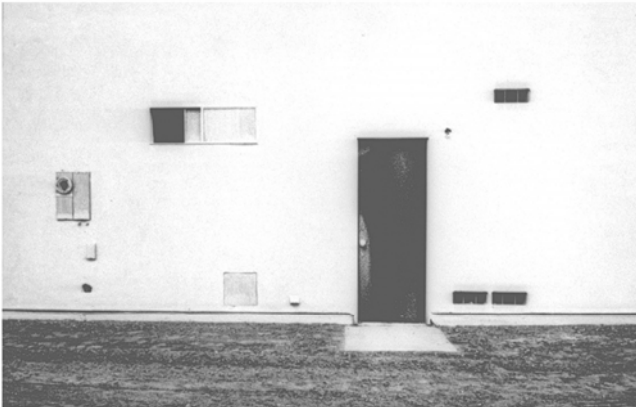Lewis Baltz, n°40 G, 18.8x22.8 cm, tiré de *San Quentin Point*, 1982-83, publié en 1985

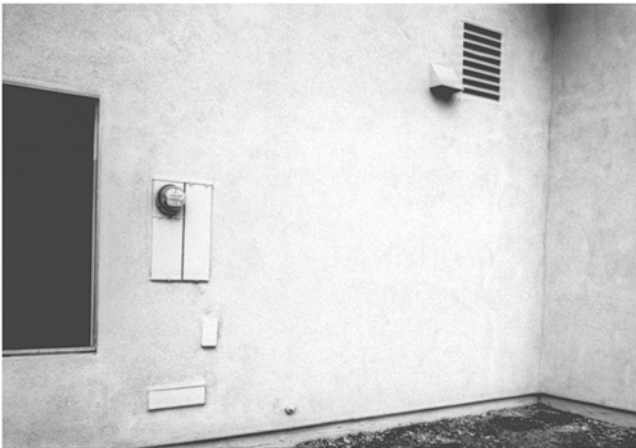# LEWIS BALTZ

LES NON-LIEUX DU PAYSAGE

Nassim Daghighian
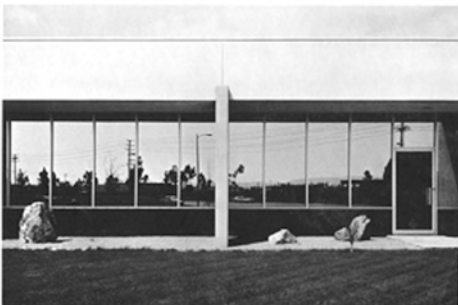
008 Baltz Lewis_Tract House_17_1971.jpg

009 Baltz Lewis_Tract House_19_1971.jpg

010 Baltz Lewis_Tract House_20_1971.jpg

020 Baltz Lewis_South Laguna_serie Prototype_1972_15x23 cm.jpg

The new Industrial Parks
near Irvine, California

Das neue Industriegelände
in der Nähe von Irvine, Kalifornien

030 Baltz Lewis_00_The New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California_1974_NY, Leo Castelli Graphics_cover.jpg

031 Baltz Lewis_12_NIP_South Corner_Riccar America Co_3184Pullman_CostaMesa.jpg

032 Baltz Lewis_14_NIP_Foundation Construction_Many Warehouses_2891 Kelvin_Irvine.jpg

033 Baltz Lewis_16_NIP_Automated Marine International_1641 McGaw_Irvine.jpg

034 Baltz Lewis_27_NIP_Construction detail_East Wall_Xerox_1821 Dryer Road_Santa Ana.jpg

035 Baltz Lewis_36_NIP_Semicoa_333 McCormick_Costa Mesa_1975.jpg

036 Baltz Lewis_40_NIP_ Mazda Motors_2121EastMainStreet_Irvine_1974.jpg

037 Baltz Lewis_43_NIP_Ware Malcolm and Gardner_16722 Hale_Irvine.jpg

038 Baltz Lewis_45_NIP_Unoccupied Industrial Structure_20AirwayDrive_Costa Mesa_1974.jpg
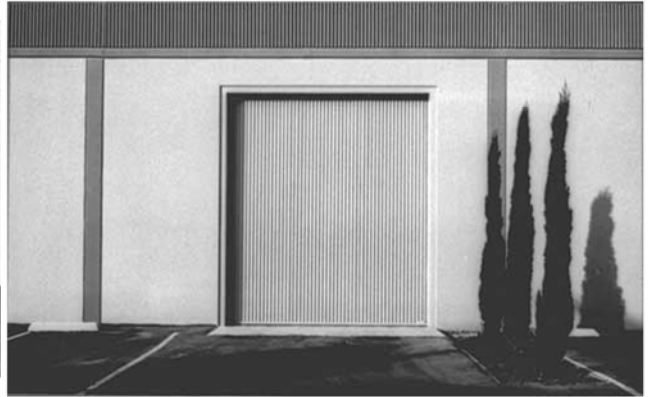
039 Baltz Lewis_51_NIP_Ressources Recovery Systems_1882 McGaw_Irvine.jpg

100 Baltz Lewis_Prospect_village_1978_9.jpg

130 Baltz Lewis_Park City Interior_1978-9.jpg

131 Baltz Lewis_Park City Interior_14_1979.jpg

132 Baltz Lewis_Park City Interior_70_1980.jpg

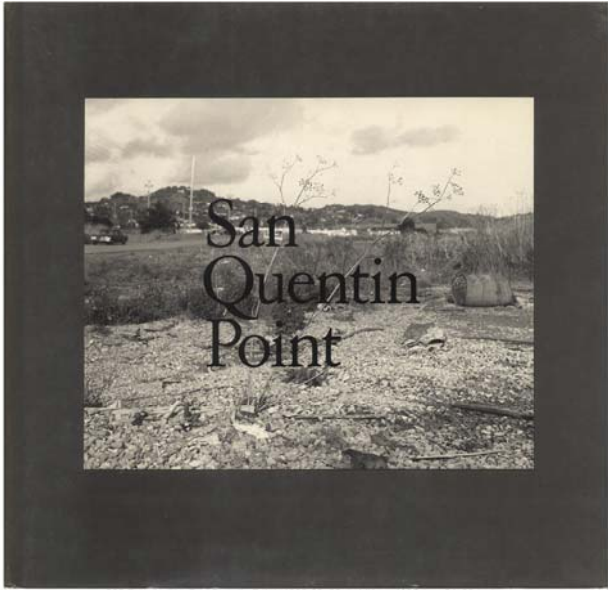Lewis Baltz, Candlestick point, 1984-1988,
portfolio de 84 photographies, 16.8x22.9cm

Lewis Baltz, *Fos (Bouches-du-Rhône)*, 1986, 26.3x41cm, image réalisée dans le cadre de
mission photographique de la DATAR, 1983-1989

200 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_00_publié en 1985_env.24x29cm.jpg

201 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_01_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

202 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_02_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

203 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_03_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

204 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_04_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

205 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_07_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

206 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_08_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

207 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_10A_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

208 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_16_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

209 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_18_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

210 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_19_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

211 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_20_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

212 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_22_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

213 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_24_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

214 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_25_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

215 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_27_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

216 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_33_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

217 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_35_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

218 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_37_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

219 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_37B_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

220 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_38_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

221 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_40_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

222 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_40G_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

223 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_40I_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

224 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_40J_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg

225 Baltz Lewis_San Quentin Point_1982-83_42_publ 1985_18.8x22.8cm.jpg
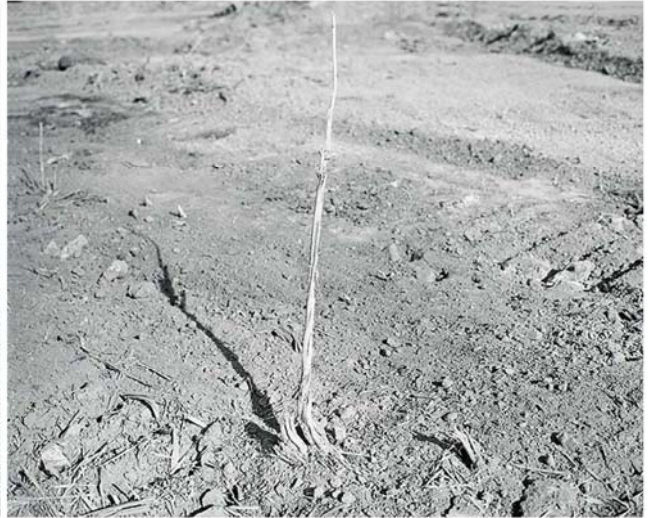

500 Baltz Lewis_Rule Without Exception_1989_1993_cibachrome_40x50cm.jpg

520 Baltz Lewis_Ronde de Nuit_1992_Installation_200x1200cm.jpg

521 Baltz Lewis_Ronde de Nuit_1992_Installation_Pompidou.jpg

550 Baltz Lewis_Bettinastrasse_1996_2 ciba_71x102cm.jpg

Lewis Baltz (1945, Newport Beach, Californie ; 2014, Paris, France)

Images sur : http://www.geh.org/ar/strip87/htmlsrc2/baltz_sld00001.html
Voir aussi *Contacts* d'Arte ; réalisation Sylvain Roumette, 1998, extrait sur http://archives.arte.tv/fr/archive_62687.html

Lewis Baltz est lié à ce genre photographique, qu'on a appelé la "Nouvelle Topographie", qui était une volonté de voir différemment le paysage, s'attachant à la représentation d'un environnement changeant. Expansion des banlieues, espaces désolés, industriels, terrains vagues, les non-lieux prirent une place de plus en plus importante dans le paysage photographique. Si cette nouvelle approche a souvent été interprétée comme dénonciation écologique, on peut noter que nombre de ses artistes mêlent à ce regard documentaire une dimension fortement esthétique, où la beauté n'est pas mise en cause ni absente.

Baltz s'est d'abord fait connaître en participant à l'exposition de 1975 *New Topographics : Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape*, qui montrait un tournant, dans la photographie de paysages, s'éloignant d'une vision héroïque du désert américain pour s'intéresser au caractère souvent banal d'une suburbanité croissante. La totalité des photographies de Baltz représentait une zone industrielle, d'entrepôts, située dans le sud de la Californie. Uniquement composées de murs en béton blancs et de bâtiments préfabriqués, ces images donnent une impression de claustrophobie et d'anonymat de la vie urbaine.

Au Nevada, l'étape suivante du travail de Baltz, un nouveau style narratif est apparu. Retraçant l'implantation de logements dans la vallée désertique autour de Reno, Baltz a alterné des vues panoramiques de l'horizon avec des photographies de chantiers, de campements et de rues pour montrer un paysage ouvert se faisant lentement dévorer. Le Nevada était la premier pas vers une méthodologie imagée d'une cartographie extrêmement détaillée, que Baltz explorerait la décennie suivante, aboutissant à son projet épique, *Candlestick Point*. Photographiée entre 1984 et 1988, la série explore en détails un paysage dépossédé de toutes ses références naturelles, situé à proximité de l'aéroport sud de San Francisco.

- 1971, *Tract House* : série de 25 photographies, représentant, en détails, des logements en construction dans une zone résidentielle du sud de la Californie. Les vues neutres de ces maisons présentent des plans rapprochés de détails architecturaux, aussi bien de grands murs en béton, fenêtres à volets roulants en aluminium, grandes cours sales, que des vues plus larges montrant entièrement les maisons. D'un côté, les maisons, inachevées, attendent les améliorations personnelles de leurs propriétaires, ou les touches finales du promoteur, bien que l'exécution de mauvaise qualité et les signes de négligence laissent supposer que l'achèvement puisse ne jamais venir. De l'autre, on pourrait croire qu'il s'agit de maisons abandonnées par leurs occupants depuis bien longtemps, et maintenant au bord de la ruine. Vide de présence humaine, ces images portent sur la perte de l'individualité dans la société de masse. Chacune de ces images, comme l'ensemble, combine l'élégance formelle avec une idée d'apathie fondamentale et insiste sur l'essence sépulcrale du logement préfabriqué.

- 1980, *Park City* : 102 photos prises pendant la construction de Park City, station de sports d'hiver à l'est de Salt Lake City. Quand Baltz a vu pour la première fois Park City, c'était une ville-fantôme, entouré d'un paysage jonché d'ordures, avec les restes de mines (de fer, d'or, de zinc, de câbles électriques) abandonnées. En seulement deux ans, l'espace s'est vu couvert de maisons et de structures commerciales. Un critique a écrit que l'enquête de Baltz, "enregistrant la suburbanisation rapide du désert, autrefois rude, autour de Park City donnait une nouvelle et inquiétante signification au mot 'park'. Ces parcs n'étaient pas pastoraux, bucoliques ou gérés publiquement, mais mornes, monotones et commandés de façon privée."

Les photos ci-dessous sont extraites de la série *The New Industrial Parks*, [1974], 51 images représentant des bâtiments commerciaux aux environs d'Irvine, en Californie [voir texte suivant].

- *Ronde de nuit* (1992), *Docile Bodies* et *The Politics of Bacteria* (1995) : trilogie qui examine les relations entre les nouvelles technologies et les structures du pouvoir social. *Ronde de nuit* est une série monumentale et kaléidoscopique de fragments de l'environnement urbain, créant un mouvement qui plonge le spectateur dans différentes couches d'une réalité urbaine apocalyptique. Des façades de maisons, un escalator, l'intérieur d'un restaurant, le centre de contrôle d'un immeuble, des câbles. Dans la version originale de 1992, une voix venant de hauts-parleurs, lit en français une liste alphabétique de concepts liés à la technologie de pointe et au pouvoir. La plupart des images, particulièrement celles montrant un espace urbain, sont issues des caméras de surveillance de la police, à Roubaix, qui contrôlent tous les espaces publics et permettent à la police de suivre, sans interruption, une personne, d'un bout de la ville à l'autre. Baltz a eu l'autorisation d'actionner ces caméras pendant plusieurs jours. Les photos de paquets de

câbles et de l'ordinateur principal donnent une idée de l'équipement technique nécessaire pour un réseau de ces dimensions. Ces images forment un second groupe, dans laquelle un visage surdimensionné, généré par ordinateur, observe le spectateur.

La qualité des images correspond à leurs différentes connotations. Les images de la caméra de surveillance ont une basse résolution. A l'opposé, les images de l'autre groupe, côté technique de la surveillance, ont une haute résolution, une clarté photographique qui inclut directement le spectateur dans l'acte de surveillance. Face à ces photographies, le spectateur est placé dans la même position que l'artiste quand il contrôlait la caméra. Cependant, la monumentalité des scènes de surveillance mine cette stratégie. En même temps que la figure monumentale regarde le spectateur, qui ne s'adapte pas au contexte d'être regardé, les proportions des images de surveillance captent son attention. Ils est simultanément observateur et observé

Thématiquement, *Ronde de nuit* prolonge les premiers travaux photographiques de Baltz, qui montrent également des bâtiments à une grande échelle. Cette oeuvre peut également être comprise comme une série d'images codées portant un avertissement. Les mots qu'on entend, comme venus d'une haute autorité, semblent redoubler, et donc souligner ce message.

Un des thèmes principaux de *Ronde de nuit* est la dépendance de la vie urbaine quotidienne à la technologie de l'information et à la surveillance des données, qui, de plus en plus, vont au-delà de leurs limites. Les deux autres installations de la trilogie, *Dociles Bodies* et *Politics of Bacteria*, sont centrées sur un autre domaine de la vie sociale dans laquelle la société de surveillance est à l'œuvre.

Dociles Bodies continue l'imagerie du pouvoir dans le domaine des développements médicaux de pointe. Baltz, qui se réfère au livre de Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, y met en évidence le côté subversif du pouvoir. Tant que le pouvoir est seulement répressif, il n'est pas si efficace. La médecine basée sur la technologie met les patients à la merci des machines et de leur omnipotence. Les images utilisées pour cette oeuvre viennent en grande partie d'hôpitaux français, dans lesquels la surveillance à l'intérieur même du corps permets aux chirurgiens et médecins de choisir le traitement le plus sûr. Le corps devient un objet déshumanisé au service de la connaissance. Finalement, le pouvoir de décision est réservé à ceux qui détiennent la connaissance. La vie du patient dépend de ce pouvoir "bienveillant".

Dans **Politics of Bacteria**, Baltz nous présente clairement le côté répressif du pouvoir en décrivant le gouvernement et l'administration comme des champs de virilité et de pouvoir. La plupart des photographies ont été prises au Ministère français des Finances, où est présente une technologie du dernier cri, comprenant même une piste pour hélicoptères, et qui semble sortir tout droit d'un James Bond. La description du corps capitaliste comme un objet dépendant constamment de la fluctuation des personnes, de l'argent et du marché, s'inspire des idées des philosophes français Gilles Deleuze et Felix Guattari. La vision de Baltz du corps, dans sa globalité, prolonge son approche des villes et des bâtiments comme des lieux infiltrés par l'écoulement d'informations. *Politics of Bacteria* (le titre vient de Thomas Pynchon) dépeint un monde masculin construit autour de l'idée de force organisée contrôlée, dont les différents aspects prennent corps dans les figures masculines et leurs postures. [cette description de la trilogie est librement traduite d'un texte de Katrin Kaschadt]

Source au 06 01 26: http://www.u-blog.net/bartlebooth/cat/10

Lewis Baltz documents the changing American landscape of the 1970s in his series **New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California** [1974]. The project's 51 pictures depict structural details, walls at mid-distance, offices, and parking lots of industrial parks. Contrast and geometry are important in these pictures, but what marks them uniformly is Baltz's attention to surface texture and lifeless subject matter. Often displayed in a grid format, it is important to Baltz that his pictures be seen collectively as a group or series. The series format suits his desire that no one image be taken as more true or significant than another, encouraging the viewer to consider not just the pictures but everything outside of the frame as well, emphasizing the monotony of the man-made environment. The pictures themselves resist any single point of focus, framed as they are to present the scene as a whole without bringing any attention to any particular element in it. Shot with a 35mm lens on a 35mm camera, usually at eye level, and stopped down for maximum depth of field; Baltz chooses his materials for maximum clarity and precision. Indeed, he takes care to title his pieces so exactly that the viewer could return to the same exact site.

Source au 06 01 26 : http://www.mocp.org/collections/permanent/baltz_lewis.php

Lewis Baltz : architecture des virtualités et des disparitions
Régis Durand

Est virtuel ce qui n'est qu'en puissance, ce qui est à l'état de simple possibilité, ou encore ce qui porte en soi toutes les conditions essentielles à sa réalisation. A peine cette définition posée, son optimisme, son « progressisme » appliqués à Lewis Baltz nous arrêtent. L'image que nous avons de son travail n'est-elle pas plutôt celle de « terrains vagues » où viennent mourir les franges du bâti et les déchets épars échappés à l'enfermement des décharges ? Lewis Baltz lui-même n'a-t-il pas parlé d'entropie, d'une « architecture de l'entropie », dans la classification qu'il a donnée de ses travaux depuis 1971 ? Pourtant, la dernière partie de cette classification, celle qui commence avec la deuxième partie de *Park City* (1981) (et qui inclut *The Canadian Series* (1984), *San Quentin Point* (1984-1986), *Continuous Fire Polar Grele* (1986), *Near Reno* (1986), *Fos Secteur 80* (1986-1987), et *Candlestick Point* (1984-1988), s'intitule précisément « l'architecture de l'avenir ». Ironie ? Partiellement sans doute, si nous continuons à charger le terme d'avenir d'un contenu de progrès, en vieux modernistes que nous sommes encore. [fin p.96]

Mais Lewis Baltz est dans la *post*-modernité au sens strict, comme ses espaces sont ceux de l'ère post-industrielle. Ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'il n'y a plus d'industrie (ou de modernité), mais que la logique dominante n'est plus celle de la conquête et de l'expansion industrielles (ou modernistes). La dynamique est assurée aujourd'hui (là où elle existe) par les secteurs dits tertiaires (ou « quaternaires ») : quelques industries de haute technologie, mais surtout le marché des services, des loisirs et des images.

