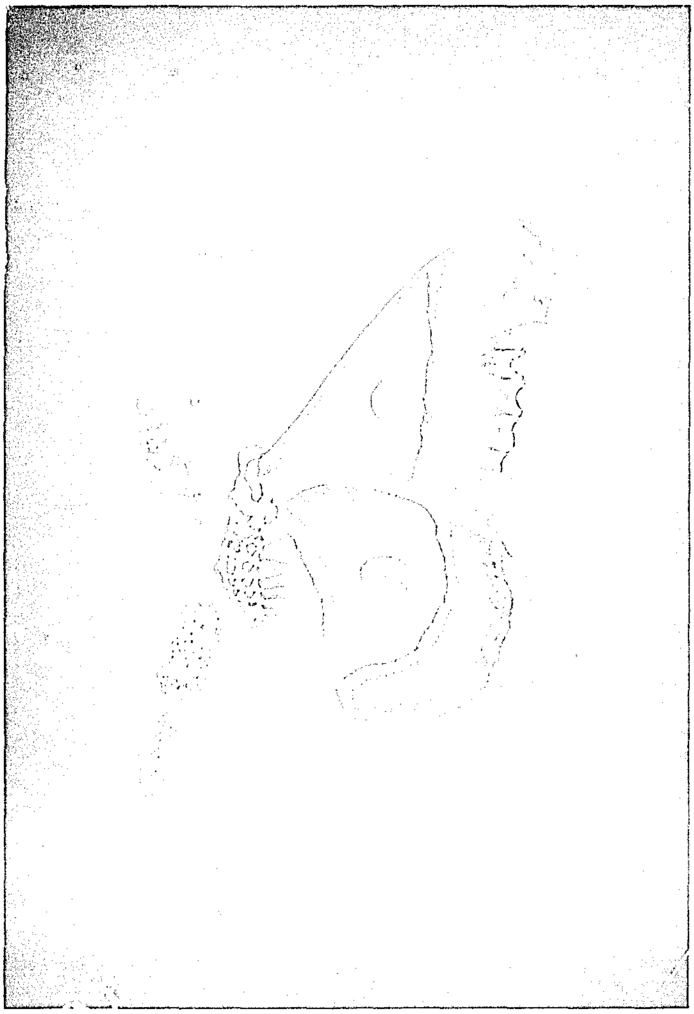


FIGURE 7. This "nature" shot, reproduced from the 1980 Sierra Club calendar, exemplifies the level of skill exhibited by MCC nature photographers. However, the artificiality of a black background displeased MCC respondents. Artists view pictures like this as scientific illustration, skillful but lacking in artistic merit.

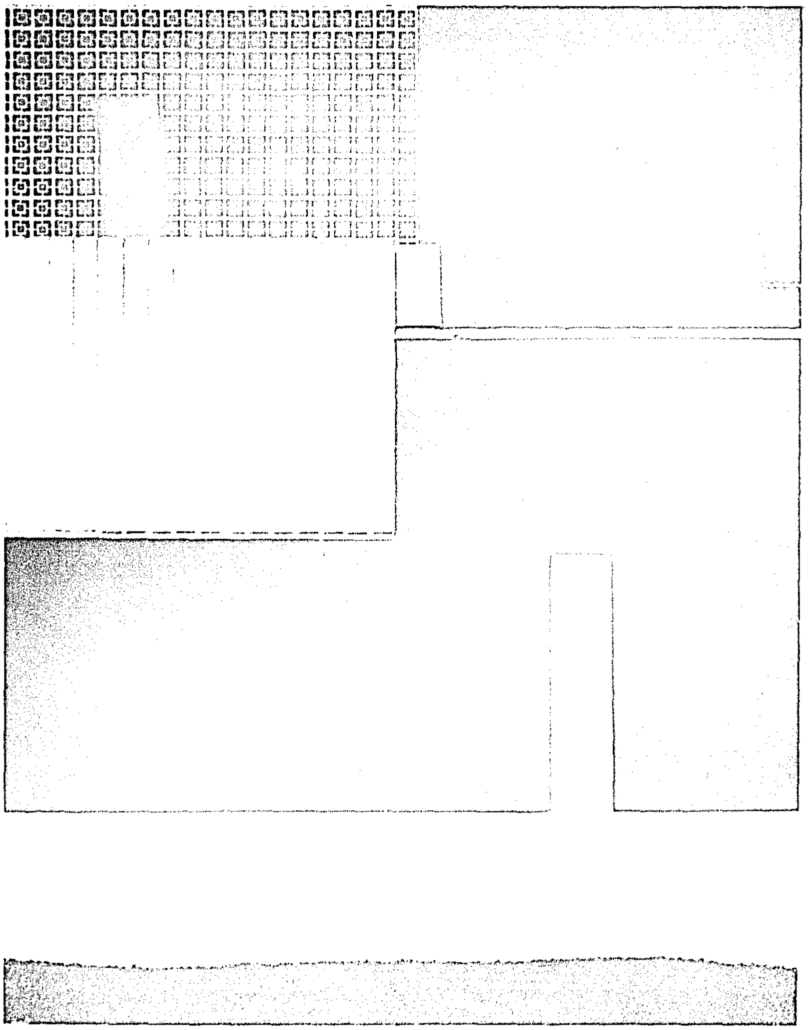


FIGURE 8. This geometric composition displeased almost all photographers asked to view it. Called cold and formalist by art photographers, both groups found this picture to be devoid of meaning. MCC photographers criticized the picture calling it flat, without enough contrast. Photograph by Robert Gurfinkel.

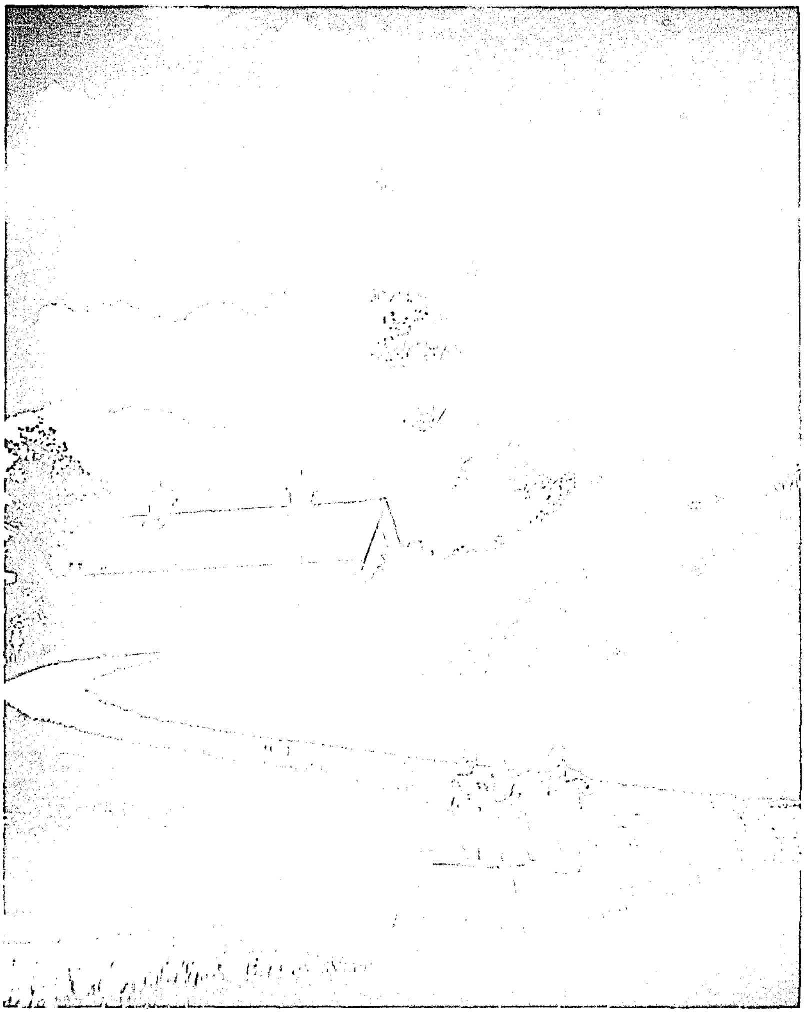


FIGURE 9. All the elements of a successful camera club photograph appear here. The subject matter has warmth and charm. The road forms an "S-curve" which leads the viewers eye through the frame, linking together the lower and upper portions of the frame. The photographer's competence as a printer is demonstrated by the contrast and clarity of the image. From the PSA *Journal*.