Fos, à cet égard, est une réalisation d'un autre âge, le dernier avatar d'une industrie lourde à l'agonie ou en tout cas en pleine mutation. Le Secteur 80 représente la part de l'inachevé et du doute dans cette entreprise anachronique, une frange, une réserve à l'avenir incertain, zone de la zone à la lisière du secteur d'activités sur lequel elle permet un regard (les tours et les pylônes sont visibles à l'arrière-plan de certaines de ces photographies).

Entre deux états : ni bâti ni vraiment non-bâti. Le site n'est plus vierge. Ce n'est pas un coin de « nature », c'est un site industriel déjà quadrillé, et qui porte des traces confuses de travaux interrompus. Ici ou là, en effet, des empreintes de roues, l'amorce d'un remblai, les vagues irrégulières d'un terrassement entrepris et abandonné, des densités différentes de sol remué – le sablonneux lisse d'une flaque, le gravateux d'une pente, un chaos de parpaings brisés. Ailleurs, on jurerait un coin de garrigue côtière à l'état sauvage, n'étaient la présence d'un bloc bitumeux ou le drapé négligent d'un plastique. Et partout une végétation que nous reconnaissons encore, mais éparse, indécise, sans doute mithridatisée.

Lewis Baltz examine patiemment l'état des choses [fin p.97] au ras du sol ou en coupe lorsque le terrain le permet, et c'est une entreprise passionnante. Sans doute faut-il, pour en apprécier vraiment la richesse, avoir une certaine affinité avec les lieux de lisière, les espaces intermédiaires. C'est une prédilection qui ne se commande pas, et qui tient parfois à l'histoire imaginaire de chacun et à l'usage que nous faisons du monde. Car sans doute est-il nécessaire, pour cela, de ne pas rechercher sans cesse, dans les photographies et dans le monde même, les formes assurées de l'absence de mystère, les formes de ce qui rassure et conforte les certitudes. Lewis Baltz nous installe au cœur de l'incertain, là où aucune identité n'est établie.

Les lieux bâtis, aussi détestables soient-ils, proposent un ordre et une sécurité au regard et à l'esprit. Ils ont la solidité parfois arrogante de ce qui fait rempart contre la dispersion des devenirs. Les lieux qu'analyse Lewis Baltz sont au contraire des lieux perméables et fragiles. Ils sont le contraire du monument, et pourtant ils sont aussi, à leur manière, des lieux de mémoire. Ils sont dépositaires de la mémoire faible inscrite dans les objets et les traces qu'ils recueillent. Et il y a quelque chose d'émouvant dans ce recueil, dans cette disponibilité du lieu au repos des objets. Vagues, ces terrains le sont par leurs limites et leurs usages incertains, mais surtout par l'état des énergies qui s'y inscrivent. Ce sont des mouroirs, d'une certaine manière, mais sans la haute énergie des décharges dites « contrôlées », où le compactage et le feu accélèrent les transformations. Ici l'entropie lente suit son cours, c'est-à-dire la tendance à l'équilibre. Rien à voir non plus avec la très moderniste « Terre Vaine » qui est une terre de désolation, une terre brûlée (par la guerre en particulier), et donc toute [fin p.98] chaude encore et pathétique dans sa dévastation. Points de fragments, ici, à rassembler pour mettre l'individu à l'abri de la ruine commune. Point de cataclysme. C'est un état ordinaire des choses que nous propose L. Baltz, et il est difficile de dire que cette vision est

désespérée, une vision de la fin. Car tout pathos en est absent, et le spectateur se trouve renvoyé à son propre territoire intérieur, et à son propre imaginaire des confins.

Si on regarde ces photographies avec attention (et il le faut, car elles sont elles-mêmes de précieux actes d'attention), on y sent la marque retenue de drames minuscules. Une bouteille brisée, une toile convulsée, un arbuste écrasé, des ouvertures de terriers d'animaux au flanc d'un talus raboté... Ces choses appellent de la part de celui qui a la folie d'y prêter attention, un acte d'empathie, une reconnaissance d'une souffrance qui n'a pas de nom, du cri que pousse sans doute chaque chose qui meurt. Comme tout regard rapproché, celui-ci est dangereux, il entraîne vers l'obsession et la mélancolie. Mais il y a aussi, dans les photographies de Lewis Baltz, la présence des lointains qui peuvent, si nous en éprouvons le besoin, nous arracher à cette proximité douloureuse. Architecture du futur : ce qui est au loin, net et voilé à la fois, indique les gisements d'énergie haute, et leur contamination inévitable de ces lieux encore vides. Ces lieux sont, nous semble-t-il, les derniers espaces libres de notre temps, les seuls qui jouissent d'une vraie liberté, car étant tenus pour provisoires et de peu de valeur, ils sont laissés sans surveillance et sans défense. Et nous comprenons alors que Lewis Baltz tienne depuis quelque temps à en présenter les photographies non pas isolément, [fin p.99] comme autant de prélèvements énigmatiques, mais sous forme d'ensembles, de blocs d'images. Ce n'est pas pour reconstituer artificiellement le territoire, en dresser le panorama ou le relevé topographique, mais c'est, je crois, pour lui rendre un dernier hommage. Lieux où les choses disparaissent, lieux eux-mêmes en voie de disparition, Bermudes banlieusardes : sans eux, nous serions plus démunis encore pour penser ce à quoi tout cela ne cesse de renvoyer – je veux dire notre propre disparition. [fin p.100]

Scenes from a tired civilization / Scènes extraites d'une civilisation fatiguée
Morten Salling, revue virtuelle www.synesthesie.com, n°8, août 2003, traduction d'extraits

Le " paysage " auquel l'art de notre fin de siècle s'intéresse s'est développé entre les centre-villes historiquement chargés et les espaces naturels romantiques et protégés. Dans le monde occidental, c'est certainement aux Etats-Unis qu'on trouve les exemples les plus extrêmes de tels espaces-limite à l'abandon, zones culturellement négligées et désespérément banales et il n'est guère surprenant que l'art américain actuel réagisse de façon très détachée et dépassionnée aux représentations pastorales antérieures des relations entre l'homme et son environnement.

"Park City" : Dans les descriptions panoramiques et les plans rapprochés, dans les espaces ouverts et dans les intérieurs en constructions, l'œil est guidé vers des entassements de matériels qui ont dû autrefois servir à quelque usage particulier ou qui vont contribuer à une quelconque future forme d'existence. Les photographies sont pratiquement vidées de cette vie humaine qui a cependant manœuvré presque chacun des mètres carrés de cette énorme plaine bordée à l'horizon lointain par les Monts Wasatch.

Ainsi, selon Baltz, l'architecture du futur doit résider dans ces zones où la civilisation est mise à l'index. Dans leur banalité et leur énigme ces lieux résistent à un enregistrement documentaire traditionnel. L'information visuelle est brouillée. En accordant son attention aux marges de l'acte architectonique, l'appareil photographique de Baltz est dans plus d'un sens dans le hors champ.

Notons également que les séries photographiques de Baltz sont dépourvues d'une quelconque qualité spatiale; ce que voit l'observateur ce sont des surfaces, des secteurs, des lieux. " Là où les récits disparaissent, il y a perte d'espace ", écrit le sociologue français Michel de Certeau qui attire l'attention sur la distinction entre " lieu " et " espace ". Un lieu est déterminé par des éléments qui peuvent se réduire à la présence de choses inanimées (un tas de graviers, un cadavre ou d'autres objets qui ne bougent pas). Alors qu'un espace est déterminé par des "opérations" infligées à une pierre, un arbre ou un être humain, étant entendu qu'un mouvement semble toujours être une condition nécessaire à la création d'un espace, l'associant à du temps vécu, à une histoire. Dans son travail photographique, Baltz cherche à rendre compte des lieux où ces mouvements n'existent pas, refusant, pour ainsi dire, de laisser l'appareil photographique suivre quelque chose qui pourrait ressembler à un événement. C'est de sa part un effort constant pour se positionner " à côté ".

Depuis les constructions rigoureuses de "New Industrial Parks" jusqu'au chaos dispersé de "Candlestick Point", les séries photographiques de Baltz passent en revue un processus de cristallisation parallèle au concept du temps inversé de Robert Smithson. Des couches entremêlées de matériaux culturels portent témoignage des pratiques de construction de différentes époques. D'une image à l'autre les éléments représentés vont vers une équivalence mutuelle et aussi, au sens

littéral du mot, vers une indifférence. Chaque élément porte, pour ainsi dire, des fragments de mémoire, non seulement d'un ordre hiérarchique antérieur mais aussi d'une future *tabula rasa*. Si le travail de Baltz nous rappelle en général que l'homme moderne est partout, il dirige aussi notre attention vers son éphémérité inévitable.

Le montage, ou " cutting ", joue bien évidemment un rôle central dans toute les séries. Le montage ne concerne pas simplement l'établissement d'une composition visuellement équilibrée. Que les bords de l'image soient le résultat d'un cadrage à la prise de vues, ou d'un recadrage au développement, ils sont surtout pour Baltz, d'abord et avant tout, une matière à exclusion. En introduction à son catalogue "Rule Without Exception", Baltz cite l'écrivain français Georges Perec : " Ce n'est pas le sujet du tableau ni la technique du peintre qui fait la difficulté du puzzle, mais la subtilité de la découpe. " Le défi repose, en d'autres mots, sur le fait de couper au milieu de sujets apparemment évidents pour cadrer sur les espaces intersticiels.

Selon Peirce, l'index peut être défini comme un signe qui se réfère à un objet ou un ensemble d'objets sans avoir une quelconque similarité ou analogie avec eux. Les éléments sur lesquels Baltz pointe peuvent en très grande partie entrer dans cette catégorie de signe. Parmi les exemples les plus évidents on trouve différents types de coquilles vides, telles les maisons vides récurrentes et standardisées, les TV fracassées et les cannettes de " soft drinks " percées, de la série "Near Reno", ou bien le tube en néon brisé de " Névada ". Mais ceci s'applique aussi à des éléments entièrement différents tels la terre labourée dans " Irvine ", une photographie datant de 1970, les empilades de déchets sans nombre dans les séries ultérieures, les circuits électriques de " Park City ", la fumée dans " Continuous Fire Polar Circle " etc. Tous ces signes sont des clés référentes à un facteur continuellement au travail mais néanmoins obstinément évité dans la production noir et blanc de Baltz : la figure humaine.

Le spectateur réagit à un appel esthétique immédiat dans ces photographies de nuit, où les couleurs chaudes dérivent d'un grand nombre de sources lumineuses fluorescentes dans le cadre de l'image. Ces sources donnent un temps de pose quasi-théâtrale aux silhouettes sombres des immeubles, alors qu'elles aveuglent partiellement le photographe et illuminent le terrain qu'il (et par extension le spectateur) occupe. Comme tant d'autres terrains, les terrains illuminés dans les diverses " Generic Night Cities " appartiennent à la catégorie des " surfaces contrôlées ". Pour Baltz, les zones ubaines de notre temps représentent un pouvoir centralisé qui se joue du spectateur comme d'un pion. L'observateur est observé. Le sujet devient objet.

Dans ses premières photographies noir et blanc comme dans ses récents Cibachromes, Baltz dirige son attention vers la dégénérescence graduelle que subit une structure-clé de notre civilisation : le modèle de la vie urbaine, dont la raison d'être ne fait que dériver depuis la mise en place de réseaux de communication locale bien développés. Ainsi que le fait remarquer Paul Virilio, la pression audiovisuelle de notre temps n'est rien d'autre qu'une expression du déclin du voisinage et, à long terme, du déclin de toutes les planifications territoriales. Les frontières des zones urbaines ne sont plus des arrangements physiques séparant la campagne des périphéries et les périphéries des centre-villes, mais des systèmes électroniques et universels d'accès contrôlés qui vont mener à la dissolution totale de notre conception actuelle de la ville. Ainsi, Baltz a choisi d'enregistrer certains aspects de la fatigante traversée de la modernité occidentale. En tant que photographe il a assumé ce rôle d'examinateur, sachant bien qu'en dernier ressort lui-même est aussi l'objet d'une surveillance soigneuse et continuelle.

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Scenes from a tired civilization
Morten Salling, www.synesthesie.com, n°8, août 2003, texte original

" The bus passed over the first monument. I pulled, the buzzercord and got off at the corner of Union Avenue and River Drive. The monument was a bridge over the Passaic River that connected Bergen County with Passaic County. Noon-day sunshine cinematized the site, turning the bridge and the river into an over exposed picture. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a Photograph. The sun became a monstrous light bulb that projected a series of "stills" through my Instamatic into my eye. When I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank." (Robert Smithson)[1]

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[1] Robert Smithson, "A tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey", *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, Nancy Holt (ed.), New York University Press, pp. 52-53. The original version appeared in *Artforum*, December 1967.

1. The landscape has often, particularly in the USA, been used as a metaphor of national identity and longings. Thus, the landscape is a dominant motif in American art from the paintings of the 19th century right up to the Land Art of our epoch. Throughout this period the photograph has also contributed, both documentarily and aesthetically, to the representation of America's immeasurable expanses.

During recent decades, however, the heroic and nostalgic depictions have given way to a more down-to-earth and often critical treatment of these hitherto untouched areas. As long as the big cities were steadily developing as clearly delimited entities, the contrast between the urban network and the countryside became ever more accentuated, and a romantic perception of the landscape could be preserved. Inner city decay, the remorseless, dehumanized constructions in peripheral areas and industrial exploitation of barren land have, however, weakened this polarization.

The "landscape" in which the art of our *fin de siècle* is interested has established itself between the historically weighted city centres and the romantic, protected natural areas. In the Western world the most extreme examples of such left over, culturally neglected and bleakly banal border areas are probably to be found in the USA, and it is not surprising that American art offers its the most uncompromising, dispassionate reactions against earlier pastoral representations of man's relations to his surroundings.

2. In the world of art the highly experimental period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s is characterized by a widespread interest in the medium of photography. Besides the impressive activity in the field of "pure" photography, the greater part of the most important artists belonging to such groupings as Land Art, Conceptual Art, Body Art made lively use of this medium not only for documentary purposes but also as an integral part of their works.

Despite the fact that from the end of the 1970s the American artist Lewis Baltz's attention to terrains that from having been untouched and unremarkable natural areas were being transformed into real estate came to expression in a pure photographic form, it seems necessary to place his production in relation to this very broad artistic and socio-political panorama. This is, for example, expressed in a collection of notes entitled *An Architecture of Entropy,* in which Baltz himself has mapped out three chapters of his own production: 1) *the architecture of the recent past, 2) the architecture of the present* and 3) *the architecture of the future.* For Baltz the concept of architecture is "the most prominent and enduring material artifact produced by the dialectic of nature and culture", and he defines the concept in its broadest sense as being "the activity of building, demolishing or altering structures in the landscape".[2]

An introductory look at some key works from these three chapters reveals the extent to which Baltz's on the face of it modest production bears witness to a number of precise and concentrated fields of interest that cannot be categorized within a stringent photographic tradition:

Among *the architectures of the immediate past* we find the work "The Tract Houses" executed in the period 1969-71, a series of 25 photographs that give a prosaic depiction of an estate of newly erected standard-type houses on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Here Baltz focuses on an uncompromisingly simple and universal architecture from which any form of individuality has been eliminated. On standard-type houses in general he has written: "It is difficult to think of them as homes or even as shelters; they resemble the test structures built at ground zero".[3] The majority of the photographs in the series are frontal close-ups of facades in which the windows, instead of giving visual access to the inner spaces of the buildings, present themselves as black shutters from which the eye rebounds. The houses appear as empty shells designed for lives without meaning.

Under the heading *the architecture of the present* Baltz places a number of photographic series that continue the depiction of mass housing, but now, in contrast to, for instance, "The Tract Houses", the surroundings play a prominent role. In "The New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California", "Maryland", "Nevada" and "Park City" Baltz is primarily interested in the context of the architecture and the metamorphoses undergone by entire territories in the development of industrial and urban areas. "The New Industrial Parks" (1974-75) is an objective registration of the light industry factories that had mushroomed in Southern California in the course of a few years. As a rule, the camera has restricted itself to frontal views of the external frameworks of the factories; now and again there is an open gateway or window, while the eye of the observer wanders restlessly over the facades without ever discovering what these enormous, flat, minimally designed constructions actually

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[2] These notes appeared on the occasion of Lewis Baltz's exhibition in Galerie Michèle Chomette, Paris 1988.

[3] Lewis Baltz, "Review of the New West", Art in America, March-April 1975.

contain. Now and again the equally flat landscape makes a discreet appearance, contributing to the observer's loss of orientation.

"Natural" elements are even more present in the "Maryland "-series (1976) - 26 photographs that register a lower-middle-class district in the little state north of Washington D.C. - and are strongly manifested in "Nevada" (1977-78) and "Park City" (1980-81). Looked at in isolation certain of the photographs from these two series can momentarily appear as cliches of earlier romantic depictions of the limitless expanses of America. When they are seen in relation to the other pictures, however, it quickly becomes clear that the untouched areas should rather be regarded as potential or perhaps already purchased territories that may at any moment become sites for speculative building.

From the irreproachable order reigning in "The New Industrial Parks" Baltz leads us towards an apparently all-embracing chaos in the 102 photographs that constitute the series "Park City". Here the camera registers the metamorphosis of a territory - from coal-mining area to skiing complex for the wealthy citizens of nearby Salt Lake City. In panoramic depictions and in close-ups, in the open air and in the unfinished interiors, the eye is drawn towards heaps of materials that have either served some goal in the old days or will contribute to some future form of existence. The photographs are virtually devoid of the human life that has nonetheless manipulated almost every single square meter of this enormous plain bordered on the distant horizon by the Wasatch Mountains.

Baltz's third chapter comprises what he calls *the architecture of the future* and covers a number of works executed during the 1980s, among others, "San Quentin Point", "Near Reno" and "Candlestick Point". The tone of this highly deconstructed scenography had already been established in the last sequences of "Park City". "San Quentin Point" (1986) presents in 58 scenes a corrupted landscape, its atmosphere inevitably marked by its proximity to one of California's most notorious prisons. What is less immediately apparent is that this terrain also borders on one of the very wealthiest suburban districts in the state. Baltz's camera closes in on a myriad of discarded fragments, whose identities have been partially eradicated by the workings of time. Exposed to destruction or fire these elements have lost all connection with any form of designation or classification. We are far from the formal order of "The New Industrial Park" and yet in its entirety this merciless terrain appears as a stringently organized non-hierarchical pattern.

The 14 photographs that make up the series "Near Reno" also form the framework around a terrain whose scattered objects are alien to it. We see an unnamed piece of land near Reno; we see a number of objects that originally possessed widely different identities related to widely different milieus, but which, now spread out like fossils from the past, share a common geographical fate. The same mood is present in "candlestick Point" (1988), which in 84 pictures scans a hilly dumping site in the neighborhood of San Francisco.