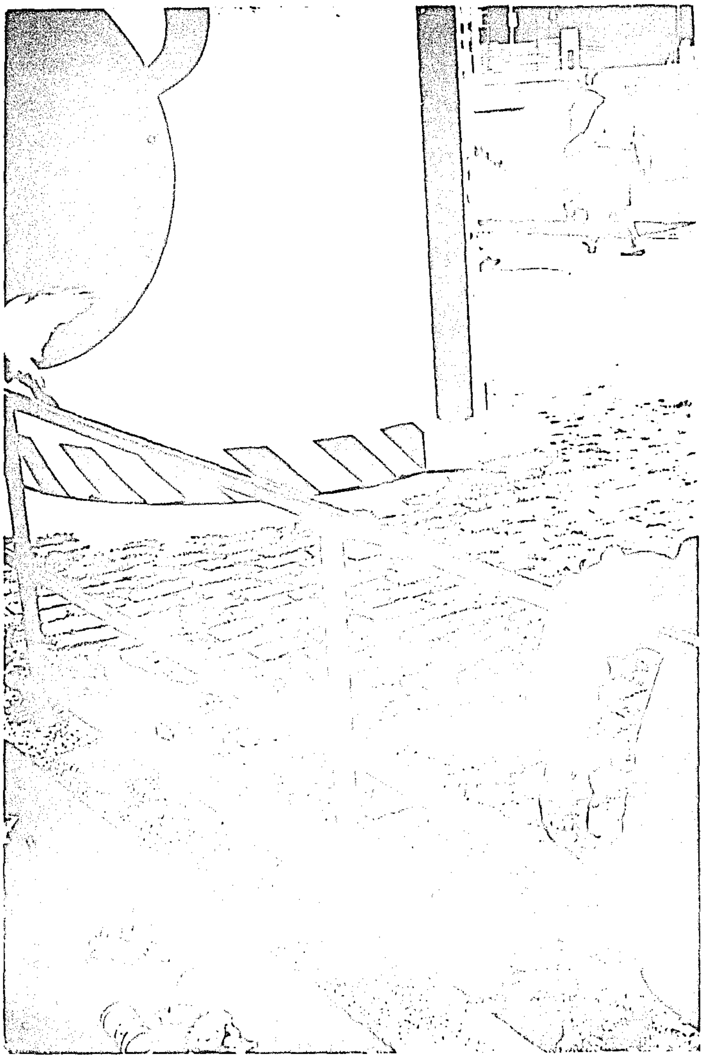


FIGURE 10. Art photographers were relieved to find this one photograph, among those I had chosen, which excited them. Referred to as "well-seen," this picture is "bold" and "provocative," demonstrating the photographer's sophistication and level of experience. The ambiguity of the image invites viewers to invent accompanying scenarios. Photograph by Burke Uzzle.

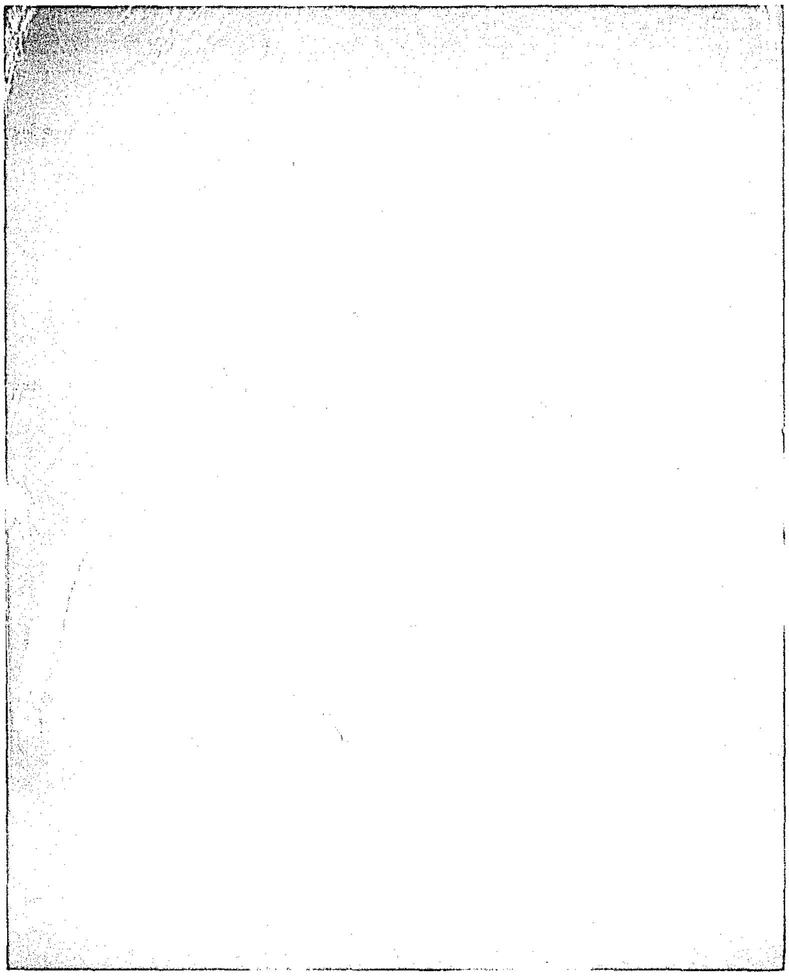


FIGURE 11. Extreme close-up portrait of MCC photographer, David Gurtcheff's son. Camera club portraits resemble studio portraiture, while artists' portraits violate the commercial code through dress (or undress), gesture, orientation of the sitter, and the like.