Thus, according to Baltz, *the architecture of the future is* to be found in these repressed zones of civilization. In their banality and indecipherability the areas resist a traditional documentary registration. The visual information is blurred. With its attention to the marginal areas of the architectonic act Baltz's camera is in more than one sense out of focus. In an essay on "Near Reno" the art critic Jeff Kelley convincingly describes this double displacement in relation to the photographic topic as the focusing of its objects: "a displacement which sweeps these pictures to what might be called the backside of traditional landscape photography. Near photography, as the roadsides, dumpsites and fenceposts are near Reno".[4]

It should also be noted that Baltz's photographic series are devoid of any *spatial* quality; what the observer sees is, rather, *surfaces, areas* or *places*. "Where the stories disappear, there is loss of space", writes the French sociologist Michel de Certeau and draws attention to the distinction between *place* and *space. Place* is determined by elements that can be reduced to the *presence* of inanimate things (a piece of gravel, a corpse or other unmoving objects). *Space,* on the other hand, is determined by *operations* inflicted on a stone, a tree or human being, inasmuch as movement always seems a necessary condition for the creation of a space, associating it with lived time, with a story. In his photographic works Baltz seeks to give an account of places - where these movements do *not* exist; refusing, so to speak, to allow his camera to follow anything that might resemble an event, it is his constant endeavour to position himself aside.[5]

3. "The energy in the world is constant. The entropy in the world seeks to achieve a maximum": This is how, the German physicist Rudolf Clausius formulated the two principles of thermodynamics in

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4) Jeff Kelley, "Near Deadline, Nevada", in the *catalogue Rule Without Exception*, p. 103.

5) Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien. 1. Arts de faire*, Guallimard, Paris, pp. 172-82.

1865.[6] In this context the production of entropy, that is of wasted currents of energy, expresses an irreversible development in which the entropy will ultimately become total. In scientific circles there is today considerable disagreement concerning this eschatological world view, but in other fields during recent decades entropy has often been used as a striking, metaphor for aspects of our society. Claude Levi-Strauss, for example, has pointed out that the town is a machine that produces far more *inertia* than *organization.* Civilization is in its totality an extremely complex mechanism which would in the long run have had a chance of s surviving "if its function had not been to produce what's physicists call entropy".[7] According to Levi Strauss, "entropology" rather than "anthropology" should be the name of the discipline that is concerned with studying the dissolution processes of human civilization, and he adds elsewhere that the more complex the cultural organization of a society, the greater the entropy produced.

The more highly developed a structure, the more it will be marked by schism and dissolution. Thus, according to the French ethnologist, the primitive "cold" societies produce very little entropy, while the "hot" societies, above all the USA, produce enormous quantities of disorder and entropy.[8]

And it was in the USA of the 1960s that certain artists began to interest themselves in this phenomenon, among them first and foremost Robert Smithson.[9] Whether it expressed itself through monumental interferences in nature or through sculptural compositions within the white walls of the gallery, Smithson's interest in the entropical landscape consciously included any form of mineralogical presence in the border areas between town and nature: from the geological formations of cliffs to the glass windows of stores. His copious production of texts and works presents the modern American landscape as a comprehensive fractal pattern that combines both the slow crystallizations of natural areas and the random constructions of the suburbs.

In his essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" the artist gives an account of a walk in the ghost suburb of Passaic one Saturday afternoon in 1967. The deserted building sites make of the district a "ruin in reverse", where a cosmic calm comes to expression in banally lyrical pictures. As opposed to the romantic ruin, the various buildings do not crumble into ruins *after* they have been realized, but are built as ruins *before* they are completed.[10] In another of his famous essays, "Entropy and the New Monuments", Smithson cites the writer Vladimir Nabokov's renowned thesis: "the future is but the obsolete in reverse" and adds that where traditional monuments invite us to remember the past, these new ruins attempt to make us forget the future. Instead of "What time is it?", a person walking around in this setting must necessarily ask himself. "Where is the time?".[11]

From the rigorous constructions in "New Industrial Parks" to the dispersed chaos of "Candlestick Point" Baltz's photographic series review a process of crystallization parallel to Smithson's "reversed" concept of time. Intermingled layers of cultural materials bear witness to the building practices of different epochs. From picture to picture the represented elements are led towards a mutual *equivalence* and, also in the literal sense of the word, *indifference.* Each element bears, so to speak, fragments of memory, not only of a prior hierarchic order but also of a prospective *tabula rasa*. If Baltz's work in general reminds us that modern man is everywhere, it also draws attention to his inevitable ephemerality.

4. Up to 1988, i.e., in the period when Baltz was using black-and-white photography, his works mainly appeared as modest-sized photographs composed into series. These series were often produced in book form, which naturally affords a quite different and more sequential reading of the individual work. Especially in the USA photographic book publications at reasonable prices gained ground during the 1970s as a reaction to the increasing fetishism and marketing of original works, phenomena that are quite alien to the genre of photography. As the book form is highly contributory to the close reading of a serial composition, it was natural for Baltz to publish his most extensive works, "The New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California", "San Quentin Point" and "Park City" in this form.

Although, obviously, the same works presented on the walls of a gallery appear quite differently, they preserve the same character. The viewer can form an immediate impression of the work as a whole, but no one photograph stands out from the others. Baltz rejects both a hierarchic

[6] See, inter al. Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, Den nye pagt mellem Menneket og universet (The new pact between Man and the Universe), Forlaget ASK, 1985, p. 19.

[7] Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques, Librairie Plon, Paris 1955, pp. 478-79.

[8] Georges Charbonnier, Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss, Grossman, New York 1969.

[9] In 1984 Louisiana organized a comprehensive ehibition of works by Robert Smithson under the title "Skulptur / tegninger" ("Sculpture/Drawings").

[10] *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, p. 54.

[11] Ibid, pp. 9-10.

composition and a narrative pattern in which one picture leads the eye on to the next and so on. This does not, however, exclude a syntactic distribution, in which the photographs enter into precisely conceived groupings. Baltz reminds us that landscape in general is "a linguistic construct representing an organized perception of the exterior world".[12] Each individual unit is incomplete and must ally itself with others in order to create sequences of visual experiences, the forming of which, however, is in the final resort dependent on the viewer.

The cutting, or "montage", naturally plays a central role in all the series. The cutting is not merely related to the establishment of a visually balanced composition. Whether the borders of the pictures are the result of the camera angle or the development process, they are for Baltz first and foremost a matter of exclusion. As an introduction to the catalogue *Rule Without Exception* Baltz cites the French writer Georges Perec: "It is not the subject of the picture or the painter's technique which makes a puzzle more or less difficult, but the greater or lesser suttlety of the way it has been cut".[13] The challenge lies, in other words, in cutting in the middle of the apparently obvious subjects and focusing on the intervening spaces.

Here the photograph will, in Baltz's words, be able "to provide us with a permanent, optical picture of an absent object and an absent space".[14]

That Baltz's *urbanized landscapes* can be decoded as *linguistic constructs* is also due to the fact that each series comprises a multiplicity of what we can call *indices.* The American philosopher C.S. Peirce distinguishes among three types of sign: the icon, the symbol and the index. According to Peirce, the index can be defined as a sign that refers to an object or a number of objects without having any similarity or analogy to them.[15] The elements that Baltz focuses on can for the most part be related to this type of sign. Among the most obvious examples are the various kinds of empty "shells", such as the recurrent, empty standard-type houses, the smashed TV and the perforated soft drink can in the "Near Reno"-series, or for that matter the broken neon tubes in "Nevada". But this also applies to quite different elements, such as the ploughed earth in "Irvine", a photograph from 1970, the countless piles of waste in the later series, the electric circuits in "Park City", the smoke in "Continuous Fire Polar Circle" and so on. All these signs are clues referring to a factor that is continually at work but is nevertheless stubbornly avoided in Baltz's black-and-white production: the human figure.

5. Since 1989 Baltz has produced a number of works grouped together under the title "Generic Night Cities". Despite his continued insistence on wide scenographies of Western urban districts, there are a number of differences in relation to Baltz's earlier production. Rather than being due to a new field of interest, these differences must be related to a decisive modification in our habits of perception over the last 10-15 years.

First and foremost, there is the use of cibachrome. Up to the mid-1980s, as Baltz explains, the use of black-and-white film was the norm in photography, while color was often associated with a kind of "Fine Arts" tradition. Today the reverse is the case: black-and-white photography is affected, "artistic", while color photography is neutral, banal and easily disappears in the flood of pictures from advertising and other mass media. Furthermore, Baltz has abandoned the extensive series of small "scrutinizing" pictures in favor of modules that come close to the human body in their dimensions. Presented singly or combined as diptychs or triptychs, they nevertheless resemble the preceding black-and-white series in that they prevent the observer from forming an immediate overview of the registered townscape. The eye is also disturbed by the reflections from their plastic surfaces.

Another new factor is the artist's interest in the night and the artificial light that replaces the sharp sunlight of earlier series. Baltz has related this choice to, among other things, an increased concern in his latest works with the concepts of *seduction* and *deception.* "The images must be enticing enough on the surface to draw the viewer into the terror that they hold."[16] The viewer reacts to a an immediate aesthetic appeal in these night pictures, where the warm colors derive from a large number of fluorescent sources of light within the frame of the picture. These sources give a theatre-like exposure to the dark silhouettes of the buildings, while they also partially blind the photographer and *illuminate* the terrain he (and thereby the spectator) inhabits. Like so many other terrains, the lit-up terrains in the various "Generic Night Cities" belong to the category of

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[12] Interview with Catherine Grout, Art Press, March 1993, p. E20.

[13] *Rule Without Exception*, p. 7. The quotation derives from the introduction to the novel La Vie mode d'emploi.

[14] Lewis Baltz, "La mission photographique de la Datar: Critique", unpublished letter to François Hers.

[15] C.S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotics. The Theory of signs", in R. Innis, *Semiotics: An Anthology*, Bloomington, 1985, pp. 9-10.

[16] Interview with Lara Stumej. Forthcoming in the journal MARS, National Gallery of Modern Art, Ljubljana.

"controlled areas". For Baltz, the urban area of our time represents a centralized power in whose game the viewer becomes a pawn. The observer is observed. Subject becomes object.

This reflection is not only a guiding principle for Baltz in his "night cities"; it also leads him into a much more broadly conceived project that has to do with the new technologies: "In 1988 I stopped photographing territory, as I thought that everybody already knew far too much about the appearance of the earth. In the 80s the underlying content of my work was apocalyptic; towards 1990 the world seemed to have already ended, that is it withdrew itself from our apprehension".[17] While at the same time maintaining his investigation of urban patterns, Baltz began to frequent various high technology centres, from Telecom and Matra in France to the Toshiba factories in Kawasaki, Japan. There is a wealth of documentation from these visits, but a recurrent purpose in the realized projects is to give an account of the complete absence of any real information obtained through all this photographic activity concerning the actual work carried out by these institutions. It is undoubtedly a long way from Toshiba's clinical laboratories for artificial intelligence to the desert-like terrain outside Reno, but in both cases the photographic result is that the observed objects refrain from signaling any form of direct message.

6. "The metropolis is today merely a ghost landscape, a fossil bearing witness to former societies in which technology was still closely linked to the *visible* transformation of materials, and from which the sciences have progressively distanced us".[18] This statement by the French sociologist and urbanist Paul Virilio helps us to establish a link between Baltz's continued registration of urban zones and his interest in the immaterial, technological zones. Here his concern is to present a civilization in which material figures and forms are replaced by an "aesthetic of disappearance"; a civilization in which the very conditions that make it possible to keep information secret are no longer limited to a physical isolation (locked files, etc.) but are increasingly secured within the electronic field of telecommunications.

In Baltz's production the series "Generic Night Cities" and his interest in the zones of high technology mark a departure from what Virilio has called the *direct* light of optics in the direction of the *indirect* light of the electro-optical era.[19] The lit-up terrains in "Generic Night Cities" are, of course, not all that far from the "enlightenment" of the video camera, that is its direct representation and surveillance of the public space. Thus, video surveillance plays an important role in Baltz's polyptych "Ronde de Nuit" ("The Nightwatch") from 1992: the photographic panels of this comprehensive work represent fragmentary scenes from the control panel in a provincial police office in France. Concerning this work Baltz wrote: "With the increased technical possibilities of surveillance and, most important, the use of electronic information processing technologies to collate and distribute information, the modern liberal/democratic/quasi-socialist state enjoys a control over its citizens unprecedented - a control so thoroughgoing that the citizens/consumers could come to believe that it was they and not the state, who held the power.[20]

Both in the earlier black-and-white photographs and in the cibachromes of recent years Baltz's attention is directed towards the gradual degeneration undergone by a key structure in our civilization, the pattern of urban life, which has hitherto derived its *raison d'être* from the existence of well developed local communication networks. As Paul Virilio points out, the 'audio-visual' pressure of our times is nothing other than an expression of the decay of the neighborhood and, in the long run, the decay of all territorial arrangements.[21] The boundaries of urban zones are no longer physical arrangements separating the countryside from suburbs and suburbs from town centres, but electronic and universally controlled access systems that will lead to the total dissolution of our previous concepts of what a town is. Thus, Baltz has chosen to register certain aspects of the fatigue pervading modern Western civilization. As a photographer he has assumed a scrutinizing role, well knowing that in the last resort he himself is the object of careful and continuous surveillance.

Morten Salling, historien d'art, curateur, chargé de mission, service de la culture au Conseil Général de la Seine Saint-Denis

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[17] Lewis Baltz, "Notes sur la Ronde de Nuit", published in connection with the exhibition at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1992.

[18] Paul Virilio, *L'espace critique*, Christian Bourgois, Paris 1984, p. 31.

[19] Paul Virilio, *L'Inertie polaire*, Christian Bourgois, Paris 1990, p. 113.

[20] Lewis Baltz, "Technologies Project 1989-Present", unpublished text.

[21] *L'espace critique*, pp. 115-16.

Lewis Baltz. Dernière Interview avec Jeff Rian
L'œil de la photographie, 25.11.2014

C'est une formidable interview que nous publions aujourd'hui. La dernière de Lewis Baltz, réalisée par son ami Jeff Rian. Baltz, personnage secret et réservé, s'y livre sans réserve. Merci Jeff Rian, merci Diane Dufour, qui nous avait suggéré lors de son exposition, cet été au BAL.
Au revoir, Lewis, vous êtes un Monsieur très étonnant.
Jean-Jacques Naudet

JEFF RIAN — Comment était le sud de la Californie quand vous étiez enfant ?
LEWIS BALTZ — C'était une Californie différente, avec six millions d'habitants au lieu de 40 millions ; provinciale à un point presque inimaginable pour ceux qui y vont aujourd'hui. Ce n'était pas une Californie cosmopolite. La plupart des gens étaient blancs ; la plupart venait du Midwest. Les Hispaniques venaient des provinces du nord du Mexique ; les Africains-Américains, comme ils sont appelés aujourd'hui, venaient du sud de l'Amérique. Los Angeles aujourd'hui comporte plus de 200 langues dans son système scolaire — les Noirs peuvent venir du Soudan, les Blancs peuvent venir de Russie. Les Hispaniques peuvent venir d'Amérique Centrale. Je pense que c'est la ville occidentale la plus cosmopolite. Une autre ville semblable est Toronto, où les gens semblent s'entendre. Los Angeles tend à avoir des règlements de compte en voiture.

Où viviez-vous ?
Dans un coin de Newport Beach, Corona del Mar, qui se trouve à peu près 75 km au sud du LA Civic cCenter, au bord de l'eau. Elle était différente des autres petites villes dans le sens où elle avait un petit port naturel, très proche de LA ; c'est pour ça que les stars du cinéma qui aimaient les yachts vivaient là — Errol Flynn, John Wayne.

Aviez-vous une belle maison ?
Non, il n'y en avait pas. Enfin, il y en avait une : La Lovelle Beach House, construite dans les années 20 sur la Balboa section par Rudolf Schindler.

Vous m'avez dit une fois que lorsque vous aviez 12 ans, vous vouliez travailler au MoMA. Ce qui m'a frappé, c'est que vous connaissiez ce musée et vous vous y connaissiez en art.
Quand j'avais 11 ans, mes parents m'ont offert un appareil photo et j'ai commencé à prendre des photos. J'étais fasciné par la photographie. Puis, à 12 ans, j'ai eu un Rolleiflex. Je lisais le peu qu'il y avait à lire sur l'art. Il n'y avait pas de magazines d'art. Je ne les aurai pas vus de toute façon. Je crois qu'il y avait *Art News*, de New York, géré par Thomas Hess. Les magazines de photographie étaient comme *Popular Mechanics*, plus technique qu'esthétique. Mais, en lisant des magazines de photo, j'ai découvert *The Americans,* de Robert Frank, et Edward Weston — que je voulais être. Je pensais que Weston faisait tout ce qu'on pouvait faire de mieux en photographie. Mais la photographie n'était pas vraiment un art.

Comment avez-vous connu l'art – cela devait sembler très lointain ?
Oui, très, très lointain. Il n'y en avait pas beaucoup sur la côte Ouest. Los Angeles comme centre artistique, c'est très récent. Mais si on connaissait Weston, on pouvait savoir qu'il y avait une rétrospective au MoMA. Il y avait si peu de choses écrites à propos de la photographie qu'il était facile d'apprendre de telles choses.
Développiez-vous vos photos vous-même ?
Oui, et c'était difficile.

Je croyais que vous travailliez dans un magasin de photo ?
Oui. Je travaillais au magasin de William Current. Bien plus tard, il a été inclus dans la collection du MoMA. J'ai plus appris de lui que de quiconque. Mon père est mort quand j'avais 12 ans et je cherchais, je crois, un mentor.
Aviez-vous des frères et sœurs ?
Non.

Alors vous remplissiez votre propre espace.
J'essayais. Il y avait quelque chose de bizarre à propos de la manière dont vivaient les familles. Tout était conformiste. Tout le monde était républicain, du moins tout le monde dans le Orange County.

Avez-vous eu une voiture à 16 ans ?
Quinze ans et demi, parce qu'en Californie il y avait quelque chose appelé le permis d'apprentissage, qui vous permet de conduire tant que vous êtes accompagné d'un conducteur avec un permis californien.

Quelle a été votre première voiture ?
Une Porsche 1959 1600, que j'ai démolie quand j'avais 16 ans. La suivante a été également une Porsche, que j'ai démolie encore plus vite.

C'était comment le lycée ?
J'étais inscrit au lycée. Je n'étais pas très bon. Je m'ennuyais comme un rat mort. Un commentaire à propos de mois était : *« Si l'on considère le nombre de jours où Mr Baltz a été présent, il ne s'est pas si mal débrouillé. »* J'étais absent, légalement ou illégalement, plus de la moitié du temps. Je voulais étudier l'art et rester chez moi pour lire.

Avez-vous appris beaucoup de choses sur l'art ?
Je lisais tous de livres Skira et Abrams bon marché avec les illustrations séparées. Les lundis soir, il y avait une soirée entrée libre dans le secteur des galeries à LA, alors j'ai commencé à voir des galeries. Je voulais être un artiste. La plupart des gens ne savent pas ce qu'ils veulent faire de leur vie, j'avais une idée absolument claire : je voulais travailler dans le milieu de la photographie ; je ne voulais pas être peintre ou sculpteur — ou travailler dans la pub, la mode ou faire des photos de guerre ou de documentaire. Je voulais également vivre dans un bel endroit et que des belles femmes viennent me rendre visite à toute heure de la journée ou de la nuit.

Preniez-vous de photos uniquement en noir et blanc, ou alors en couleur également ?
D'abord en couleur puis j'ai pris conscience du fait que toutes les photographies que j'admirais étaient en noir et blanc, parce que toutes les photographies artistiques étaient en noir et blanc, et il en a été ainsi jusqu'au milieu des années 70.

Quels photographes vous intéressaient ?
A 16 ou 17 ans, je voulais rencontrer des gens comme Weston, Wynn Bullock. Je les ai même appelés pour leur demander si je pouvais les rencontrer.
Avez-vous rencontré des artistes ?

Quelques années plus tard, quand j'avais 18 ans, j'ai rencontré le peintre John Mc Laughlin, qui avait 70 ans. Je l'ai rencontré grâce à William Current. Bill photographiait ses œuvres pour lui rendre service et ça ne lui plaisait pas trop. Les goûts de Bill n'étaient pas minimalistes ; il trouvait que McLaughlin n'utilisait pas toutes les possibilités de la peinture — la main, la couleur. Son idée de grande peinture serait probablement plutôt Matisse ou Kandinsky, ce contre quoi on ne peut rien dire. Bill possédait une peinture e McLaughlin, qui lui avait été donné pour avoir photographié le travail. Il avait la peinture dans la boutique de photo, qu'il avait conçue dans le style néo plastique — blanc, propre, rectangulaire, couleurs primaire — auquel personne ne répondait d'une manière ou d'une autre. Puis, quand Bill a quitté Laguna — il n'était pas un bon en affaires, bien qu'il ait eu un Guggenheim puis ait déménagé ensuite à Santé Fe —, avant de partir il m'a demandé si je voulais acheter la peinture. C'était un prix ridiculement bas. Mais il a insisté sur le prix, me demandant : *« Tu veux l'acheter ou pas ? »* Alors j'ai payé et je l'ai eue.

Last interview of Lewis Baltz with Jeff Rian

This exceptional interview was the final one given by the late Lewis Baltz. It was conducted by his friend, Jeff Rian. Baltz, a secretive and reserved person, speaks unreservedly here of his life and work. Thank you, Jeff, and thank you, Diane Dufour, who suggested us last summer during the Baltz exhibition at Le BAL in Paris.
Farewell, Lewis, you were an incredible man.
Jean-Jacques Naudet

What was Southern California like when you were a kid?
It was a different California, with six million people, instead of 40 million; provincial to a degree almost unbelievable to anyone who's been there today. It was not cosmopolitan California. Most people were White; most of them were from the Midwest. The Hispanics were from the northern provinces of Mexico; the African Americans, as they are now called, were from the American

South. Los Angeles today has over 200 languages in the school system—Blacks could be from Sudan, Whites could be Russian, Hispanics could be from Central America. I think it's now the most cosmopolitan city in the western hemisphere. The other such city is Toronto, where they seem to get along pretty well. Los Angeles tends to have drive-by shootings.

Where were you living?
In a small part of Newport Beach, Corona del Mar, which was about 75 km south of LA civic center, on the water. It was different from other small towns in that it had a natural small-boat harbor; the closest to LA, which is why the movie stars who fancied yachting lived there—Errol Flynn, John Wayne.

Did you have a nice house?
No. There weren't any. Well, there was one: the Lovell beach house, built in the Twenties on the Balboa section by Rudolf Schindler.

You told me once that when you were 12 you wanted to have a work at MoMA. What shocked me was that you even knew about that museum and about art.
When I was eleven my parents gave me a camera and I started taking pictures. I was fascinated by photography. Then, at 12, I got a Rolleiflex. I read the literature, which there wasn't much to speak of. There were no art magazines. I wouldn't have seen them anyway. I think there was *Art News,* from New York, run by Thomas Hess. Photography magazines were like *Popular Mechanics,* more technical than aesthetic. Still, from reading camera magazines I learned about Robert Frank's *The Americans* and about Edward Weston—who I wanted to be. I thought Weston was doing the best thing you could do with photography. But photography wasn't so much an art.

How did you know about art—it must have seemed very far away?
Yes, very far away. There wasn't much in the West Coast. Los Angeles as an art center is very recent. But if you knew about Weston, you learned that he had a retrospective at MoMA. There was so little written about photography that it was easy to learn such things.

Did you develop your own pictures?
I did, and it was difficult

I thought you worked at a photography shop?
I did. I worked at William Current's shop. Much later he was in MoMA's collection. I learned more from him than from anyone. My father had died, when I was 12, and I was looking, I guess, for a mentor.

Did you have brothers and sisters?
A No.

So you were filling up your own space
I was trying too. There was something odd about the way families lived. Everything was conformist. Everyone was a Republican, everyone in Orange County, anyway.

Did you get a car when you were 16?
Fifteen and a half, because in California there was something called a Learner's Permit, which lets you drive, so long as you are accompanied by a licensed California driver.

What was your first car?
A 1959 Porsche 1600, which I wrecked when I was 16. The next one was also a Porsche. I wrecked it even faster.

What was high school like?
I was enrolled in high school. I wasn't very good. I was bored to death. One comment about me read: "If you just considered the days Mr. Baltz was present, he did rather well." I was absent, legally or illegally, over half the time. I wanted to study about art and to stay home and read.

Did you learn about art?
I read all those cheap Skira and Abrams books with the tipped-in illustrations. On Monday nights there was an open-door walkabout at the gallery district in LA, so I started seeing galleries. I wanted to be an artist. Most people don't know what they want to do with their lives. I had an absolutely clear idea: I wanted to work in the medium of photography; I didn't want to be a painter or sculptor—or work in advertising, fashion, or make war pictures or documentary photography. I also

wanted to live in a beautiful place and have beautiful women come to visit at all hours of the day or night.

Did you shoot only in black and white or also in color?
First in color, and then I realized that every photograph I admired was in black and white, because all artistic photographs were in black and white and remained so until the mid-Seventies.

What photographers interested you?
At about 16 or 17, I wanted to meet people like Weston, Wynn Bullock. I'd even call them up and ask if I could meet them.

Did you meet artists?
Some years later, when I was about 18, I met the painter, John McLaughlin, who was in his seventies. I met him through William Current. Bill photographed his work as a favor, and wasn't that fond of it. Bill's taste was not minimalist; he thought McLaughlin didn't use the possibilities of painting—the hand, color. His idea of a great painting would probably be Matisse or Kandinsky, which you can't argue with. Bill had a McLaughlin painting, given to him for photographing the work. He had the painting in the camera shop, which he designed in the neoplastic in style—white, clean, rectangular, primary colors—which no one responded to in one way or another. Then when Bill left Laguna—a bad businessman, though he did get a Guggenheim and then moved to Santa Fe, but before leaving he asked me if I wanted to buy the painting. It was a ridiculously low price. But he insisted on the price, asking me, "Do you want it or not?" So I paid and got it.

What did you think of McLaughlin's paintings?
I thought they were sublimely beautiful. I thought they did what a painting could do—with extremely limited means he could make something seriously contemplative and moving. I thought they were brilliant…. McLaughlin was a Japanese speaker, an authority on Japanese art, he'd worked in Japan as part of the American occupation, but he never studied painting, and so it's hard to find an undamaged McLaughlin painting. He was as careful as he knew how to be, but, as a result, the paintings were often not in good shape. I had a friend doing a Masters Thesis on McLaughlin and I asked that friend if he could arrange that I meet him, which he did, and McLaughlin said to bring the painting by for him to look at. McLaughlin looked very much like an English gentleman, sort of like Walthur König. He and his wife invited me in. I thought I'd just drop it off. He told me to check back in a couple of weeks, but then he needed another month, because he completely repainted the painting, which is on a kind of cardboard, which is already problematical. I took back the painting, and he refused compensation. I felt guilty for taking up his time, but I realized later he was delighted, because no one saw him or called on him.

Was he a recognized artist?
He'd had his picture in *Life* magazine, and was in a show at the LA County Museum—five California abstract artists. He showed at an LA gallery. But it was a smaller world.

Were McLaughlin's paintings anything like other contemporary art you'd seen?
Well, it was like California Hard Edge, but I didn't know that then.

What did you do after you finished high school?
In 1963-64 I went to a community college in Carmel, on the Monterey Peninsula, because I couldn't get in anywhere better. But it was near to where Weston had lived. I studied as much art history as I could, which wasn't a lot, and took courses in photography, which didn't help much. I stated out as a business major because the Vietnam War was on and I thought that would look more serious. I still believed in classical photography. I went out to Point Lobos to shoot, but after a while I realized I lived in a different world, so I started looking around my world. I loved Weston—still do—but my world was different. I wanted to find something of my own time, something that had authenticity to me.

What did you photograph?
Back then I shot in nature, but I later destroyed all that work. Then I started what became the *Prototypes* when I was still in community college, but on my way to the San Francisco Art institute, which I went to up until 1966-1967, the summer of love.

Did you change your way of dress?
I never got the style right, and the movement didn't hold much interest for me. I didn't react well to the drugs they liked. I liked to drink; I liked amphetamines; cocaine hadn't been invented for

Americans yet. I hated smoking pot. I tried. And I'm not much into music. I was more of a Beatnik—literature and alcohol. But you had to learn the language and social codes. You had to know your astrological rising sign. If you didn't learn them, you had no one to talk to, no sexual partners. When I was 18, 19, 20 my friends and I considered *Naked Lunch* America's greatest work of literature. We could all quote it at length. Years later I contacted Grove Press to buy the film rights, even though I suppose the book is not filmable, which Cronenburg proved. Burroughs was a really bad boy.

He came from enough money that he could give himself permission to be bad, unlike Ginsberg, who always remained a nice person. Those people—the Beats—largely defined us. What were you reading—and always reading as you do still?
Norman O. Brown, Borges, Pynchon: I was always reading.

You were 22 in 1967. What was the San Francisco Art Academy like?
At its absolute bottom. It was a new building, which wasn't finished, so it was a building site. No one came to class, even the professors. I did two years, finished my undergraduate work, cum laude, though I spent a total of 21 hours on campus. I was living across the bay in Sausalito, taking pictures, developing them at my own house. But they'd also opened a graduate program and couldn't refuse their graduates into it, so I blackmailed them.

Did you make good prints back then?
The ones in my retrospectives are all from then.

You photographed a 1957 Chevy.
I photographed a '57 Bel Air. It was the most elegant car of the era—it had everything.

That was my first car; it cost $365. You first called them the Highway Series—the title reminds me of Dylan or the Beat Generation. Were you listening to music?
Not like you did. We all listened to folk music, protest music, Dylan. I thought that what happens in America happens along the edge of the highway.

Did you feel different?
Well, for a long time I didn't see anyone who was interested in what I was interested in. When I was in upper-division art school in San Francisco I was always taking heat for not taking cool pictures of rock stars, something part of the hippie world. Remember the New York/New Wave show?

Yeah: Queens, 1981, at PS 1. I'd arrived in New York the year before.
Yeah: a good photograph was a shot of Blondie. But my pictures were well enough made that people couldn't complain.

Let's talk gear. You mentioned Edward Weston, who seems to have had a similar personality as you—sensitive, quiet, solitary, serious, uncompromising, not particularly materialistic, but he used a large format camera.
Weston made contact prints using an 8 x10-inch view camera, probably because the materials and objects up until the 1950s weren't very good. He couldn't have made a Gursky-sized print. But 8 x 10 (20 x 25 cm) is big enough to see an image. Otherwise, if you introduced a lens system, at another generation you get a degradation, and then you had to use a different paper, to make a bigger picture, say 30 x 40cm or 50 x 60cm, which might not have been worth it. The paper that you printed contact prints on was very good and had a very long, with very subtle, tonal range, which the larger paper didn't have then. It also took a long time to develop, say, when you turned a 100-watt light on the paper from about a foot away and left it on for minutes.

What did you shoot with?
I used a Rolleiflex or a Leica. Everything I shot until about 1980 was simple 35mm film. But I had help in finding very sharp lenses. There were stores around San Jose where you could buy Leica lenses. They'd be in a cardboard box, and cost $12.50 each. William Current told me to look carefully at them and pick a couple out and test them out.

What size picture did you make?
Each one was roughly 7 x 9 inches (18 x 23 cm). The quality of paper was much better than it is now. There was a lot more silver in it. I used Agfa paper and 35mm microfilm, which wasn't complicated, but if you developed it for continuous tone it failed every lens you put it with, hazing and fading at corners. It had problems. If the average film was ASA 125, it was ASA 6, which means you had to use it on a tripod, outdoors, on a sunny day. Unless you wanted to use your lens wide open at F2, but then you discovered that your lenses aren't sharp enough, because the optics at

the time weren't that good, at least until F5.6 or -8. There's also a very short developing time, and to do this you have to be very precise. Film rolls that developed for, say, 20 minutes, you can shake a bit in the can to make the negative, before developing the picture. But this takes a minute or two, so any mistake accrues. When it did work, it had no latitude; you took the correct exposure to make the picture. With this you would take five exposures, one spot on, one over, one under, two over, two under, and one would be printable, so it was tricky. I did it to get the sharpness.

Did you learn all this by yourself?
I never really learned all the techniques of photography, such as developing film. So I had bad negatives for one reason or another, yet I wanted perfect prints, which is very time consuming.

Weston photographed nudes, still-lifes, and landscape pictures. Everything was a kind of positive, beautiful image.
Weston was the first photographer to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship. And he made a book called *California and the West,* which was 64 images made in California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Oregon, and they're the most beautiful and the most straightforward of his images — sometimes almost anti-compositional, sometimes leaving elements in a picture, say, a sign in the Sonora desert, a coffee cup. Most people think of Weston as more romantic than that.

But you take almost the opposite view, starting with the Highway Series, or Prototypes, as you later called them. OK, a beautiful 1957 Chevy leans toward an aesthetic object, but the majority of your subjects are not beautiful subjects, though each print is a well-made, maybe even a beautiful object. I mean, beautiful things are basically women and landscapes, and both imply some kind of relationship to security and safety, with women embodying culture and the landscape representing, at best, nurture or a search for safe haven against wild animals and what Samuel Beckett called the attacks of dogs and marauders.
Things can also be beautiful for their extra-visual qualities, which really doesn't involve anything other than the eye. What a picture can eroticize is a different level of intelligence, which is erotic. Look at a physically crafted porn star and how sexless they end up looking.

But Weston, or even Ansel Adams or Robert Adams, gives you something like comfort food.
Well, Ansel Adams does because he's not a very good photographer; he's more of a popularizer, a fundraiser, a businessman; he wasn't an artist. He made postcard pictures. But Weston—unlike Ansel Adams—was trying to be a contemporary artist. He corresponded with Kandinsky. Weston realized 19th century landscape ideals contemporaneously.

But you read something entirely different in the landscape.
I was 22, rebellious, and against society and the vulgarity of our country. I remember when I was seven or eight, walking around our seaside town, most of it looked like the desert with new houses. I thought the whole world couldn't be this ugly, cold, and alienating. Probably all Californians my age and older feel like they're the same age as the city they grew up in. I think Sartre wrote that American cities are straight lines and the citizens are older than the cities. It makes you feel meaningless. In European cities there are traces, even monuments, to human effort and persistence. Places like Los Angeles or Las Vegas make you feel like you could disappear overnight.

Americans grew up with newness. Maybe Weston was photographing the end of the frontier.
Everything we grew up in turned out to be the end of a frontier. I saw a world that was being shoved down my throat, and I thought by putting up a mirror to it I could show it to itself.

Did you have an idea of a better world?
Well, Europe is better.

When you were taking those pictures were you simply looking for subjects? Did they relate to each other?
I was just shooting images, later they started to relate to each other.

How did the "Highway" pictures evolve into the Prototypes *series?*
I was looking for subjects that would sustain a single body of work. I found interesting things in a few photographs, but not enough to make, say, 50. Sometime later I needed to call them something. So when it seemed that I might show them, someone, I can't remember who it was, asked for a name and the word *prototype* came into my head and I said call them that. Actually I misremembered a title that I actually wanted to reference. Which was from an exhibition Joseph

Kosuth had made at the Kunsthalle Bern, which included four little, very beautiful, badly printed books. I was also working on The Tract Houses, which I would eventually show.

Where were you going to show them?
At Castelli Gallery.

You went from zero to the Leo Castelli Gallery? How did that happen?
A guy named Hal Glicksman was the museum director at Pomona College, where I was studying in 1970-71 — I studied art, but as a photographer. I got in by showing what I'd done of the *Prototypes,* which hadn't yet had a name. The graduate school was strange because it didn't have its own faculty. You studied with various undergraduate teachers and do more so you got graduate credit. Pomona was interesting. Chris Burden went there. Hal looked at the work and wanted to show it in the gallery in the coming fall. He said he also had a friend whom he thought would enjoy seeing them. I was happy about that. It turned out to be Irving Blum, an already well-known art dealer who looked like a straight version of Cary Grant. He said they were "marvelous," that they had a "classic beauty." Irving called the Pasadena Art Museum to get them to show the work. The photography curator looked at them, and was nice, but didn't say anything about wanting to show them. Irving was pissed as hell. I was apologetic, embarrassed. Irving said the guy's an idiot and no wonder the museum is in trouble. He asked me if I went to New York. I said, not so often—I'd never been. He said October's a good time. I'll give you names of friends of mine. So I went in October, and I met Henry Geldzahler, who was working at the Metropolitan. I met the head of *Aperture* magazine. I met Philip Johnson, whose partner had a gallery, and loved the work but didn't have an opening available to show them. He said I should see Leo Castelli, which never quite occurred to me. He set up an appointment for the following week. I was staying at a hotel, on 55th Street, which I hated. But I stayed and went to the Leo Castelli Gallery, then still uptown, on 79th Street. He hadn't opened downtown. He was busy and said to come back in an hour. I left a portfolio, The Tract Houses, in case he wanted to look at them. I went to the 79th Street bar and had a double cognac, and then another, and then I realized I was late. I was nervous as hell. I didn't think anything would happen. No one had ever met Leo Castelli. I expected nothing. I figured I'd get months of dinner stories just from the visit. So, I ran back, and he's about to leave. Someone is helping him on with his overcoat. I thought he would tear me apart for being late. And he says in his very hushed voice, "Congratulations, Mr Baltz. I'm sorry I have to take a flight for Europe and I'm going to be late if I don't leave now. But these are wonderful pieces and I'd like to buy a set and exhibit them. You can work out the details with my wife and the gallery director."

Wow! How many images were in a set? How much did you sell them for? How many in the edition?
I sold the set for $1000 dollars, 25 images. They still have them. I showed them working prints. It was only then that I had to print them and figure out the edition. We came up with 12, with no artist's proofs. I hadn't thought about that as yet. One set of the *Tract Houses* went to Irving Blum, one to one of my professors, one to Hal Glicksman.

How had you come to make The Tract Houses? What did you want to say with them? What were you after?
This was somewhere around the time when sculpture conquered the universe. Not object sculpture, but the idea that any object, or collection of objects, or spaces or acts could be seen sculpturally, no matter how commonplace. A pile of dirt could be read for its sculptural qualities; a pile of dirt on the back of a pick-up truck could be seen as a parody of kinetic sculpture. Everything could be recovered for this Weltanschauung, including painting (like early Frank Stella) and language (like by Lawrence Weiner or Joseph Kosuth). It seemed a triumph of the power of art. Art changed nothing, but by informing people's perception of the phenomenal world it changed everything. The world was already in the condition of art, waiting to be noticed as such. As Robert Irwin famously said, " I feel like a man sitting beside a river selling water." I think that's one of the reasons some or many of The *Prototypes* are jarring is because I use a high-art photographic technique to present views of nothing, that is, of no special interest per se. In my mind this was absurd, a metaphor of the condition.

You were different also from someone like Gary Winogrand. You had a different content from the photography of the time.
Gary always somehow showed himself, the photographer, with all those angles and hand-held images. A lot of people liked albums, family snapshots, but I never did. I liked the photographs in

Real Estate office windows, which are technically correct and heartbreakingly empty. Let's say that, with notable exception, I liked photographs made by cameras on a tripod.

Did those sentiments reflect your awareness of Minimalism, Conceptual Art, or even Land Art?
They were all closer to my sensibility, but I had a lot of sources—Bruce Nauman, Donald Judd, etc.

You were still in school.
Yes. I was in graduate school, working as a teaching assistant—actually teaching a class. One day when I was teaching a seminar class at Claremont College, Leo called the school. The receptionist got the call, and seemed to understand that it was a very important message, so she came and got me out of class, and saying, in front of everyone, "Excuse me, Mr Baltz, there's a Mr Castelli on the line for you." So I dismissed the class. Leo confirmed the show, exhibition dates, asked which image on the announcement.