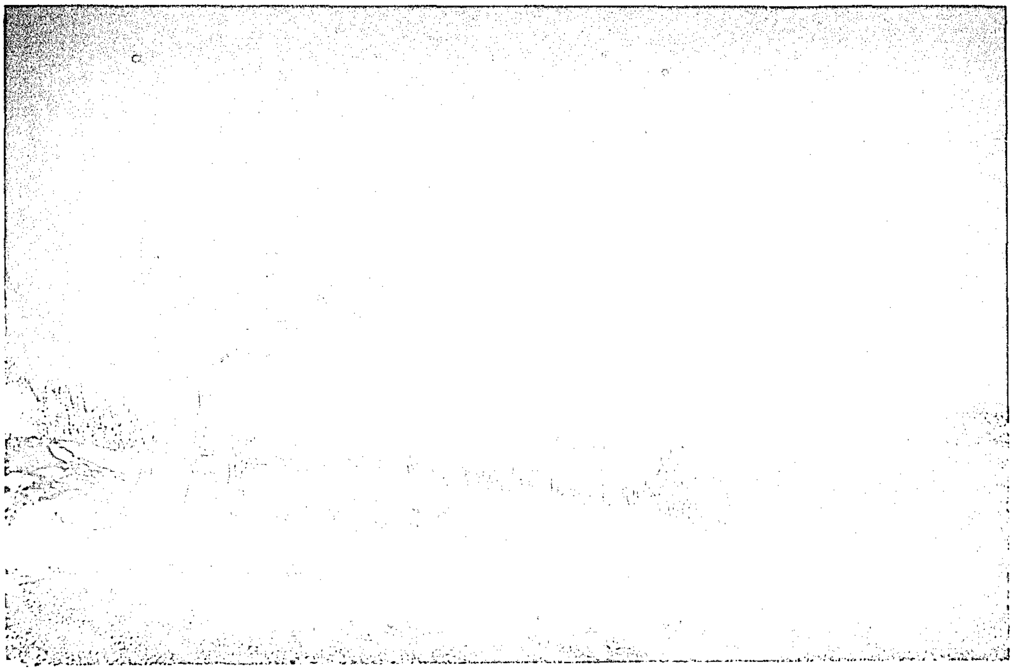


FIGURE 12. Abstract pictures appear infrequently among camera club work. When abstractions are made, they retain some clue as to the subject matter. Two techniques, in particular, are used frequently. Here, a "solarization," in which tonal gradations are translated into solid areas of color. Photograph by Paul T. Luebke.

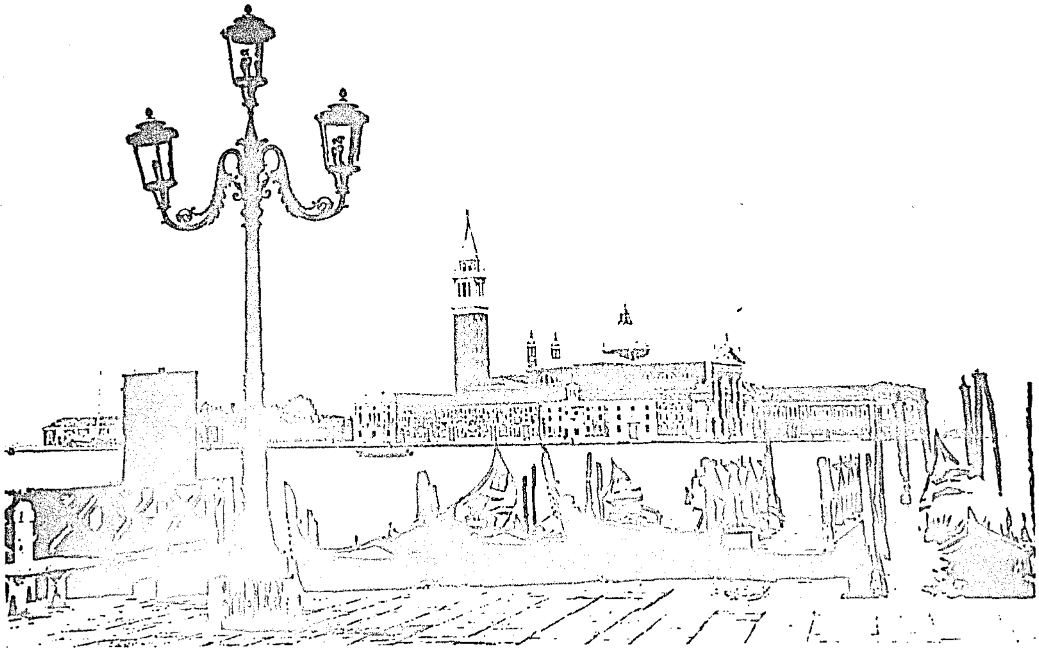


FIGURE 13. Abstract camera club technique called a "half-tone" excludes all intermediate gray tones (save middle gray in this example) leaving a stark black and white image. Photograph by a member of the Photo Section of the Academy of Science and Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, published in the PSA Journal.

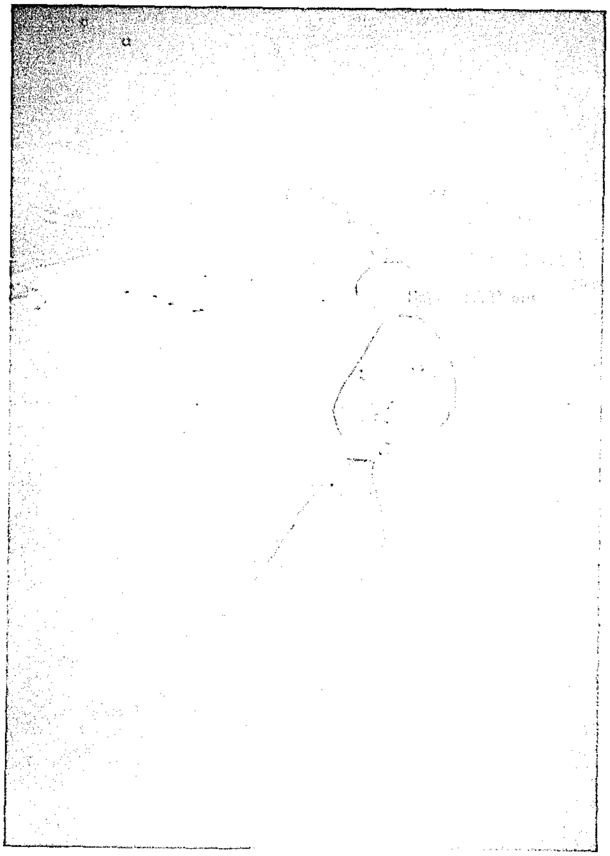


FIGURE 14. Landscape by MCC photographer, Harriet Richards, appearing on the cover of PSA Journal. This composition utilizes a "leading line" (the stream) which draws the viewer's eye into the depicted space.