Did your life transform?
Yes and no. Everybody hated me because I'd gotten all the goodies without paying any street dues. It was a brush with fame and fortune, because there was actually no market at all—none at all. We sold one set to a museum and that was it. I mean, back then, a Nauman drawing might sell for $125. Money was worth much more back then. Five dollars would fill your car's gas tank.

Showing the Tract Houses *at the Leo Castelli Gallery; did that in any way lead you to think differently about your life or work?*
It was a powerful validation, but you have to realize, everybody hated my work. All the students I'd been to school with thought my work was too uptight. They wanted grainy pictures of Janis Joplin singing at a concert. What united them was being from a middle class family and not wanting to go in the family business. They were all sort of remittance men.

What were you?
My mother deserves a lot of credit, because she sold the family business while I was in college. She told me that I was about to go into the world and would find it very difficult and that I'd beat my head against walls and the idea of going back to Newport Beach to a safe business that's making a lot of money might seem very tempting and she wanted to remove that temptation. She and my father had spent their lives in a mortuary and hated every minute, every minute.

Hadn't your father been a musician?
He sure as hell wasn't a mortician. That was the only medical business he could get into. So my mother didn't want that business to be live and functioning when I was out in the job market. I couldn't imagine doing that, but who could know what an unemployed person would do?

The Tract Houses *and the* Industrial Parks *were bodies of work, in series.*
They were invented to be that.

Did you ever sell them separately?
Not at first. I don't remember when that changed, but collectors or galleries were buying portfolios and selling the photographs separately. They came in a box, but people would break it up to get more money.

Did you have to go along with that?
I became more accepting of that after the *Industrial Parks* because I had a book, and no matter what happened to the objects, I had the book. And one of the joys of multiples is that they can be put back together.

What came after the Tract Houses*?*
The *New Industrial Parks at Irvine.* They were from the area I drove through to go from where I lived in Laguna Beach to Claremont College where I taught. There was nothing in Irvine when I grew up, but things were going up fast, including a university. People like Chris Burden and Douglas Davis have studied at the new university, which had been built at Irvine. Barbara Rose was one of the visiting professors.

Joseph Kosuth once remarked that art making had become a form of noticing—rather than a form of copying or imitating, which is what most of art history is about. You seem to have made photographs about what you noticed was occurring around you.
This was the richest, most powerful country in the world, and what did it do? It made shopping malls, tract houses, industrial parks…

"The New Topographics" show at the Eastman House, in Rochester, New York, in January 1975, subtitled "the man-altered landscape"—how did that happen for you?

The second time I was in NY, which was for the show at Castelli Gallery, I went up to Rochester and showed them the work. This was Eastman's private mansion. It was created sometime in the autumn of 1940, and had an enormous collection of historical photographs from France, just escaping Nazi occupation, which were to be given to a charitable cause. Beaumont Newhall, then the curator at MoMA, took it over, and under his direction they showed classic museum photography. But that had run its course by 1960 or so, and they hired some young curators—three of them, each in their early-to-mid 20s, each egging the other on to do an interesting show. One of them was Robert Sobieszek, who later became the curator at the LA County museum; one was William Jenkins, who later had a quiet teaching career in Arizona, as did Tom Barrow, who went to New Mexico. They said they loved my photographs and would like to buy a portfolio and to show it, which they did. My work also fed into something they'd been thinking about and working on — a lot of work that I hadn't seen — which dealt with a spectrum of a single subject, the semi-built, highway landscapes, etc. "The New Topographics" show was a pretty good idea, and the exhibition was well done and well chosen. The only thing debated was why Ed Ruscha wasn't in the show, and maybe that was because he was so much earlier and was making art book. Nevertheless, Ruscha was the presiding spirit over the whole show, because we all knew those books, and we all admired them.

What did you show?

I showed 18 pictures from the *Industrial Parks.*

Speaking of Ruscha, did you consider him a photographer in the same way as Weston—or even yourself? I mean, Ruscha's pictures aren't frontal and compositionally squared, and seem more concerned with the subject than the photographic image itself. I'm reminded of the quad of Ruscha photographs exhibited at Thomas Zander's gallery in Cologne in 2012, along with your early works and some paintings by John McLaughlin— a brilliant exhibition. To me, Ruscha's pictures weren't so much great photographs as a brilliant series of images about a specific subject, LA apartments.

Well, let's go back. If you'd read exactly what Clement Greenberg wrote about how art progresses through self-criticism, denial of extraneous factors, and constant refinement; if you believed it as an artist and acted on it, what you'd end up with is Conceptual Art, which Greenberg hated. He called it novelty art. Then you had to realize that Greenberg wasn't playing in good faith. Whenever he said the word *art,* he meant painting. He was biased in terms of what painting could be. The most celebrated Greenbergian paintings, like Pollock or Newman's, didn't ultimately follow his precepts, either. Photography was the same. If you read what, say, Weston was writing in the1920s he talked about an industrial medium, reflective surfaces, contemporary subject matter—it's a straighter line to Ruscha's *26 Gas Stations* than it would ever be to Ansel Adam's pictures of Yosemite and their kitschy calendar sensibility. I was one of those guys who believed in straight photography, and what Ruscha was doing was simply straighter, photography degree zero, when photography became more and more transparent. It wasn't about the photographer or virtuoso techniques. Ruscha was perfectly good technically. What is a good print after all?

When you were making your Prototypes, *Greenberg was still king of the art influencers. Painters discussed "the mark" as a basic gestural component. Paintings were objects. Ed Ruscha fit into the Pop Art angle with his paintings and the Conceptual Art angle with the books. Greenberg certainly hated it. But an important element in art is how it's made, and the way Ruscha's makes painting is a lot more technically calculated than his photographs. He comes from old-school style of hand-drawn, hand-painted design. When he takes a photograph he doesn't exactly seem to be looking for light— as many photographers do—he's looking for content. His content was always incredible, but what he brought to the photograph was, for me anyway, something like John Lennon's playing the piano, which he does perfectly well for his needs, but it's not very good piano playing. I'm a fan of Ruscha, across the board, but I find that your photographs were and are always better because of what you bring to the material. Ruscha made books and good conceptual art, but not great photographs.*

I like Ruscha's photographs as photographs. I think they're very good. The technique is fine. Robert Frank pictures are grainy and blurry and they look great. A meticulous Weston looks great, too. But what makes a good object depends on the intentions and what you represent.

The Bechers were in "The New Topographics" show. Were you already familiar with their work?

Yes, but only because I'd seen their show at the Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in New York.

Did you sense an artistic resemblance?
Yeah, but in a spectrum. In "The New Topographics" show, they occupied the most conceptual end while the most traditional photographer, who was also in the show, was my friend Henry Wessel. His vision — and the tradition he comes from derived from Friedlander and Winogrand. Stephen Shore was in the show, too, and the only artist to show color pictures. Nicholas Nixon made wonderful pictures, which he'd shot from tall buildings in Boston, New York, etc. Wonderful. He'd had another brilliant idea. He married a Waspy young woman with three sisters, and every year he took pictures of all four of the Brown sisters. Now they go back like 40 years, and we can watch their Waspy female aging process.

You start something like that but can never know how it will end up—marriage especially.
I'm not sure that was an obligation for him.
Were those pictures in the show?
No.

Stephen Shore was a neighborhood kid on Union Square and at 14 or so he was shooting in Warhol's Factory.
All his shots are recorded in books. For "The New Topographics" he used a large view camera and made beautiful contact prints. The quality, tonal range, contrast, etc., of a contact print is the same in color as it is in black and white.

What were the critical reactions to "The New Topographics" show?
None to speak of. It was reviewed in *Art in America*—Eastman House paid the journalist to come, put him up, etc. That was it. Then nothing, though it traveled to the Otis Art Institute, because I knew the curator, and then it went to Princeton University, in New Jersey, in the summer, when no one is there. Then six months later people were talking about the backlash against the show.

Against it?
Well, I never saw a "fore-lash." People said the photographs were cold, anti-humanistic—emperor's new clothes. I liked it, and the show was redone again only a few years ago, which terrified me.

What happened in between?
By the mid-1980s people were talking about how influential the show had become. But when it was shown again I wondered what people would think, or even if it had been destroyed by its success. It doesn't look the same now. And most people have been doing different—sometimes very different—work. Most of the photographers in that exhibition were always experimenting.

But it had an influence. Could that be because photography was also changing?
Yes, but it wasn't a hotspot of controversy in 1975. I felt the show was ignored.

The New York art world was in transition from performance, minimalism and conceptual back to painting, expressionism.
I don't think the product issue in art emerged until the 1980s, when Reagan's counter-revolution and the deregulation of the stock market created a new class of rich people, who wanted art, as rich people always do. Minimalism and Conceptual art were already sorted out, very expensive, mostly unavailable, and, of course, very difficult for the newly rich collector, and, therefore, the last thing a master of the universe wants in his apartment. For most people, art means painting. Reagan era art buyers wanted apartment-sized paintings. They wanted narrative art, as do critics, because it gives them something to write about. Concrete art or abstract art is tougher. So the 1980s were, in retrospect, a pretty empty period. Your friend Richard Prince is one of the very few Americans who make art I'd be interested in seeing.

What do the Prototypes, Tract Houses, *and the* Industrial Parks *have in common?*
Things, homes, public places in general.

What came after them?
After the *Industrial Parks,* I did *Maryland,*which was a bicentennial work, 1976, organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art. I drove east, got a sublet on Capitol Hill—a really weird neighborhood in the process of gentrifying. I went in the direction of the Maryland suburbs—during the coldest winter in recorded history. My then-wife came with me. She'd sit in the car and honk the horn for me to come back, so that I didn't get frostbite.

What was different about the East Coast?
Everything wasn't new, but what wasn't new was generally dirty and broken.

Compared to Los Angeles?
Los Angeles had a little downtown from the Chandler era. But LA didn't really exist. It had all these little cities growing up around it. It's more like sprawling London. As John Gossage said, "On the East Coast is one endless slum from Washington, D.C. to Boston with a few silk-stocking districts packed into each one."

What did you do after Maryland*?*
I came back west and photographed around *Reno, Nevada,* which was a kind of non-place, given to the Mafia, a state that was kind of a left over, different from but related to Vegas, without the Mafia. Later I photographed *Park City,*Utah, a similar place, given to Mormons. These were all places I didn't care for, but highways ran through them.

Nevada, Park City, San Quentin, and *Candlestick Point*: what drove those subjects?
For *Nevada,* I had a Guggenheim Fellowship and was very curious about the state, because it was California's grubby backyard, where things were thrown over the fence, where they kept mining, missile ranges, and the Mafia. When you drive east on I-80 from Tahoe to Reno you think it's a godforsaken hole. When you enter Nevada, you know you've crossed a natural border. It's exotic, and very much the West, where people are friendly and don't ask questions, especially in northern Nevada. I was interested in that.

What about *Park City*?
I knew people in Salt Lake City, Utah, where I stayed. One of the tourist places, Park City, is located about 45 miles out of Salt Lake City. It was an old silver mining town, and one of the few places that didn't have an overwhelmingly Mormon population. Miners were mostly Irish, and Catholic, not Mormon. What I saw was weirder than anything I'd ever seen. Years ago, when the Pan-Am building was going up in NYC, over Grand Central Station on Park Avenue South there was an illustration of the building standing on the moon, asking where could it look better. At Park City I thought of the moon. Tract houses were going up all over the place in a flat area, before you got to a canyon. They were all kinds of styles—Greco Roman, Log Cabin, American Colonial—and constructed by many developers, most of whom worked in multiple styles: they built a wooden structure, called a balloon frame, and tacked on a style with finish carpentry, the American way. They seemed badly built, like hellish madness. I was fascinated in the same way that I was making The Industrial Parks. I didn't have to drive around looking for things to photograph. The landscape was changing constantly with new construction. The same area I'd visited two months earlier would be transformed. So I photographed there over a period of 14 months, coming and going from San Francisco.

And then *San Quentin Point*...
It was close to home, and I was in a difficult financial situation when I did that.

Were you teaching?
I was never known enough to get a teaching job. In fact I had to borrow a guy's camera

What kind of camera?
Until then I used Leicas, but the film that I'd been using was no longer manufactured, so I had to use a more normal film, like a 64 ASA film, and I didn't have a camera. So I borrowed one from R. Crumb's lawyer.

I hope Crumb approved... The San Quentin Point *images are also around this time, and similar.*
They kind of came from the Bogart movie, *Dark Passage,* when he first escapes prison from San Quentin Prison, before he has a face change, which you don't see until the end when his own face is revealed. I thought of that walking around the landscape. I was in dark mood myself, I'd just read Jonathan Shell's book, *The Fate of the Earth,* and seeing the landscape as a dead man might see it. It had both wet and dry areas—not yet $1.5million homes.

Not unlike Candlestick Point*…*
That was the location of what would be the stadium parking lot. Its only value was as a parking lot. Anyway, I'd go out to those places, which were dangerous because the crack wars were going on, but then I realized that if they didn't see the car, which I parked far away, I'd be safe. Candlestick Point was a huge weed lot. They wouldn't even notice me. There was a powerful, politically active Black community, whose representative was Willie Brown—Downtown Willie Brown.

This was a period when you shifted from the Prototypes *and the* Tract Houses. *How would you describe that change?*
The space opened, and it was not a great time. It was between then and *Candlestick Point* that I culminated what I thought I wanted to do. There was more space in the shot, starting with *Park City,* and then by *Candlestick Point,* there's nothing "in" those pictures. I've always felt that my series were codependent, but people always find a favorite.

Isn't that just how it is?
Try that with *Candlestick Point*—they're all pretty much equal, pretty much alike.

In Candlestick Point *you have the Wizard of Oz moment where there's suddenly color. What was that about?*
From 1976, when Eggleston was first shown at MoMA, and a great furor was made over his work, we started to have the "new color"—the new American Color, the new British color, the new Western color. A market opened up for treacly looking calendar colors, like Joel Meyerowitz's pictures. The color has been drained out. Most color was saturated. There was such an argument at the time, but it stopped being an argument by the end of the 1980s, so I used them both color and black and white.

Is that coincidental with black and white's disappearance from the landscape?
I think normal pictures were black-and-white until about 1975, and then there was a lot of hullaballoo, and then after about ten years, the average picture was in color. Before that, magazine covers —even *Life* magazine pictures—and most so-called classy pictures were done in black-and-white. I wanted dusty colors, and had a certain amount of difficulty at the lab because the guy would always give me back art pictures. This was the first time someone else developed my pictures. I wasn't willing to do color development. I had to find a nice, smart person, whom I could talk to and who would understand that I wanted an almost-black-and-white picture, but in color. Which was easy to do, but they wouldn't believe that's what I wanted. In the late 1980s you had a choice between two kinds of color: Type C, which prints from negatives and is subtle, very beautiful, but not very permanent; or Cibachrome, which prints from transparencies and is relatively permanent, like 75 years, and was high-gloss reflective. But everything looked unnatural.

Wasn't Candlestick Point *semi-matte?*
Yeah. And Cibachrome worked fine as long as you weren't photographing natural colors. A parking garage at night was perfect for Cibachrome. Shooting Yosemite Valley would end up being a fake-looking picture no matter what. It was a characteristic of the paper. All my night pictures were shot in Cibachrome. Anyway, they make a scan, and now they print with laser.

Nevertheless, Candlestick Point *seems to mark a rupture or transition.*
I was winding down from something. This was the piece in which I took everything I knew and used it and didn't want to repeat it again, ever.

In a single piece made up of many photographs?
Yes.

Has it ever been sold in parts?
Not that I know of.

It's like a strange scrub landscape.
I looked for that, because it isn't a typical landscape.

Was it anything like Smithson's looking for ravaged landscapes?
Maybe. I recently drove down the coast of Croatia. This was Ulysses' landscape, and it's remained largely the same. When I think about the landscape in Orange County, when and where I grew up, and looking at it today, they took paradise and created New Jersey in a generation. William Burroughs said that America was always evil, waiting there lurking even when the first settlers walked across the Bering Strait....

In the mid-1970s things started to shift culturally, inner-city gentrification grew, Americans were eating more and better European food and watching European movies, and starting to wear designer clothes.
We learned that Italian restaurants had things other than spaghetti with tomato sauce—and we discovered sushi.

You once mentioned to me that your retrospective traveling exhibition, "Rule Without Exception," coincided with what you called a "paradigm shift." Had you read Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolution, *where we get that term, and where he speaks of the artificiality of grand theories against the forces of reality? Was it any kind of influence?*

Yes, I'd read it. He gave a term that explained what was going on in vanguard art as well as science, which claimed a belief in progress and a reductive logic, and how the investigations in art had become reduced to philosophical observations, which didn't exactly resolve the business of art, selling paintings, and so on. It was an end game, where the only hope was to kick over he chess table. Artists were making minimalist and very specialist and elitist art that was inaccessible to most people.

Earlier you said you were perceived as an elitist artist?

Yes, because my art wasn't figurative or narrative-based, and it didn't speak to emotional issues, or certain political ones, because I was a White man from a middle-class background making art. Society wants to confine membership to important people, but artists have wanted to increase their public to come look at art. People don't consider scientists as elitist, although the scientists who created NASA did so with information and skills people didn't know about or understand, or even have to know, which seems elitist to me. So science got away from that criticism because science is taken more seriously.

Abstract Expressionist artists and Minimalist artist Carl Andre walked around wearing worker's clothing; artists in the '80s went from dressing like punks to wearing black. In the '60s sculptors made art out of industrial materials, reducing materials to simple forms, which, to me, was a manifestation of the machine age—all Minimalist art was made by machine; Conceptual Art tended to resemble plans. In the '80s art was modernist in spirit, design, and intention.

Art for a century— Impressionism, Cubism, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Joseph Kosuth's materialist representations, or even Lawrence Weiner's word art—was a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, which described a sculptural condition with industrial ramifications.

Your beautifully made images suggested something darker, also politically.

It was intended to be a subversive investigation of the phenomenal world.

So what was your paradigm shift?

With *Candlestick Point* I'd done everything I could working that way, with that subject. I was tired of working like a painter—tired of going into my studio, making prints, taking them to a gallery, and offering them for sale. The darkroom was work. I wanted to participate in a more potent way in people's actual live, maybe by doing public projects. During this time, circa 1989, there was a centenary of Duchamp and baseball, and the 150th anniversary of photography. So a lot of places did their anniversary shows, but the photography shows tended to be somewhat empty. Photography had a history that most agreed upon, then after around 1956 it went in various directions. Add to that, Robert Franks's, *The Americans,* which changed the emotional key of photography from European pathos to American irony. But for their centennial exhibition, the LA County Museum featured David Hockney. Others showed their best historical photographs. No one showed the history of photography as a contended area, because everyone pretty much agreed with it. I didn't. The museums all did shows to validate that history. American art was also running out of steam, and newly rich stockbrokers wanted art for their apartment walls—small paintings, usually figurative, but not video, performance, photography, or sculpture.

How did you decide to change?

Spending more time in Europe where public projects existed. It was the end of the Reagan years, the first Bush years. America had changed for the worst. During the Age of Manet a chasm had opened up between the values of the bourgeoisie and the values of art. During the Reagan 1980s that breach was finally closed and artists became bourgeois. They made art for something other than it's own sake. It was made for houses in the Hamptons.

Because their lofts got fancier and the galleries got richer—because of the art world?

I didn't imagine it would be like that when I started out. I believed that art was oppositional, since Manet anyway.

Did you ever receive a stipend from a gallery?

No. I never asked for one. They weren't gifts anyway, but debts against future sales.

Was Candlestick Point *linked to this recognition? During this time photography changed in the galleries, which showed big ones like Jeff Wall's painting-oriented photographs.*
Jeff Wall made tableaux; the first years had many brilliant ones, but it couldn't be forced..

Did you know Vija Celmins, and like her work?
Her work is amazing.

I interviewed her years ago. She had a small painting of a starry sky on the easel and I tried to get her to talk about her work in terms of geography and space and human thresholds. She wouldn't have it. She saw her works as made by hand, the hand of a painter, and the paintings were about painting, and not about the thresholds of space or time or eternity.
Richter speaks the same way.

But they maintained their way of making art, while you wanted to move forward. How did you do that? And how did you live?
I never had a huge income, and there was never a lot of investment in what I was doing, so I wasn't giving up so much. I suppose if I had a waiting list and a couple of kids in private school I might have thought differently. But I had nothing to lose, and I wanted to do something that interested me.

And so?
Whenever art museums were built in California they made site-specific works, usually with a photographer, who would interpret the site before construction. Joe Deal did a massive documentary site-survey for the Getty. I proposed something for the Newport Harbor Museum. I'm a native son and all that. But once I got there, I didn't find anything to do. I didn't want to photograph more land being churned up. I could do that easily enough, but that was all the more reason to *not* do it.

What did you do?
The first impression of a place one has left is that it's smaller than you thought. It had also become expensive, but when I was a kid the only expensive property was on the water, and was mostly of interest if you had a boat. They were the luxury houses. Otherwise Midwestern Republicans had installed themselves on a not very beautiful part of the coast, but it had a natural harbor, which is why movie stars like John Wayne lived there. There wasn't a Marina Del Rey, because of the coastline; there wasn't a marina until you got to San Diego. One of FDRs works projects was to build a jetty maybe a mile long into the sea, which influenced the cross tides and made it more hospitable to small boats.

Then you somehow decided to do The Deaths in Newport *project—a book about a local murder, with a Chanderlesque style of writing that really did evoke the era. Was that a personal matter?*
That was a story that my father was fond of because it was fond of him—and a father I didn't know so well, because he died when I was 12. I was fascinated by it. It engaged a preconscious, preverbal period in my life, when things went on around me. Once I decided to do it—and I wasn't in a hurry—I researched all the newspaper archives, the *Los Angeles Times* at UCLA, *The Herald Tribune,* which was a Hearst tabloid—William Randolph Hearst was the Murdoch of his time. But his paper had closed the day before I had an appointment to visit their very extensive archives. It was one of the last murder stories before television. It wasn't as big as the Black Dahlia, which was different, because there was no formally accused, where there was in this case, and the police did something they often do to find the guilty person: they convince themselves who did it, manufacture evidence, and perjure themselves basically to frame the guilty party. Quite a few innocent people are framed, but so are most guilty people. That's how they get around tainted or wrong or inconclusive evidence.

Weren't the parents who were killed the girl and her boyfriend rich?
Well, she'd have been rich had she been allowed to inherit the money. It was a very high profile case. The state's attorney general cast his political fortune on it, believing it to be open and shut. But he lost. The defense made a fool of him, and he lost a case he shouldn't have lost. He was not returned to office in the subsequent election, and he was the only Republican at the state level not to be re-elected.

It seems you want the work to be judged for what it is, as art, not as an extension of yourself. You're presence is somehow at a remove. Did you ever see your art as being socially inclined?

Only in subversive ways—I never had much confidence in art that was scolding people. I don't want to say that late Capitalism is wrong and that we shouldn't do it. It's more interesting to plant doubt in people's minds?

What about a Larry Clark photograph, in black and white, of a pregnant teenager shooting up heroin: Is that moralizing, or simply presenting the dark limits of human life? You don't want to know this girl, and yet it shows one of the terrible things we do to ourselves.
I don't think about Larry Clark. But think about Manet's *Olympia.* His model, Victorine Meurent, was a painter herself, and lesbian. She has the strongest look, returning the look of the voyeur, stronger than Mona Lisa, not beautiful, but not a femme fatale, a gamine … none of her works have survived, though there are notices of exhibitions. I was curious about her. Then I heard someone say that since she's a citizen, and that there's information somewhere in the French archives.

Art often gets one to think about the limits of acceptability or even morality, which, it seems to me, is one of the primary interests in life.
There's more everything in America, more stuff. "I tremble for my country, for I know my God is a just God." Jefferson. But after the *Industrial Parks* were shown and known about, though mostly ignored, they received one strong review from Alan Sekula: he thought they aestheticized something that shouldn't be aestheticized. He cited Walter Benjamin's remark about the Krupp factory, saying that if you saw it, you wouldn't have the slightest idea what went on inside, which is certainly true about the Irvine industrial park, and their bays, or groups of bays, some of which were refinishing surfboards, some making instruments for the aerospace program. Walter Hopps' remarked that you couldn't tell if they were making panty hose or mega-death. But I thought more than that. One conclusion to draw from Benjamin concerns the inadequacy of the image and that we need a text to provide information about what's happening. But the image wasn't so inadequate, though maybe not for the Krupp factory. The Irvine buildings were intended to be camouflaged, to look the same. They all had a little sidewalk, a little front lawn, and some shrubbery. But no one walks the sidewalks and no one goes in the front door; they go in the back, where the deliveries are made. It's a little beyond just confusion; they're intended to be confusing and non-offensive, and to evade any curiosity about what goes on inside. They're cheap to build and anything can go on inside.

That's the modern industrial version of 19th century ateliers, which might make shoes or baguettes, or house a brothel. Assuming industrial parks or the assembly line, Taylorism, and the cookie-cutter houses are dangerous, systemic evil seems an exaggeration, including in Sekula's negative critique...
He died recently, and was tendentious adversary—but one can always use a good adversary. He was always calling me to consciousness about the humanistic or Marxist side of life. He thought one should look at the workers. But Los Angeles was not really a working class community: it wasn't a factory town. That aside, I started to think that photography always depicted factories. It's even a byproduct of the industrial revolution—which stringed together many inventions. Photography was combined from optics and printing. It came into existence as a part of industrialization and repays its invention with decades of complimentary portraiture. If you look at modernist, Bauhaus, or the Bechers' pictures, and most of what you see is industrial. You might hate it, but you're not at sea about it. You can understand the pictures and also figure out what things were used for. You didn't have to know about crop surpluses, but you knew what it was and the kind of world it represented. It was industrial. Everyone knew about specialization. It wasn't for sympathy that Marx chose the industrial proletariat; they were exploited, but they were also the ground floor of the future. You could understand mechanics, the fittings and the parts, and how things might have worked, what they did. Of course that all changed after WWII when mechanical technology gave way to electronic technology and the black-box world, of which you don't know what's inside. Now they use the same mainframe computers to send out the mailings for La Redoute that they use for French nuclear targeting. What's different is that it's invisible. And we still don't necessarily build different machines for every different function. That was the idea that began the "Sites of Technology": they reveal very little, they're a beautiful example of Platonic thinking, and in a sense, the more you see the less the know, but you feel satisfied that you're knowing something, even if you miss the point of the function itself. You can't deconstruct it like a machine. But this technology is also constructed with standard parts. They'd ask if I wanted to see the computer room, and I knew what I was going to see—a tiled floor raised about half a meter so they could run all the cords and wires underneath; if there was human work to be done, I'd see a counter space at midpoint, lit by strip lighting at between 50 and 100%, dimming to almost nothing at the floor. People who were

softhearted would put up posters. I was only in one or two places where, when we left the computer room, someone turned off the lights, because they usually kept them on. They're something more than a machine. There's no friction. But it's less ecologically sound than we are led to believe.

Visibility versus invisibility goes back to Buckminster Fuller's theorem about technology evolving from tracks to trackless and from wires to wireless.
Bucky Fuller's P.T. Barnum zeal: I think he was right about many things, and one of the best rabble-rousing public speakers I'd ever heard, though he was killed by the Cold War. Do you remember the DEW Line (Distance Early Warning Line)—the rockets and radars strung around Canada's North Pole—our first signal that the Russian's were coming? I remember because a friend sent me some photographs of a house that Antonioni and Monica Vita had commissioned on the Sardinian coast—a dome house, a series of intersecting white plaster domes, which reminded me of Fuller and surveillance architecture. They weren't Fuller domes, but the architect's. Because every Fulleresque dome I'd seen since the summer of love was ugly, clunky, and pieced-together with wood, while these were beautiful, more like the nave of a Byzantine church, painted white, and much closer in spirit to the space age. But I think the couple broke up before moving in

Are their connections between your work and filmmakers—or even feelings or sentiments related to films that got you to think differently?
Not American filmmakers. Hitchcock, because he was sinister, and English, and there was international cinema—Antonioni, Bergman, Fellini…

Which was mostly in black and white.
Yeah. There wasn't much color. Antonioni's *Red Desert,* Godard's *Le Mépris,* which was magnificent. I saw movies at the local film club, when I was 14. Then when I had a driver's license I'd go see the art galleries on La Cienaga Boulevard and international films. Growing up in Newport and Laguna Beach I knew about Hitchcock before there was cinema, when they were still simply movies. I'd seen the better Hitchcock movies. He was a master of suspense, a genre we loved, and was the guy who did it best, so he had quite a following, of people in general. In maybe 1960 I saw Fellini's *La Strada* at the Laguna Beach Film Club, at a place where a dozen or so people who chipped in to rent films. Other films were playing in LA in repertory cinemas—Bergman, Truffaut, Godard, and Antonioni... It was called International Cinema. Hollywood had run out of gas, it couldn't make Hollywood movies any more. International Cinema was establishing audience in 1959, '50, '61. If you wanted to see masterpieces of European contemporary art, you could only see its cinema. It was very hard to see European or even American contemporary art. I saw the first Warhol show at Irving Blum's gallery. The LA County Museum didn't open until 1965

What did you like about European cinema?
It offered images of a world completely different from the one I lived in. Europeans had a different emotional register and a different visual frame from American cinema—depending on the director. I don't watch movies for the acting, I look at what the director does and wants to project. I really liked Eisenstein's film, *Alexander Neveksy.*

In films, the camera pans, and when it stops on something, like the sled, Rosebud, in Welles's Citizen Kane, *the object becomes poignant, filled with potential meaning, if not specific meaning for the film. A single image in a movie becomes poetic because it stops and everyone is a prisoner of that moment; it becomes a symbolic image.*
Single frames in films don't really work, though, whereas single-frame photographs are made that way. In film, it needs the preceding and the following frames. And that was a lesson I learned.

Is that why you make series?
Yes.

So the way you make photographs is related to cinema.
I became more courageous and adept as I went a long, but by the time I got to *Candlestick Point,* there was no single image that was better than another. I wanted them all to be good enough and equal enough so that the piece itself, all the photographs together, would be one work.

You did that. Didn't it make you happy?
Of course.

Is that when the rupture happened?

That was part of it. I realized, in a weird way, that I'd just succeeded in doing what I was capable of doing in that manner.

That's an incredible recognition, and also an incredible decision, to move on, rather than to repeat.
Well, I wasn't under the same pressure as, say, Frank Stella.

That's one of the things that makes your work what it is. You had some sort of idea about what you wanted to do, and you made changes.
Not always correctly maybe.

California Minimalism—John McCracken, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, as well as the Light artists like James Turrell and Douglas Wheeler—was very different from New York Minimalism.
The finish was different, and I think the idea behind it contained a sort of Zen or meditative sense, which was very different from New York Minimalism's materialists like Judd, Andre, and Tony Smith. Larry Bell's boxes are six sheets of glass, but they are optically so beautiful. When I first went to New York, it was so gritty; the whole town looked to me as if Richard Serra and Carl Andre made it. New York Minimalism is more industrial. LA Light and Space is completely different. There was a lot of amazing California art.

What about the Ferus Art Gallery, which had been paid for by Irving Blum, and Walter Hopps and Ed Kienholz ran it?
That was again too early for me.

Do you consider yourself a California artist, with the likes of them?
I'm too young to be in that group, but yeah. That was a great generation, and only five years older than me, but enough to make a difference. Think of Ruscha, who started working at 21, making work he's still proud of, and is still making strong work. I'm sort of like a Jasper Johns type: I'm a lazy artist. I like to figure out problems.

New York art saw a change, in the works of Johns and Rauschenberg and Stella, who took art away from metaphysics and Platonic archetypes and into everyday recognitions. Artists, such as Vito Acconci, left the galleries to make public art, and did so out of a kind of fedupness with the gallery system. Conceptual artists looked at processes and concepts.
Conceptual Art delivered only half its promise—to dematerialize and decommodify art. They did dematerialize art, which is probably its most important gesture, but they did not decommodify art. The Capitalist system can consume anything. I was fed up with what I was doing, going off to shoot pictures for months, by myself; going into the darkroom to print for months, by myself. I was thought that kind of heroic art was finished. I was disgusted with the politics and economic policies of the United States; I was sick of how the art world was evolving in the 1980s; I was having or creating marital problems, and I wanted out: I wanted a different woman, I wanted a different house, I wanted a different town, a different country, and I wanted a different way of working, and probably some other things, too, like better food and wine.

So, was coming to Europe a conscious decision?
Yes. I had a grant to go to London for six or eight months, but it was so expensive I ended up staying only four months; I'd run out of money. I made some friends. I like British people, and how they think, but not the conditions in which they live—Five pounds for a crosstown tube ticket? People earning less and paying more. I think the spread was the better in Europe. I liked Paris—everybody does—but I fell in love with Berlin. Then I got into an argument with a guy there, the photographer Michael Schmidt, so I improved my German in order to better argue with him. I had studied German back in California. Then I was invited to give a workshop in Arles—I was taking every European invitation, in the 1980s—and there I met someone who lived in Paris. So I came here to Paris instead. But she was from Milan, so we also went there—and there I really fell in love, with Italy.

It's too Catholic for me.
But it isn't. The US has about 28% baptized Catholic, while Italy almost everyone is Catholic, but only about 25% of the population are actually practicing Catholics. But I lived there in two different circumstances, neither one of them requiring any engagement on my part with the government or a municipality. I first lived in my wife's apartment. I didn't have papers. I traveled a lot. In 1992, Italy started its first Office of Immigration. Nobody went there—though a lot of people were leaving Italy for economic reasons. I did public work. There was a project in the 1990s that echoed the DATAR of 1855, in France, which had catalogued the population and its development in France. In this one,

there was a photographic proposal, which referred to photographers in the past like Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, and which mentioned my *Tract Houses.* So I was asked to participate. I toured Provance and found a place to work. And the body of work that came out of that was the *Fos-sur-Mer.*

What was that?
This was the first government-sponsored commercial industrial project, which happened where the Rhone meets the sea, *Fos secteur 80.* It was to be a state developed free-enterprise zone where if you put your French or EU factory here you didn't have to pay taxes for a certain amount of time. I shot there.

Did living and working in Europe make it easier for you to get involved in public subjects, and public art?
Public art is a normal course for European artists, not for Americans, where it's always been a disaster.

That happens. Vito Acconci generally makes proposals that are never realized.
You still have to deal with money people, public commissions, questions about your sex and race, but that's more a factor in the US.

You said something earlier about the inadequacy of certain isolated images. There are a lot of photographers, such as Christopher Williams or Thomas Demand, where you need a description to understand the image.
I think American art viewers woke up to the idea that text and image were not an abomination. In an earlier time images were considered to be universal, everyone could read them in the same way: they contained knowable information, such as modernist photography.

Did photography and art also veer together toward the social and political, in which a context needed to be cited?
I thought form and content were all mixed together. Images didn't always need texts, though some do. Sometimes images simply relate to each other, like in Ruscha's *26 Gas Stations* or my *Candlestick Point* pictures. When you see a group of images together, they create their own context, and, in a sense, their own text. That's what interested me.

What about books, texts, catalogs?
The first book I did, *The New Industrial Parks,* had no text, just the titles of each piece, which was an implied text.

So, wasn't it more like an artist's book than a catalog?
That's what I wanted. Artists books have only taken root in any kind of serious way after a couple of decades of Ed Ruscha's books. Before him, artists books looked handmade, or like high school yearbooks with hand-tooled leather.

Since your retrospective, "Rule Without Exception," you've made a number of public projects in Europe—including "The Power Trilogy," which comes out of "Sites of Technology." How did the technology pictures come about?
I was living in a Milan and I'd written what was for me a dream proposal to some people at Nord-pas-de-Calais, thinking up an idea that would interest them, while also trying to do something that would interest me. They were organizing bourses for people to do a project about life and the economy, which they thought would improve. It's one of the worst-off areas in the country. They had about 25% unemployed, worse than during the American Depression. They were interested in documenting the effects of the trans-Manche tunnel between England and France. The attitudes on both sides of the channel were very different. The French were very hopeful, and thought it would bring prosperity, which it didn't. You know, the way France works, the system of governance never changes; they simply change monarchs. The British, who were perhaps more sophisticated, thought only a select few would get rich, and are, in fact, the people who generally get rich. Also, the original tunnel would go to Paddington, instead of Waterloo, under London. I proposed to photograph the technological research areas of any industry or business that would be affected by the opening of the Channel tunnel in the next 30 years. They liked my project. They said that about once a month they'd refused a proposal from a conceptual photographer who wanted to walk the length of the tunnel and take a picture at every kilometer—sort of easy Conceptual Art. So I was pretty much given a blank check.

That's generous.

But then, during this time, about a week after a dinner I'd had with a photographer I'd met in Japan, I got a letter from Kawasaki to come to Japan for one month and do a project with them. I said yes. Both proposals—in France and in Japan—kind of segued. The people at Kawaski were planning a photographic project for their 50th anniversary. They said I could photograph wherever I wanted at Kawasaki plants—they made motorcycles, televisions, and electronic products. They'd also got into a mess because they'd sold the Russians some kind of technology that permitted the Russians to hear and locate Western nuclear submarines. Kawasaki was questioned about it and needed to turn attention away from such humiliation. I stayed a month in Kawasaki City, which is between Tokyo and Yokohama, and has about 4.5 million inhabitants. It's larger than all but three European cities. The Japanese feel comfortable buying things from mega-corporations that make many things successfully, like Mitsubishi, or Yamaha, which makes motorcycles and pianos. Kawasaki had also re-mastered D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* and held performances on the Imperial Palace grounds, which I saw. One of Kawasaki's industries was involved in the Japanese Space Program. The Japanese have communication satellites in the geosynchronous orbit over Japan, for weather and communications, which are solar powered. So before I would do anything, I'd be invited a day in advance for a formal tea in the entertaining office of the director of a division, so that we would be known to each other. Then, and only then, when you're known can you make requests. They spend a lot of time in formalities. Once a Japanese firm hires you, it's a lifetime situation, and a lifetime commitment on both sides, so it's very formal. They seem to see themselves as one tribe of people, which you're in or out of. They regard Westerners the way colonizers looked at the people they rule. But they have a powerful code of politeness, so if you ask for something at a store or for directions, they'll answer with complete respect. I guess it's better to be racially discriminated against in Japan than to be relatively equal in other places. I spoke with an American who'd been there for 30 years, whose wife was Japanese. He ran Magnum and was a highly respected, but was simply a highly respected foreigner. The glass ceiling in a Japanese company is tight. The Japanese director of Sony US could never be a director in Japan after that—they'd been corrupted somehow. But I liked Japan, a lot, the people, and the cities, how they did things. Space is so precious that storefronts can be two meters wide, and tiny four-story buildings. I love their 7-11 Stores. It's like the American idea but done so much better. One thing I liked was staying in a traditional Japanese room, but you could never get coffee with breakfast, so you could get a coffee in a machine. They have vending machines on the streets. In LA you can't even find a payphone.

What did you do for Kawasaki?

One idea was to do a book about the company and technology, which I was one of three or four people to do. I was asked to select areas, and I chose AI (Artificial Intelligence) clean rooms, which are dust free. I had to wear a clean suit. I had some idea of what I was looking for.

What camera did you use?

A small Linhoff, 6 x 9cm, about the smallest view camera you can find. Long exposures, as usual—almost all my works are long exposures.