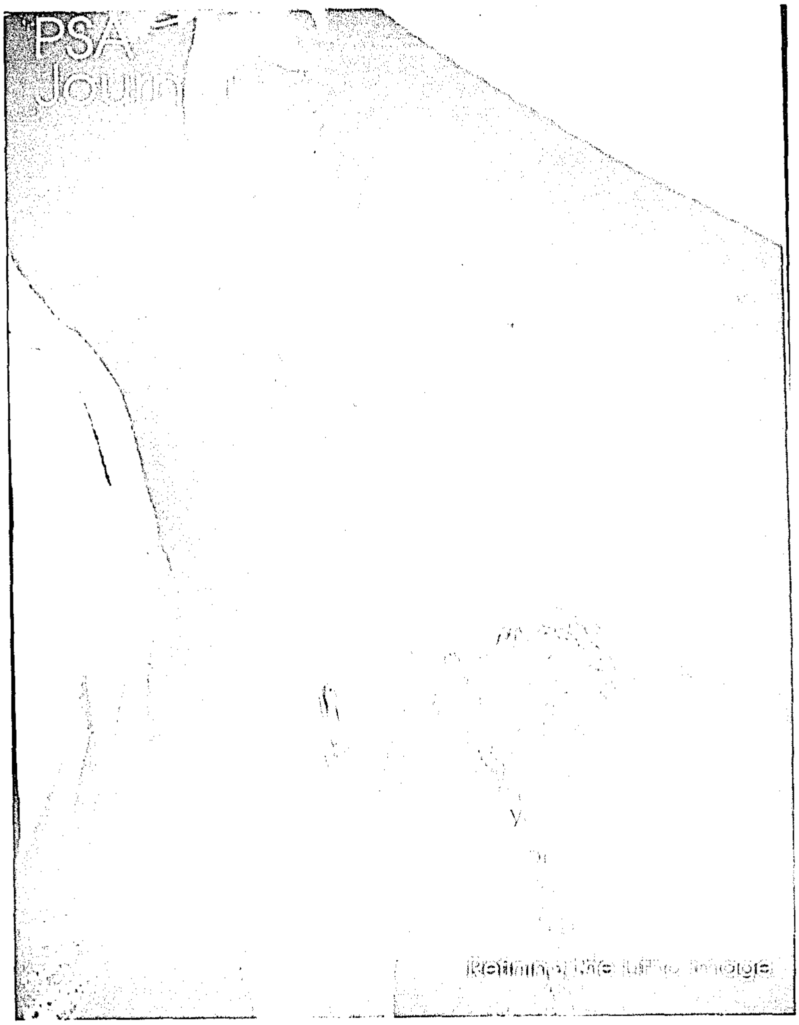


FIGURE 15. MCC photographer Max Perchick made this photograph, "Thirsty," which appears on the cover of the PSA Journal. The stream of water from this drinking fountain acts as a "leading line" focussing attention on the boy's drinking mouth. The photographer composed the picture so that the mouth would appear just off center (utilizing the "rule of thirds"), activating the picture.

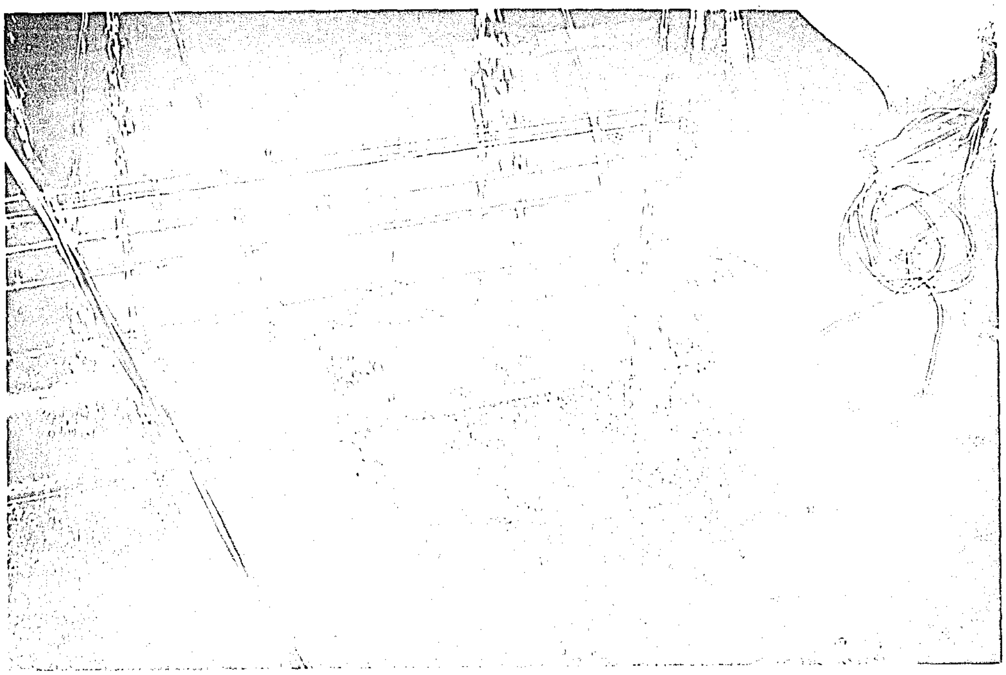


FIGURE 16. Abstract photograph made by Robert Asman. Unlike abstracts made by camera club photographers, this picture is difficult to re-contextualize. The location chosen, the origins of the showering water, and the purpose of the cable at the left and the string at frame-right resist explanation. The picture might be called "mysterious" by artists.

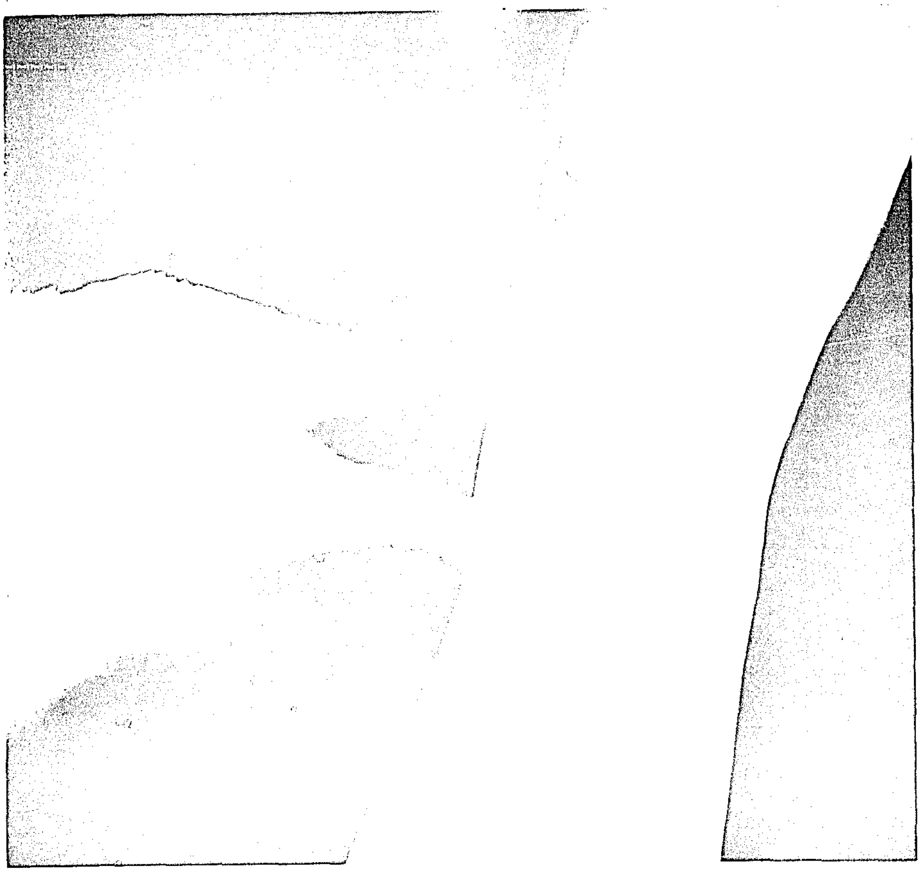


FIGURE 17. An alternative to traditional treatments of the nude, Peter Sasgen renders the human form abstractly. The only identifiable body part, the hand, fails to lead the viewer to other recognizable forms. Sasgen writes that his nudes "draw attention to their own mysteries."

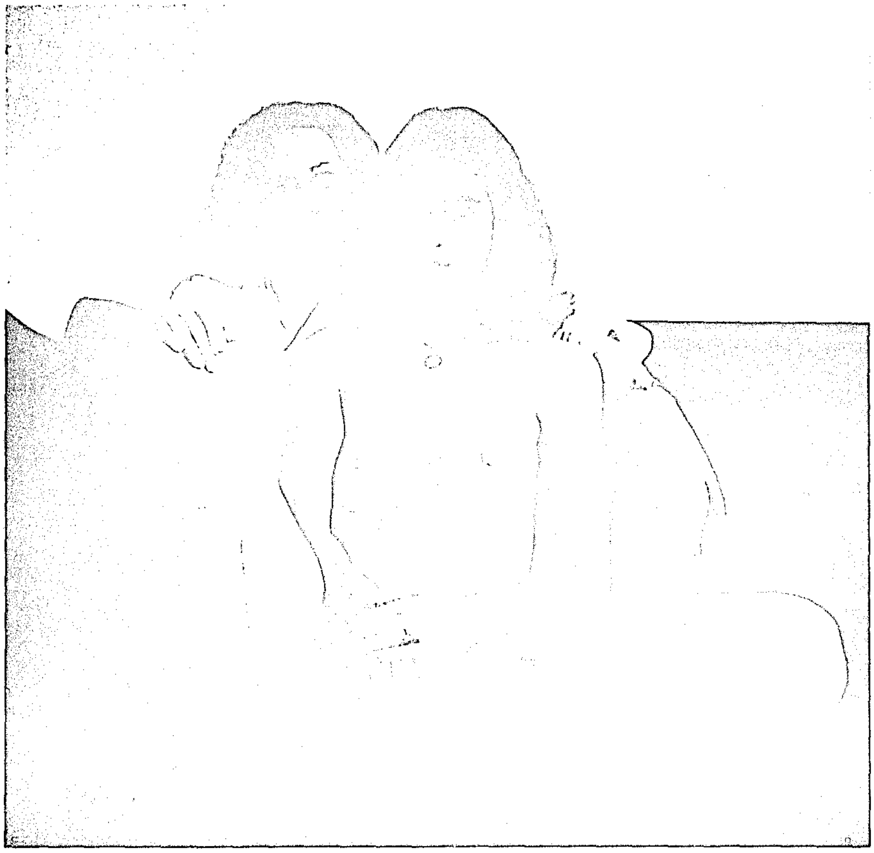


FIGURE 18. Becky Young offers an alternative to formal nudes, allowing her models to "express themselves" by participating in the selection of locations, poses and degree of undress. Her subjects, alone or with significant others, confront the viewer/photographer, resisting formal interpretations.

FIGURE 19. The original photograph reproduced here is a hand-painted black and white print. Many artists show an interest in early photographic process, reviving old techniques and transforming them into innovations by placing them in a modern, technologically advanced context. The use of hand-painting links photography to other manual art media. Photograph by Judith Steinhauser.

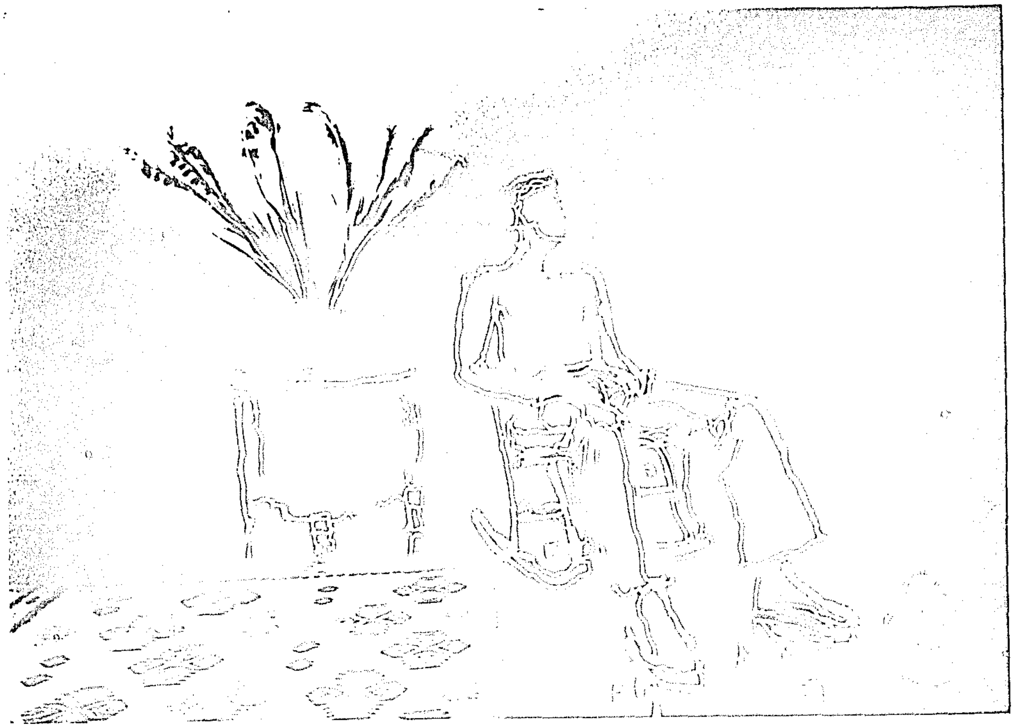


FIGURE 20. David Lebe's "light drawings" introduce a new element into art photography: line drawings within the photographic frame, made by tracing around figures and objects with a flashlight.

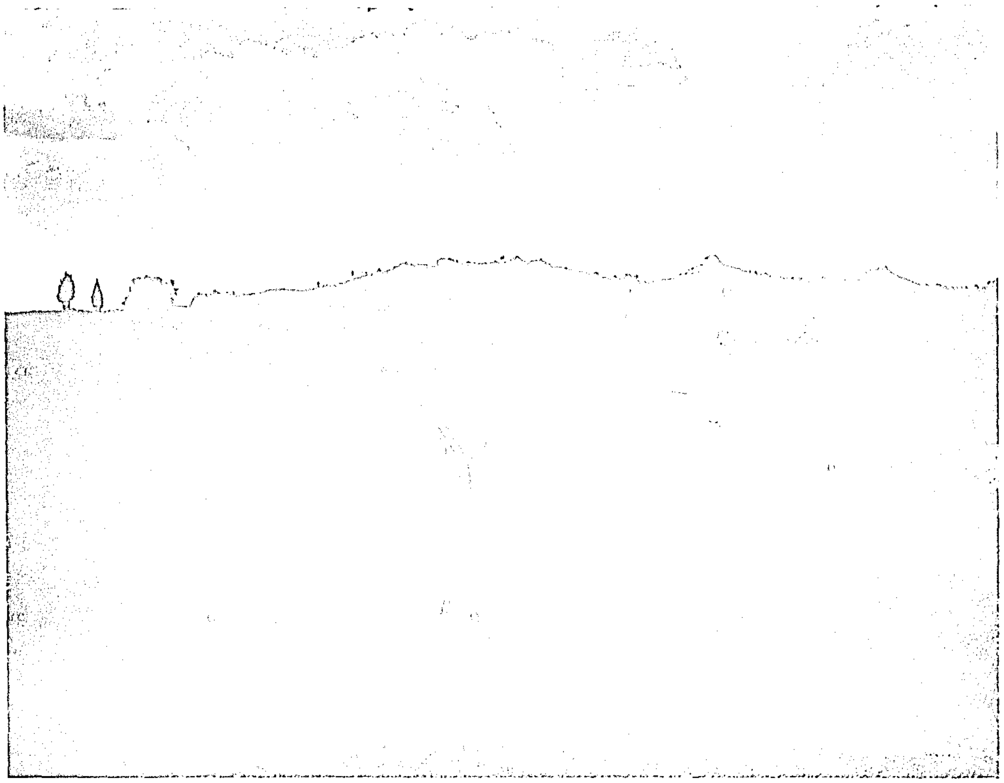


FIGURE 21. This Italian landscape by Tom Carabasi evinces the photographer's concern with the medium's ability to render detail with great clarity, in the hands of a fine printer. The extreme depth of field flattens the portrayed space, transforming this landscape into a patterned, geometrical composition.