A lot of the pictures have yellow and blue machines. Any reason?

That's the effect of uncorrected sodium lighting, which is what you get in clean rooms. It's like Bruce Nauman's *Green Light Corridor*: if you stand in there long enough it turns to white. Your eyes adjust, photographic film doesn't. The photograph picks up the color of the light. Any light creates the color of objects.

Were you conscious of that?

Yeah, I knew it would do that. It was a part of the situation. I had to agree to Kawasaki's rules. So, if I were looking at a monitor, there would be a piece of paper with the operator's name and information on the machine on it—including the logo, Sony. They said they didn't want to advertise their strategy—Sony had the best screens. I had to retouch that information out of the picture, which, back then, before Photoshop, was expensive and done by hand.

So did the direction for the "Sites of Technology."

One of the things you learn when trying to reinvent yourself is that at the end of every day you're still you. Speak with artists. Every young artist goes to every show they can, wherever they are. Older artists realize they're stuck with their own sensibility and it becomes harder to steal ideas. I could never instrumentalize other people's work for my own, so why even try?

What did you photograph in France?
The same. But one of the advantages of working in a monarchy is that the layers of government are interconnected. At a tiny cultural center in the middle of Paris I was given access to any company that was either owned by the state or that the state had shares in or that had amicable relationship with the state. I traveled around France with an assistant and a translator, and I got to see many places. France Telecom, which is like Bell Laboratories in the US, and operates with similar scientific rigor. One was in Bretagne on the Côte d'Amour, another overlooked Nice. They didn't cheat themselves when it came to lifestyle. And one of the projects they were working on was a vocal payphone at which you could say the numbers instead of dialing or pushing buttons. I asked where they would put one, and how would they work with a foreign accent. So five of us tried, one succeeded, even among French speakers. One was across from the hotel where I stayed in Lannion, at the Côte d'Armour. There was a normal phone and the voice one, which was free. But no one used it because it never worked with a Breton accent.

What was their interest?
Voice identification. I asked him how they hoped to apply their studies, and they said they work on theory and on developing new technologies—they want to see what can be done. They do pure research, like at Bell Labs in the US.

That's still part of "Sites of Technology," which were in color, and probably needed to be.
Well, in the mid-1970s MoMA did an exhibition of Bill Eggleston's work—their first color photography exhibition. And this started a landslide. Within a year, everyone was working in color.

Eggleston's photography also look like the kind that someone else could do. It's sort of like rock music, which doesn't seem to require vast amounts of practice, though it really does. It seems easy, but it isn't. Then everybody gets into the act and then new technology comes in to usurp the technique people once had. Eggleston's very different from you. He pictures the world. One might imagine him, unlike you, being friends with rock and rollers like Keith Richards or Iggy Pop.
He's played in movies; he's rich; he collects guns. He's sort of the William Burroughs of photography. Eggleston was a regional photographer, about the American South. I have no curiosity about that.

When you started "Sites of Technology" did your reading influencing you?
Foucault influenced some of my work. I considered him, at the time, the wisest of the deconstructionists. His discussion of the relationship between ideology and power always stayed with me. Every dictator claims the necessity of seizing the machinery of the state in order to put his ideology into practice. Foucault's position was completely opposite: the only ideology is power, and people chose various types of window dressing to justify it. Power is what they seek. Which is very obvious.

Things we see as obvious now weren't so much when we young. Southerners turned Republican after Lyndon Johnson, a Texas Democrat, who got to coerced them into signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
My parents were Republicans, and they weren't racists or Christian fundamentalists; what they believed in was a balanced Federal budget. There was an ultra-Right movement in San Moreno called The John Birch Society. It was a splinter group of the Republican Party. They believed that the clash between Capitalism and Communism was one between Good and Evil and that the world should wake up.

At a time when American politics were expansive and, in some places, disruptive. Foucault wrote about that world. And your works, such as Simulation Games and "The Power Trilogy" were counter-reactive to John Birch paranoiacs and to America's trying to take over the meaning of Progress.
Docile Bodies, from the "Power Trilogy," addressed power in both positive and negative terms. The payoff of medicine is human. I photographed people in European operating theaters.

The "Power Trilogy" starts with society, in Le Ronde de nuit/The Night Watch; then it goes to the individual, Docile Bodies, and then to the invisible, in The Power of Bacteria. In these works you are both a selector of images and a photographer. You are, in fact, less present in the making of each image, but more so in the creation of a complex composition.
The artist is yet more absent.

Speaking of which: there was an article in Bookforum about a year or two ago, by Barry Schwabsky, who seemed to complain that you were never in the picture. They reproduced a

photograph of a glass-windowed Mazda car dealership, and it's true you could be seen reflected in the panes.

I'm a vampire. I didn't want people in pictures for an indication of scale. These weren't backdrops for some kind of human drama; they were something different; they were objects that had their own character. If you see a person in a picture, they become foreground and I didn't want that.

What about Ronde de Nuit, from the "Power Trilogy"?

I was given a room at the Pompidou Center in Paris to present work. I had a choice of going through 30 or 50 photographs, or I could make a new piece, so I made a mural, with new work. It was as long as the Pompidou room and as high.

How did you make Ronde de Nuit?

I went back to LA, where I stored my pictures, and went through them all. One interest was what was happening after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the idea of the Stasi suborning just about everyone, and the waste of time from involving citizens in running a high-technology dictatorship. The Nazis were evil, but they didn't have high technology. We live in a kind of "Truman Show" world. And strangely enough, I was reading *Dante's Inferno*; so, I decided to take concepts for images from that. The first image is the forest where I lost myself, the second image is the descent, and the ultimate Satan is buried in stuff, and it ends with his emerging into the starry night. In a computer room I'd found a poster of Manhattan from across the Brooklyn Bridge looking at the World Trade Center, so the image I used is a detail of a detail.

Those images you looked at in LA, were they photographs you'd made or images you'd collected?

It was mostly images I'd made. I collect images sometimes, when I'm working on something. And those images, which were from 1991, were the beginning of that. I showed the piece at the Pompidou, but it was destroyed when it was taken down and stored. I liked the piece. There are images that are razor sharp and others that force you to step back. Olivier Boissière, a writer and director at Magnum in Paris, wrote a text, which was read out loud during the show. Olivier had chosen the title as well. Then for Arts Helsinki, 1995, I made *Docile Bodies*—whose title came from Foucault. And the *Politics of Bacteria,* which came after, got its title from Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow,* although it doesn't have anything to do with anything you'd imagine.

Docile Bodies *was photographed in operating theaters. How did that come about?*

There's always a downside of technology, because most of it is designed for military applications, used to kill people. But medical technology is different; it's one area of technology that is socially successful. Pioneering endoscopy in the early 1990s, the body was treated like medical meat, but in Foucault's sense, everything is about power, but not all power is repressive and evil, because it has to give something back, which is good, such as better harvests or better health, otherwise people won't stand for it. There's a point when power endangers its own existence. What amazed me, though, was the degree to which people trust their doctors. I'd asked permission, and they could say no, but whenever the doctor say, "Mr Baltz is in the room taking pictures, is that OK with you?" they'd ask if it was OK with the doctor. He'd say yes, and that was that. They trusted him implicitly. The doctor has their life in their hands. So they want to make the doctor happy.

What about The Politics of Bacteria?

That was made for Regis Durand, a French curator; it was about the power of the state, surveillance, corporate security, the gestures of male bodyguards.

How did you want the "Trilogy" works to appear?

In rooms with tight, low ceilings, in kind of oppressive environment, which would increase the visual impact of the pictures. That's how these pieces were born. Later I had them all together once at LA MoCA, in 1998.

Who was the curator at LA MoCA?

Cornelia Butler, who was very good, and under the wing of Paul Schimmel, who is a *really* good curator, but hard to get along with, he's brusque. But he's done an incredible job, and when they lost him, the museum went down hill.

You've made quite a number of projects since then, living in Europe, such as in Groningen?

Groningen's a university town, with maybe 20% of the city being natives, and part of a circle of cities that include Rotterdam and Amsterdam. But what distinguishes it is that in 1920 the town came up with the idea of having a planned community. That city plan is a good example of how

Dutch democracy works. It was arrived at after some time, by consensus, taking into account the points of view of its citizens—and also discretion.

What kind of discretion?
They have freedom of religion, but only the Dutch Reform Church would be allowed to construct church-like buildings. Other churches, synagogues, or mosques look like office buildings. You don't see them, but they're there. The thing about the town plan and the history of it is this: everybody still knows about it. They're proud to have arrived at that before anyone else. It's a big deal, so they invite artists to work there and possibly to critique the plan of their town. In 1998 I was selected. I knew about the plan and was fascinated by the way the Dutch solved conflict via consensus. One of the problems is that capital moves faster than consensus, so you end up with complicated city structures that move too fast for public control. I thought it would be interesting to take an extreme example of conflict resolution, such as warfare, and apply it to the Dutch city. That idea led me to read a lot of military theory. There wasn't so much of interesting reading Clausewitz, and, as I found out, there was much more in Machiavelli—how the prince is going to win battles and keep dignity. But the first person that we today would call a military intellectual was the Chinese, Sun Tzu, who was well placed, as he lived during a period called the Warring States, around 500 BC, when he wrote *The Art of War.* There were certain precepts he began with, one was that the a corrupt state could never have an honest army, and that to govern the army was very much like governing the state, involving authority and submission, but also responsibility. You must accept the authority of leaders, but the leaders must accept the responsibility of not leading men into massacre. Everyone has a responsibility. And, like the cartoon character Pogo, Sun Tzu believed that peace is better than war because it is better. Much of his wisdom is about intelligence gathering and fooling the enemy; the best battle is the one that's not fought. He was Mao and General Giap's favorite theorist. He's still read.

So what did you do?
The city had small, not unsolvable problems. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s they'd built a large building, which they wanted to raze to build something else. There were aesthetic arguments, but the building represented something of an earlier generation. Of course, every generation thinks that what they'll do is better, but that's not necessarily the case for subsequent generations. You can lose historic continuity. I took a number of situations that were problematic and were subject to discussion for a radical change, and tried to show what they looked like with a very limited means, using the writings of Sun Tzu. With the help from the city organizers I found several situations and places, and some suitable Sun Tzu quotes. I had a Chinese scholar verify the quotes, because we put them on top of billboard photographs of the place in question, in Chinese, with a small Dutch translation down at the bottom, and set them in each of these places. The next phase was to announce a public discussion, bearing in mind Sun Tzu's theories and these different Dutch areas. And in a very Dutch way, they turned the discussion into a dinner. People showed up, mostly those who lived in the area, in town or along the rim road. The town plan came under a Dutch idea of a compact city, which abruptly turns into countryside, making it almost like being at the ocean. You go from landscape to city, and that too was being debated, which we recorded.

Were people moving out of the city?
No, but many were moving from apartments to houses. They have an art museum, built on an island, which was one of the first museums in Europe to celebrate gay liberation in their exhibitions.

Did you draw the community in?
Yeah sure, but it was a community that was easy to draw in. They were interested. It affected their lives.

In the 1970s a lot of public art engaged the public. I'm thinking of Christo, whose Running Fence, *in California, went from public strife to total public engagement.*
I lived there at the time, and sort of watched it happen. He and his wife, Jeanne, who was very charming, and brought up on a farm, would show up at some Sonoma farm at about 5:45 in the morning, and she'd immediately lend a hand and helped to win them over. They convinced them, one after the other. People got to keep the fence when the show was over.

What about Venice Maghera *project, did you engage with the community?*
That's complicated. One of the nicest men I've met in my life was a Venetian man named Paolo Costantini, who'd studied art history and photography history with the master, Italo Zannier, who didn't tell him that there was only one job in Italy like that and he had it and wasn't giving it up. So

Paolo did projects. He did the first show I was included in Europe. He'd organized the Venice Marghera project, which is the industrial area of Venice, and a world-class toxic waste site. Sometimes the Mafia comes and dredges out the sludge and ships it to Napoli. There was a first show with only Italian photographers, and a second show with international photographers, including me. My interest was in the tremendous contrast between a polluted and dying industrial area and the unbelievably delicate beauty of Venice. I was curious what kind of an imbecile would put a petro-chemical factory two kilometers from Piazza San Marco? How did they arrive at that? Did it work? For how long? It's been documented and decried, but there wasn't anything particularly fascist about it. The Soviets, the Nazis, and Roosevelt had done the same thing. In Marghera it created jobs and led to highways and civic improvements. There was an interesting guy, Count Volpi di Misurata, a title created by Mussolini (Misurata is a place in Libya). He became the founder of the Venice Film Festival, a supporter of the Biennale, a creator of hotels, and a finance minister under Mussolini. He escaped to Switzerland, where he died, happily, I suppose, though he manufactured evil. Architects built cities outside of cities hoping to give people better lives.

Are you interested in topical artworks—making work for a particular reason?
I made works that had a *destinataire*—that were pointed at someone or something, hopefully with somebody listening. In Italy, they were interested. I made works about things people were living with or living around.

Your early works seemed to say, "Why do things have to be like this?" I don't think all young artists have such thoughts.
I surprised myself. Everything was new but looked ugly and insecure. Buildings rose overnight, and could vanish overnight. One of the differences in European cities is simply that they're older. From my apartment in the Marais down to the Seine I can see evidence of things that go back to Roman times. So there's a continuity of effort and achievement.

Back when you were showing with Castelli, did you show at other galleries?
Yes, but not in Europe. The problem was photography. There was no market.

When did it increase?
After the 1980s, and after the Bechers and their students, Gursky and Ruff, who weren't as conceptual as their teachers, the Bechers. Gursky is a third-generation photographer; he's really good, bigger, better, but he basically shoots the same thing as earlier photographers. Ruff systematically examines every photographic subject, sometimes with enormous success.

What about Americans?
I liked Cindy Sherman's first 60 or 70 photographs a lot, but nothing after. I like your friend Richard Prince's work, but not Mapplethorpe's, which, to me, seemed retrograde, but involved in liberation movement, which wasn't political but was politicized, and in that context it was progressive work.

You entered the world of art when it wasn't such a big world, and when you were pretty young, and then the 1980s expanded the art world but in ways you didn't expect.
I thought art was a noble profession, because it was one of the few things one did in the world that was done for its own sake, and not for an ulterior motive. But so many things are done badly or hastily and not for the joy of either those who make it or those who consume it, but for profit.

Do you consider Weston a noble photographer?
Oh, yeah. He was Thoreau—who only spent a couple summers in Walden, while Weston lived in his little cottage for maybe 30 years, which he probably bought for $50, like most of California back then. In the late 1940s non-beachfront lots cost about $150, back when $150 was still money.

Was there something that you were measuring against the US? It doesn't seem to me that those recognitions, such as that California construction is ugly, are purely instinctual. Did your reading influence you?
Years ago I read a lot of Borges. Somebody loaned me *Fictions,* which I read all one night, and loved. I liked the kind of science fiction that dealt with the future, like Huxley, Orwell, Ballard, and book called *A Canticle for Liebowitz,* by Walter Miller. I've read it three times. It was his only book—a dissertation on church and state. He'd fought at Monte Cassino. It's not a typical novel, or science fiction. Like Chandler he's in a genre, but is cooler than the others he's set with.

What about the changes that were and are confronting Europe and America, and one versus the other, and art?
Before media the idea of old masters made sense. Now it doesn't. I discovered that the position of the artist in socially democratic Europe was different from that in the United States, but not necessarily better. The US is market driven, which I see as a travesty; whereas in a more socialistic system, art answers a public need; it's a common possession of everyone. But in practice it comes down to bureaucracy and nepotism and more bureaucracy.

Do you think the cultural mores are better here?
Yes, but not as much as I'd expected.

What about for the successful outsiders who come here?
It's easier.

Does it depend on the type of work you do?
The audience is different, theoretically and in reality; it's destination and *destinataires* are different. I remember being in an exhibition that looked at the DATAR and what it had achieved in photography, with a catalog and opening. I asked the organizer if it was a success, and he said yes, because the Minister of Culture had come and had liked it.

During the past ten years you've had some major shows.
Mostly that started in 2010, at the Chicago Art Institute, by Matthew Witkovsky. He knew the work and thought that showing the *Prototypes* would be a good, smart, doable exhibition—about 80 pieces.

That seems like a restart.
Every 20 years people renew their curiosity in my work, and then I'm cast back into the murk that I was dredged out of and, mark my word, if I'm still here in 20 years, it will happen again and we'll have the same conversation. It's a long time between dances.

Then there were the shows in Bonn, Vienna, and Los Angeles.
That was one show, really, organized in Bonn and the Kestnergesellschaft, which I've always loved, and then LA and Vienna took it. But I guess I can now talk about my recent retirement, or semiretirement, and how, despite of that, I'm still capable of shocking people. "How can you retire?" they ask. I'm not in the IRA. But I already feel the vultures circling.

Like the dealers at Modigliani's funeral, hustling the widow for product?
Well... I hadn't made new work since around 2000, and I realized that I'd said what I had to say. I was interested in things, and got to explore them, and was heard out on those points. Also, almost all of my adult life I've taught in art schools or universities, which I regarded as survival jobs. Being a White Anglo-Saxon Straight Male, I brought a certain ethic to my job, trying to give a good day's work for fair pay. So, I always took it seriously, and did it as well as I could. But it was never near my heart. I was always an artist who supported himself by teaching. I divided my life between first-choice and second-choice work, and then I realized I'd finished my first-choice work and kept on teaching at the Architecture University in Venice, which had an interesting faculty in Fine Arts—including Giorgio Agemben and Joseph Kosuth; it was a very ambitious program. Then things turned rosier in terms of the prices people were willing to pay for my earlier work, so by around 2005, I had only that one job and I didn't even need the money, though it was very well paid. But I also realized that I really liked the work, teaching, and I spent more and more time in Venice, and in the last seven years I've spent more time there than in Paris. I enjoyed it—though I was a contract professor, without tenure. I spent all my time not having to deal with any bureaucracy; I sublet an apartment there (which they try to hide to avoid taxes); I used someone else's telephone; so, I was insulated. Italy is one of the best countries in the world, with one of the worst governments.

Curators have offered a maintaining support, as does the Thomas Zander Gallery in Cologne, and Steidl Verlag, which has published all of your works.
Gerhard Steidl is more like a patron than a publisher. His objective is to make the best books he can. He likes my work. He's been a friend. He loves books. People like Karl Lagerfeld—who's an interesting patron, support him. Lagerfeld was once asked what else he'd like to do. He said he'd like to be an artist, and the commentator said, but monsieur, you are a great artist. Lagerfeld said, couture isn't art; it's dressmaking. I'm talking about art. Since then he's had a fond place in my heart. But Gerhard also wanted to change his policy at Steidl Verlag and publish an artist's work in depth. They've done this with Robert Frank, and are still doing it. I think it was the *Prototypes* book

that was done for Matthew, in Chicago, that kicked the ball down the road toward Steidl. Gerhard wanted to do them all—every series. So I was flying up to Gottingen every three or four weeks. In the ten-volume set, no one's found a mistake. But that was all done in the new Quadratone techniques—four tones, which can be adjusted one more level up for black and white (color is always a different process—four, six, or eight colors). You can adjust the grays forever and still have a hard black-black.

All the shows were compact and efficient, including your recent show, "Common Objects," here in Paris, at Le Bal.
I didn't do that. Diane Dufour, at Le Bal, in Paris, the uber-curator of her shows, asked if I had objections about showing at Le Bal. I said it depends on the show. So we talked, and I liked what she had in mind, also the connection to cinema, with the movie clips shown with the works. Of course, Le Bal isn't big, so she makes small, pointed, exhibitions. This one shows how my work intersects with certain filmmakers, who were my heroes. I actually hadn't thought such things, but they thought of it. I had veto power, which I never used, including with texts, which I only check for facts, dates, and spelling. So as long as the text or a book—like the book you did for Phaidon—goes over your name, you can say what you think. I can disagree; what's fair is fair.