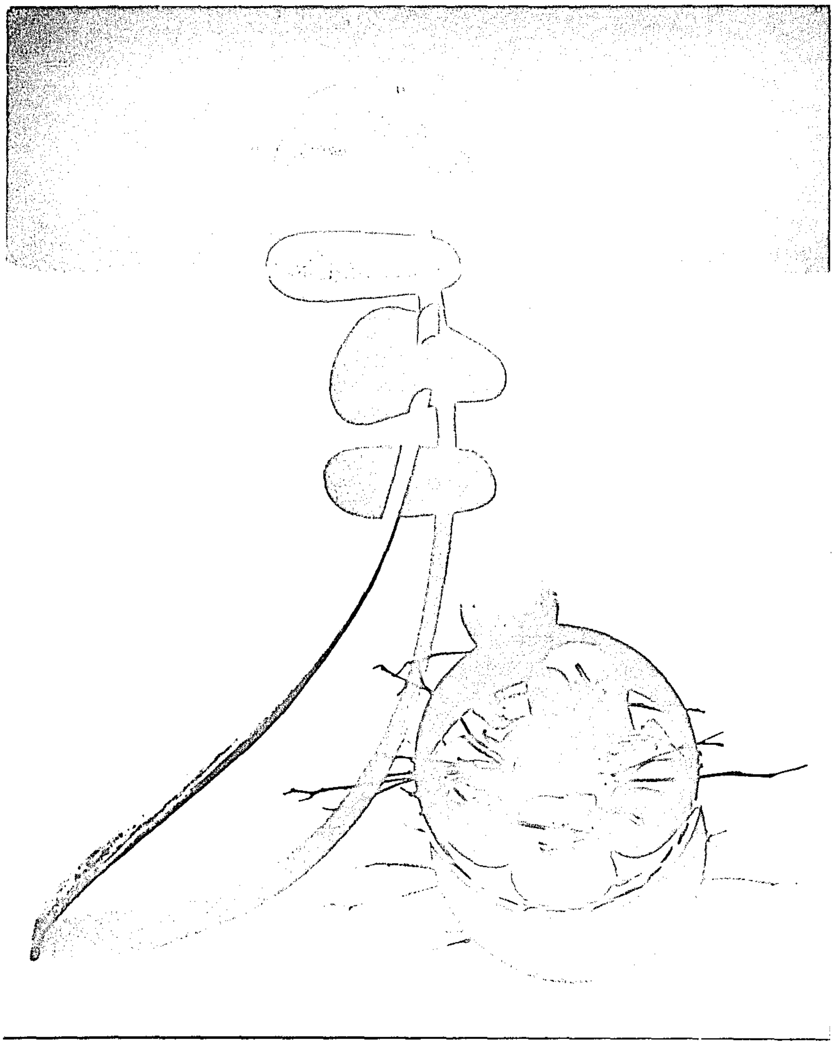


FIGURE 22. Laurence Bach transforms the traditional studio still-life into an image of inexplicable objects which defy the laws of gravity. Here, the documentary reality of photography is challenged by Bach's set-up.

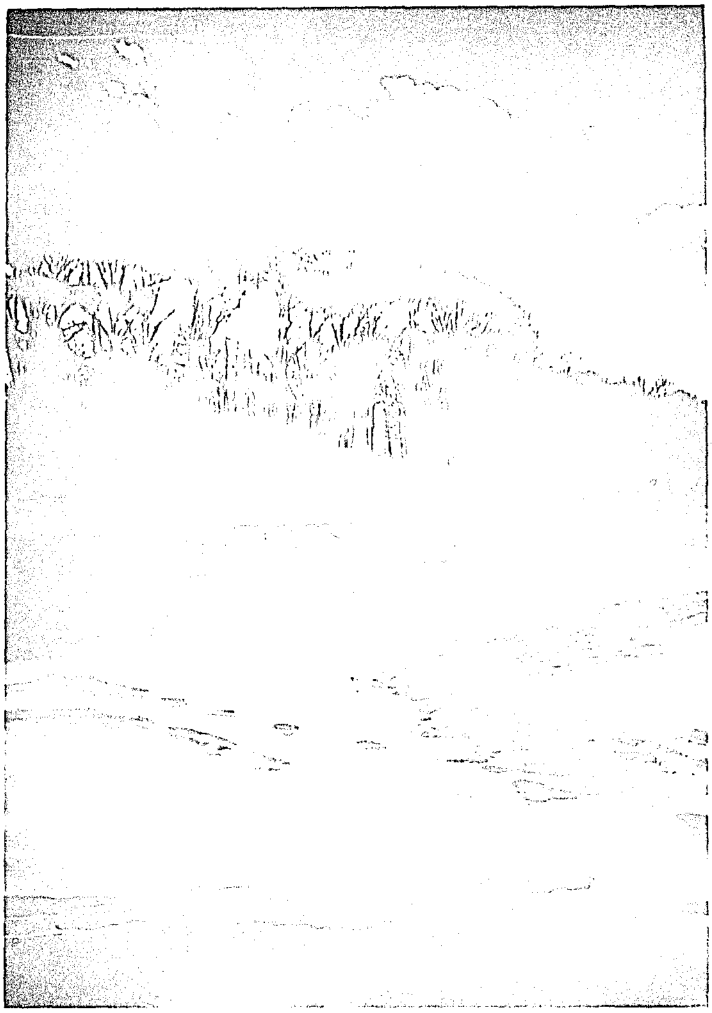


FIGURE 23. Originally a color print, this black and white reproduction of MCC photographer David Gurtcheff's snowscape shows a concern with patterns created by sunlight and shadow in nature. Shadows from leafless trees radiate from a point at the upper left of the frame (rule of thirds) occupied by the setting sun and echoed below in the glistening-wet snow.

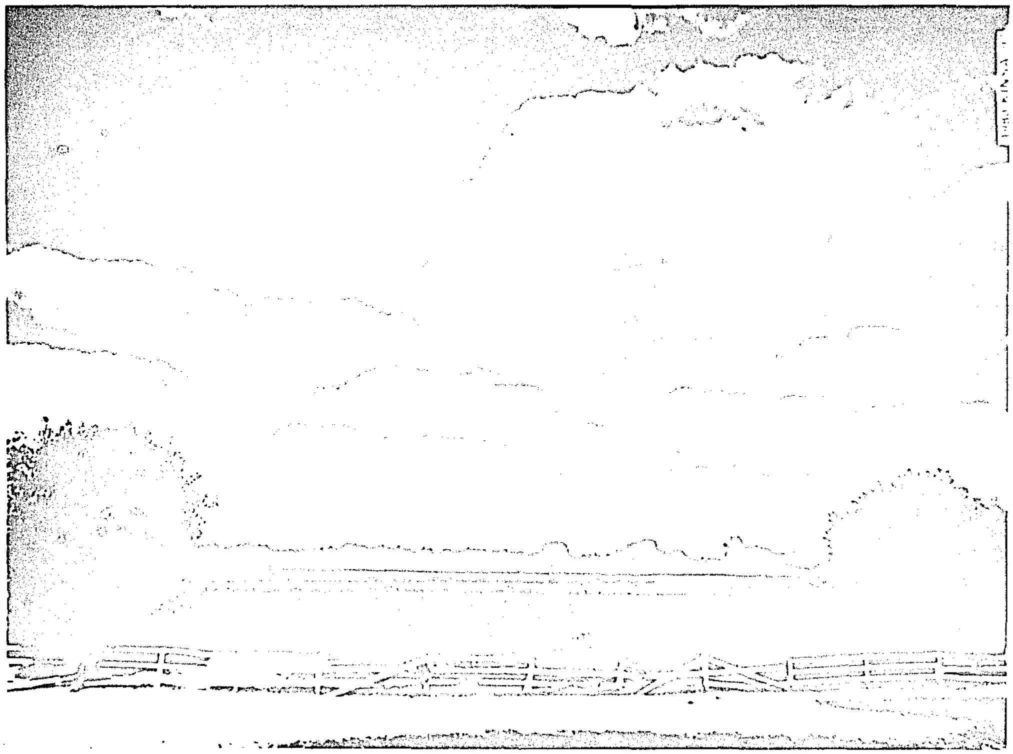


FIGURE 24. Landscape (or perhaps sky-scape) made by David Gurtcheff. Placement of horizon follows rule of thirds; if the horizon split the frame, camera club judges would reject the picture as too balanced.

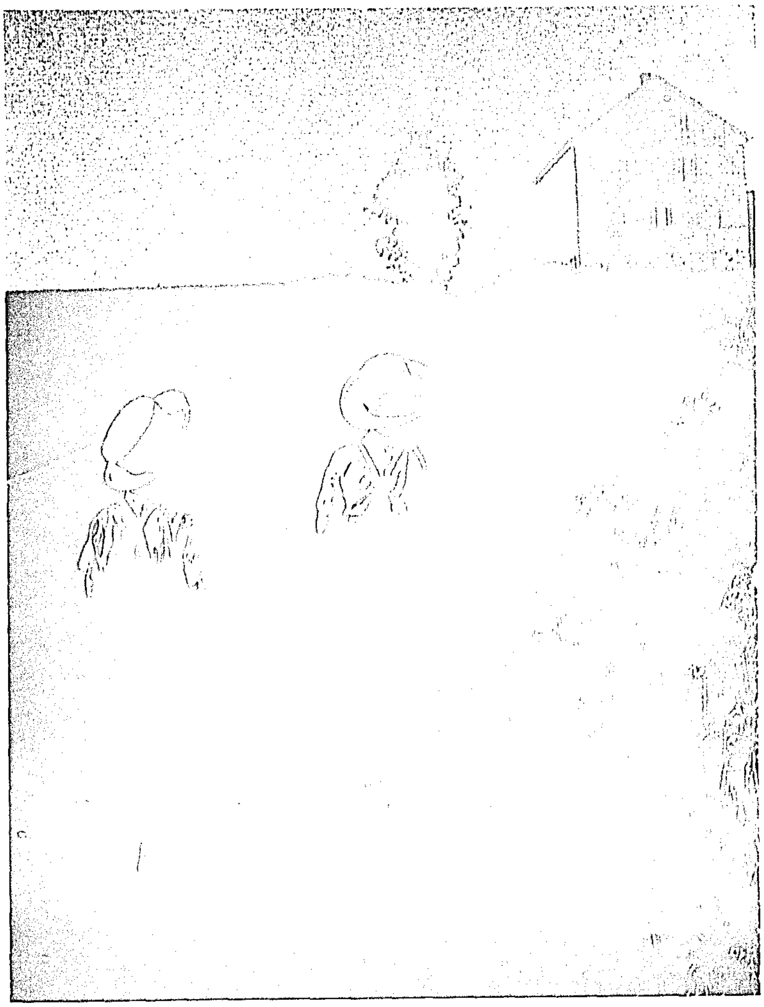


FIGURE 25. Photograph by artist George Tice resembles the camera club picture shown in figure 9: children walk along a road which acts as a "leading line" drawing together the barn and tree at the upper right and the boys in the lower center-left.

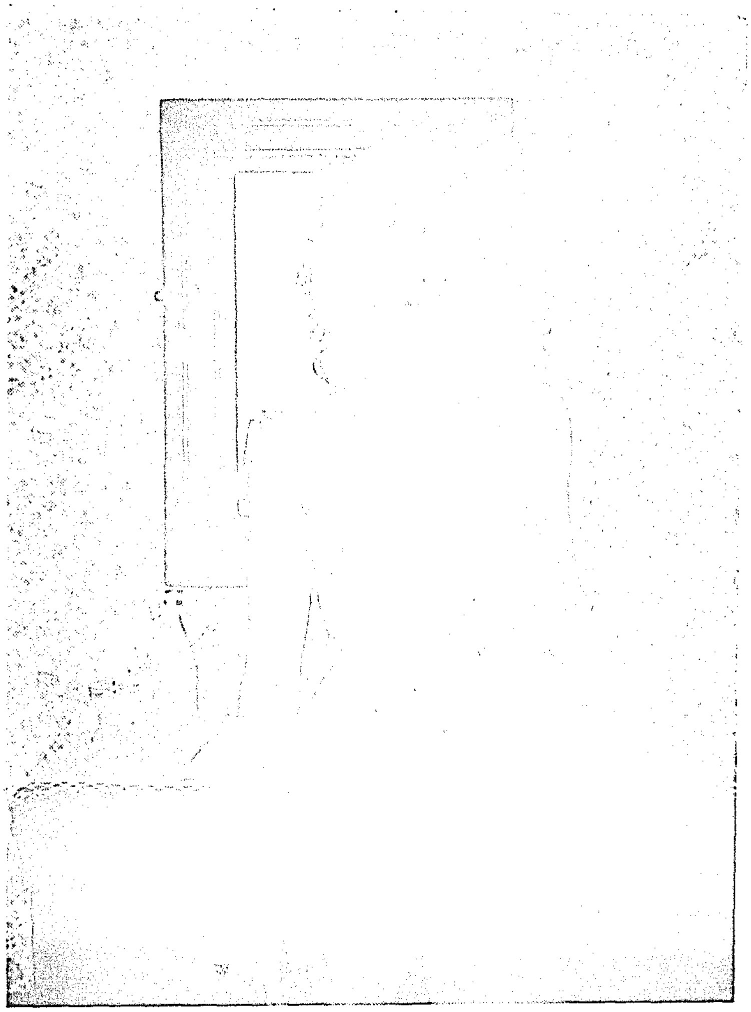


FIGURE 26. Informal depiction of the nude by Peter Sasgen. The model confronts the viewer from what one assumes in her own milieu, much like Becky Young's nudes (figure 18). A non-formalist rendition of a traditionally formal genre.

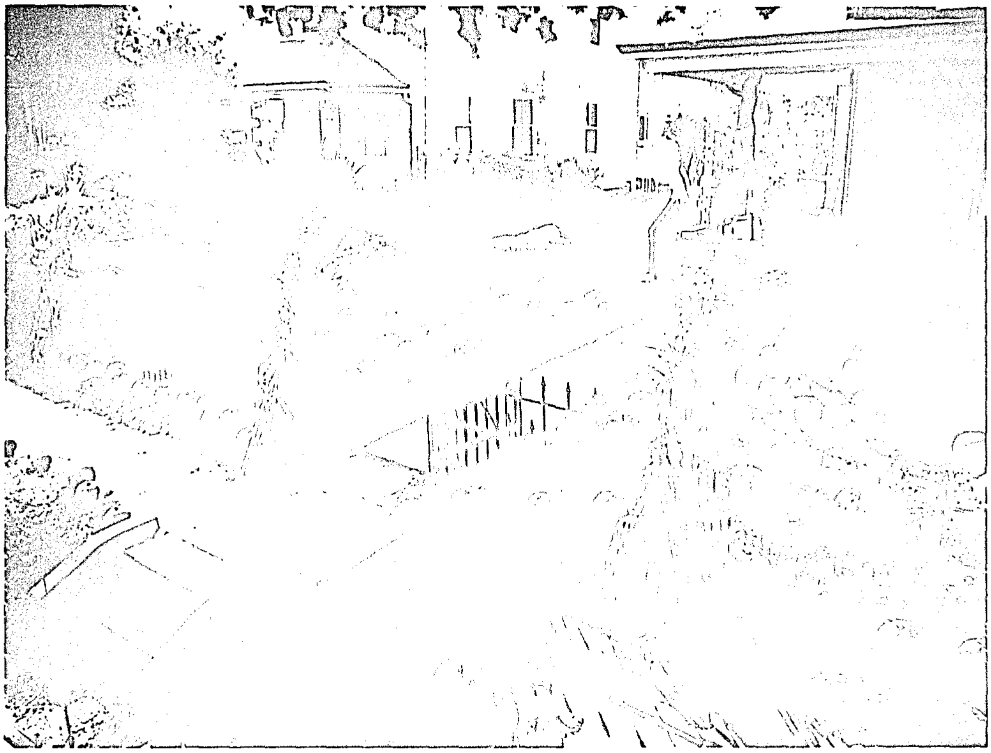


FIGURE 27. John Carnell's photograph (original in color) of pumpkins decorating a suburban front-yard gives us a snapshot view abstracted from the home-mode context. Making the commonplace into the stuff of art creates images which seem ambiguous and ill-at-ease in their role as art objects.

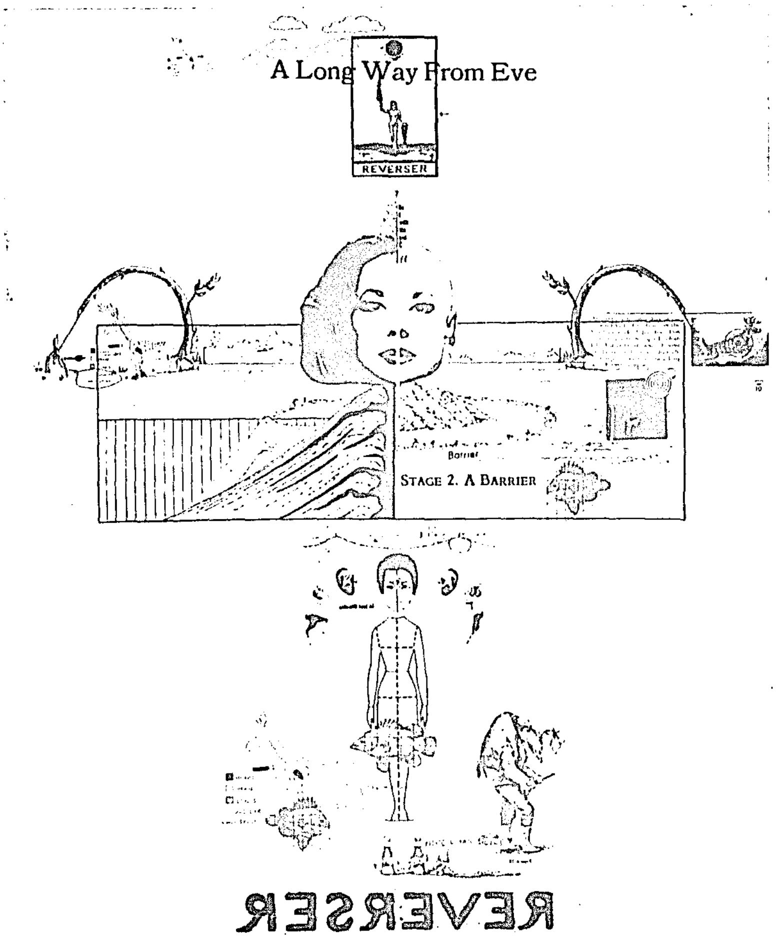

A Long Way From Eve
REVERSER
Barrier
STAGE 2. A BARRIER
REVERSER

FIGURE 28. Many artists use photography combined with other media to create art works. This "photo-montage" by Eileen Berger mixes photographs with mass-media products and artist's drawing.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RONN GLADIS

And how have I been? Well, do you know what I did the other day? I ran through a cornfield, and it reminded me of a dream I had as a child. It's strange how some memories never leave. But lately I've been asking myself, since dreams fulfill dreams, why didn't I dream more?

FIGURE 29. Part of his series "A Letter to My Mother," Ronn Gladis combines words with pictures. Usually captions produce more time/place specific meanings; here they combine to create personal meanings, specific to the creator.

APPENDIX

Questions for Art Photographers

how/when did you get started in photography?
training/schooling?
was anyone particularly influential in your development?
what kinds of equipment do you use? why? what is the importance of equipment?
where do you purchase eqiupment?
do you do your own darkroom work? assistants? use a lab?
any preference for film stocks? papers? chemicals?
how often do you shoot? alone or with others?
subscriptions to periodicals?
attendance at other art events, other arts involvement? (concerts, plays, dance, poetry, opera, film)

Where are your photos exhibited?
  local galleries
  NYC
  elsewhere
  museums
print media? magazines? books?
do you belong to any professional associations?

would you call photography your occupation?
what means of making a living are open to photographers?
how can an aspiring photographer build/establish a reputation?
how important are current trends in collecting to what you do?

do you come into contact with, socialize with other photographers?
  in Phila.?
  elsewhere?
how important are these associations? are you ever influenced by your colleagues?
audience for photographs?
criteria for evaluating photographs? what makes a photograph successful?
    subject matter
    formal elements
    skill
    difficulty
who are your favorite photographers or artists?

thoughts about widespread popularity of photography? amateur photography? camera clubs?

Questions for Art Photographers

education?
parents' education?
approximate income?
siblings' educations and occupations?
resumes?
recommendation of other interviewees?

Questions for MCC Photographers

how did you get started in photography? when?
how did you learn to make photographs? self-taught? formal instruction?

what kind of equipment do you own? why chosen?
where is equipment purchased?
do own processing?
if not, how did you choose a lab?
preferences of film stocks? papers? chemicals?
how often do you shoot? when was the last time?
shoot alone or with others?
when travelling?

what are your criteria for evaluating photographs? what makes a photograph successful? (subjects, formal elements, skill, difficulty, etc.?)
favorite photographers? (artists?)

PSA member?
exhibit in salons? what divisions?
other PSA activities?
what is done with finished slides/prints?
if hung, where?
if stored, how?
who are photos shown to? under what circumstances?

periodical subscriptions?
purchase of photobooks?
attendance at photo exhibits? where? how often?
attendance at other art events?
contact with other photographers? club members? others?

other hobbies?
thoughts about fine art photography?

recommendations of other interviewees?

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