So Le Bal didn't cross any lines.
In part the circumstances made it necessary. I'd retired from teaching for health reasons, so Le Bal was almost like a posthumous exhibition, my first, and it went really well. But Diane's probably the best curator in this country since Susanne Pagé, at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris—who'll certainly be back. They both put together good teams, and are really hardworking, and attract people like Gerhard Steidl.

Their presentation of La Ronde de Nuit/The Night Watch *was perfect.*
I think that's why the Pompidou wants a gift of that piece, and a few others.

They want it as a gift?
They had one once, but it was destroyed in transit, which I reprinted until the insurance money stopped coming, and so I let it go. If they don't want it they don't have to have it.

Is it wise for artists to give works to museums?
It depends on how old you are. For some reason I was in the 1975 Paris Biennale, and out of that I was in a two-person show at the Museum of modern art in Paris, and then got a handwritten letter from someone at the Bibliotèque de Paris—he didn't have a secretary—asking for gifts of certain works, explaining his circumstance, he had not budget. He asked everyone, and no one refused.

What did he want from you?
The *Tract Houses,* and they have it. So at that age, it makes sense to give works. Now, going on 69, the appraised value of the *Tract Houses* is $750,000. But they got a lot of stuff, which they'll keep.

At the Albertina Museum in Vienna you showed the "Sites of Technology," with each image shown at a smaller scale, which was great, and allowed people to look at the body of work up close and maybe to find individual pieces that they liked and might even purchase.
The whole installation was beautiful—starting out with a very beautiful room, the most beautiful I'd ever shown in, which was the Chapel of a Baroque castle, and then the works that Walter Moser used to surround my works—he's also a cinema specialists—film excerpts photographs by the Bechers and by Ed Ruscha. These were artists I always admired. He made the show interesting by showing connections.

What's the highest contemporary art museum on your list?
The Tate Modern. They have works, too.

What about MoMA?
They've been rudderless for 30 years.

Are you in a lot of museum collections?
Yeah, 60 or 70. What's going to be important, but hasn't coalesced yet, but will, is the National Gallery in Berlin. They're obliged to build a museum of modern art as part of their chain of city museums.

Germany builds great museums.
When we were still kids they had the Ludwig museum, but it was unique. Now modern museums are everywhere in Germany. Back then Conrad Fischer had the best gallery in the world.

In The Gift, *Lewis Hyde addresses art in terms of gift exchange, which goes through the stages of making, then entering the public sphere, which now means commerce, and then being preserved by culture. He sees museum visitation as the public's payment of cultural debt—a debt to itself, whose "gratitude we suffer," in his words. We're compelled to go to museums out of obligation to culture. Hyde considered art making a noble job, though it passes through a stage of public commerce before it becomes property of the culture at large. When art became popular, museums got coffee shops and boutiques. Maybe that's when some of the nobility was lost.*
Art can't stand up to mass affluence.

Maybe in the long run it can.
Yeah, but you have to keep alive a world in the short terms in order for there to be a long term. It used to be, not so many centuries ago, that images were scarce. Can you imagine living in a world where music demands the presence of a live musician?

That's largely gone.
When historians started to write what it was like to live in a village, it came from public records. A person might die owning a table, a big spoon, a bottle, and two straw mattresses. That was a world in which there weren't enough objects to make your world safe, comfortable, productive, which certainly changed with the Industrial Revolution. People before didn't see images, except some big place you made a pilgrimage to where there was an image of Mary and Jesus. As the aristocracy moved up and had contact in court, especially in places like Holland, rich businessman started needing images. We grew up in a world of images. So the veneration once given to an image is gone. It's a no-win game, you can have it all for Veronica's veil, or you can divide it up into the 150,000 images you saw in the last two days.

Daniel Boorstin, in his 1961 book, The Image, *called advertising's artificial situations that pretend to be life, "pseudo events." Now we have an amateur world of images.*
Aren't you amazed when you watch what's transpiring in the Ukraine and you realize that Putin isn't that much different from his Communist predecessors, and making the same mistakes, shooting down a commercial airline. Gorbachev recognized that the Soviets had developed a foreign policy in which everyone hated them. "Is that good for the Revolution?" he asked. I thought Putin was much more polished and more clever. I would have thought a KGB background would have made you more cautious and selective. Russian leaders should be smarter than American leaders because they go to a much tougher school, with bigger stakes. All he learned was to do the Olympics first and then the invasion. I have a Polish friend; whenever she sees Putin on television, she says, "Look at him. He's going to do something. Just wait." I thought it was paranoia. She can smell across the airwaves. But Russia, at least now, should be one of the luckiest countries in the world: they don't have a large population and they have a lot of resources.

In our lifetime a lot of categories have crumbled and driven art in different directions.
Certainly the second half of the 20th century saw the transition from painting to sculpture as a more significant medium and generator of ideas. Out of that a lot of other ideas formed.

Art also drifted from the unconscious search for forms to the conscious noticing of experience. And you were doing that very early.
I don't know what I was like as a kid, but I never had a capacity for faith or belief. I had to be shown things. Like everybody, my parents took me to church, and I really wished I could have believed such a beautiful story. It's probably comforting, but I can't make myself believe it or in anything that deals with spirituality or the soul or even Freudianism. (His nephew, Edward Bernays, basically invented modern advertising and public relations.)

Turning Platonic archetypes into sales images, their seemingly symbolic products.
People getting over their inadequacies through shopping.

Expectations have changed. Our parents' lives were driven by survival, not entertainment.
I always wondered, since I was 12, how I would survive, while also having the ambition to be a successfully working artist.

Did you get what you wanted?
Professionally, yes.
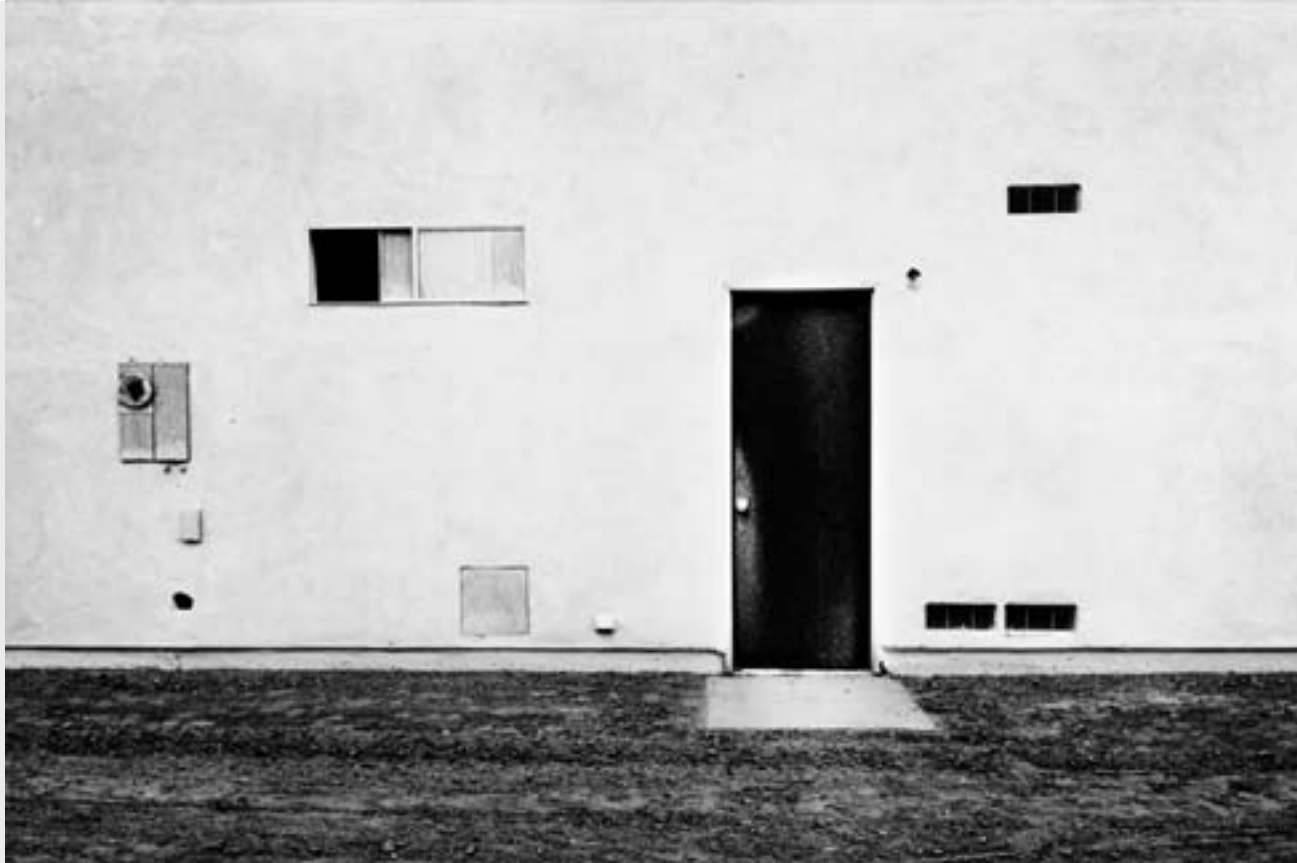*Is it enough?*
It's what there is.

LEWIS BALTZ

COMMON OBJECTS

ALFRED HITCHCOCK
MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI
JEAN-LUC GODARD

**DOSSIER
DE PRESSE**

**EXPOSITION
23 MAI – 24 AOÛT 2014**

**PREVIEW PRESSE
JEUDI 22 MAI 2014
À 15H30**

EXPOSITION

LEWIS BALTZ
COMMON OBJECTS

IL POURRAIT ÊTRE UTILE DE PENSER LA PHOTOGRAPHIE COMME UN ESPACE PROFOND ET ÉTROIT ENTRE LE ROMAN ET LE FILM. LEWIS BALTZ

Du 23 mai au 24 août 2014, LE BAL présente une exposition d'envergure consacrée au photographe américain Lewis Baltz.

Conçue par Dominique Païni et Diane Dufour, l'exposition reviendra sur ses séries les plus remarquables de *The Prototype Works* (1967-1976) à *Ronde de nuit* (1992-1995) et interrogera pour la première fois, sur proposition de Lewis Baltz, l'influence du cinéma notamment européen (Godard, Antonioni), sur la formation de son oeuvre.

Première exposition en France depuis la rétrospective au Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris en 1993, l'exposition au BAL intervient après les rétrospectives qui ont récemment mis à l'honneur le travail de Lewis Baltz aux Etats-Unis (Art Institute of Chicago, 2010 et National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2011) et en Europe (Kestnergesellschaft, Hannovre 2012 et Albertina, Vienne, 2013).

Les séries *The Prototype Works* (1967-1976), *Tract Houses* (1969-1971), *Nevada* (1977), *Continuous Fire Polar Circle* (1986), *Candlestick Point* (1987-1989), *Sites of Technology* (1989-1991) ainsi que *Ronde de nuit* (1992-1995) seront exposées en regard des films (extraits) *La 5ème colonne*, *Psychose* d'Alfred Hitchcock, *La Notte, L'Eclipse, Il Deserto Rosso,* et *Zabriskie Point* de Michelangelo Antonioni, ainsi que Les *Carabiniers* de Jean-Luc Godard.

L'exposition est organisée en collaboration avec la Fondation A Stichting, Bruxelles et le Fotomuseum Winterthur, avec le soutien de la Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne, de la Gallery Luisotti, Santa Monica, de David Knaus et de la Artwork's Retirement Society.

L'exposition est accompagnée d'un livre coédité par LE BAL et Steidl, qui a reçu le soutien de Neuflize Vie. Il a été conçu par l'artiste Pierre Hourquet.

« Depuis les débuts de sa carrière artistique, à la fin des années soixante, Lewis Baltz explore la relation difficile entre vision et savoir. À quoi ressemblent le monde et les images qu'il produit ? Ces apparences, qu'ont-elles à nous dire ? Ce qui importe vraiment, peut-on le représenter visuellement ? Et, dans notre monde moderne, quelle est la relation entre le beau, le laid et le vrai ?

Lewis Baltz n'a jamais appartenu à un mouvement particulier, même si sa place unique dans l'art et la photographie laisse apparaître de multiples affinités : ses interrogations des limites de la photographie en tant que document font sans nul doute écho à celles de nombreux artistes conceptuels de la première heure ; son intérêt pour le développement de l'architecture industrielle modulaire peut être envisagé à la lumière de la sculpture minimaliste ; son exploration des espaces marginaux ou relégués apparente son œuvre au land art ; son penchant pour les formes américaines vernaculaires se retrouve dans le pop art ; son inquiétude devant un territoire et une architecture façonnés par les forces économiques dominantes rejoint l'évolution de la photographie documentaire, désormais attachée à fixer moins les événements eux-mêmes que leurs effets ou leurs traces ; enfin, la fusion de différents registres et genres de l'imagerie, caractéristique du travail récent de Baltz, offre de nombreux points communs avec l'intérêt des postmodernes pour le montage, le collage et l'appropriation.

Les publications sur et de Baltz comportent de nombreuses références à la littérature, la philosophie, la politique, l'économie, l'architecture et le cinéma. Chacun de ces domaines pourrait fournir un point de vue éclairant sur son œuvre. Cependant, au sein de ces références, trois noms reviennent souvent : Alfred Hitchcock, Michelangelo Antonioni et Jean-Luc Godard. »

David Campany
Extrait du texte « Lewis Baltz, le cinéma et l'intuition du rien », publié dans Lewis Baltz – Common Objects (LE BAL / Steidl 2014).

LA RÉALITÉ A QUELQUE CHOSE DE TERRIBLE ET J'IGNORE CE QUE C'EST.
MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI, *LE DÉSERT ROUGE,* 1964

«Le cinéaste qui paraît avoir constitué une véritable référence pour Lewis Baltz est Antonioni. Les premiers plans-séquences du *Désert rouge*, qui décrivent l'errance de Giuliana (Monica Vitti) et de son fils dans le paysage dévasté par l'industrie pétrochimique, des environs de Ravenne peuvent être rapprochés d'une série telle que *Continuous Fire Polar Circle*. Fumées émanant de la combustion lente des matières chimiques, goudron en expansion, huile dispersée, détritus de tous ordres, eaux envahies de cambouis sont communs aux regards du photographe américain et du cinéaste italien. Une même posture partagée entre la détresse écologique et la fascination plasticienne, autrement dit un certain pictorialisme spécifique de la fin du XXe siècle, ce siècle au bord du désastre généralisé.

L'autre versant de la vision antonionienne est celui, architectural, qui prit comme décor le Milan des années soixante et l'EUR mussolinien. L'égarement de la Lidia (Jeanne Moreau) de La Notte (1961), l'alternance optique à laquelle elle se soumet entre la transparence des vitrines et l'opacité des façades de béton, entre l'élan vertical des immeubles de la reconstruction italienne et l'horizontalité poussiéreuse des terrains vagues hérités de la misère des borgate, pourraient avoir marqué fortement l'imaginaire visuel de Lewis Baltz. La photographie no 6 de la série *The Tract Houses* en serait la preuve, à la mesure de ce pan de mur qui obstrue l'espace tout autant qu'il lui imprime une ligne de fuite.

Dans un tout autre registre, la séquence finale de *Zabriskie Point*, explosion accompagnée de la langueur mélodique et planante des Pink Floyd, a fondé une part de l'imagerie de référence pour la génération de Lewis Baltz. La série *Near Reno* présente des images comparables d'objets de la consommation moderne figés dans un état de ruine définitif : pièces de mécanique automobile, récepteurs de télévision, caisses de matériel électroménager, canalisations, tube fluorescent écrasé… […]

Lewis Baltz s'est peu attardé sur des images déjà faites, images dans l'image. Néanmoins, dans certaines de ses photographies, il prélève des images abandonnées comme autant de ruines, semblables ainsi à d'autres matériaux industriels non identifiés. Ces images du passé témoignent du désastre qui précipite la réalité du monde en même temps que ses reproductions. Comment résister alors à la tentation de rapprocher cette cueillette iconographique pathétique de la fameuse séquence du film de Jean-Luc Godard, où *Les Carabiniers,* de retour de la guerre, égrènent en guise de conquête des cartes postales dérisoires ? »

Dominique Païni
Extraits du texte « Le cinéma comme inconscient optique », publié dans Lewis Baltz – Common Objects (LE BAL / Steidl 2014).

CITATIONS

« Je me suis efforcé de rester autant que possible en retrait, de créer un espace pour le spectateur. L'ironie de la chose, c'est que les photographies en soi ne sont nullement en retrait, mais impitoyablement spécifiques : ce visage, ce bâtiment, ce lieu. En fait, rien de tout cela ne m'intéresse tellement en soi – cela m'intéresse en tant que phénomène. Considéré comme un phénomène, n'importe quoi peut être intéressant, même Madonna. »

« Là où j'ai grandi, construction est synonyme de destruction. L'appât du gain anéantit tout sens commun. »

« Je me suis toujours concentré sur les phénomènes à la marge, ces zones presque invisibles, transparentes, que l'on ne qualifie pas de «paysage». Tout ce qui est occulté par convention ou habitude, le presque obscène. »

« De la même façon que le paysage est détruit par la prolifération galopante des banlieues, les valeurs traditionnelles associées à la ville (donc à la civilisation) sont menacées. La culture civile américaine, qui n'a jamais été très profonde, se dissout si on l'éparpille trop finement sur un territoire. »

« *Ronde de nuit* (1992) est une tentative pour créer une métaphore du cercle que composent voyeurisme, surveillance et spectacle – ce travail doit beaucoup à Debord et à Virilio. Debord offre une option même si elle n'est pas réjouissante: le spectacle ne peut être critiqué qu'avec le langage même du spectacle. »

Lewis Baltz

BIOGRAPHIE

Né en 1945 à Newport en Californie, Lewis Baltz étudie au San Francisco Art Institute.
A 26 ans, la galerie Leo Castelli à New York lui consacre sa première exposition personnelle avec la série *The Tract Houses*, 1969-1971 et *The Prototypes Works* 1967-1976. En 1975, Lewis Baltz participe à l'exposition « New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape » conçue par William Jenkins à la George Eastman House de Rochester. Sont ainsi présentées les photographies de la série *The New Industrial Parks near Irvine*, 1974. Cette exposition inaugure une nouvelle conception de la photographie de paysage, dont l'influence reste encore prégnante dans la création visuelle contemporaine.

Dans les années 1980, Lewis Baltz produit d'autres séries toutes aussi emblématiques, *Continuous Fire Polar Circle*, 1986 et surtout *Candlestick Point*, 1987-1989 qui marque son passage à la couleur.

En 1992, le Centre Pompidou expose *Ronde de nuit*, une installation de 12 mètres de long qui interroge l'apparition de notre société de surveillance. Un an plus tard, le Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris lui consacre une rétrospective.

Lewis Baltz est un des premiers artistes à utiliser la photographie comme forme de l'art conceptuel. Son travail a été exposé dans nombres d'institutions internationales et a été distingué par de nombreux de prix et bourses d'étude dont celle du National Endowment for the Arts (1973, 1977) et de la Fondation John-Simon Guggenheim (1977).

Depuis 2004, Lewis Baltz est professeur émérite à l'Instituto Universitario di Architettura de Venise. Sa collaboration avec Gerhard Steidl a donné naissance à la publication de l'ensemble de son œuvre.
Lewis Baltz a légué l'ensemble de ses archives au Getty Research Institute de Los Angeles en 2013.

Lewis Baltz - Night Construction, Reno - Nevada, 1977 - Bruxelles, Fondation A Stichting
© Lewis Baltz, courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

LEWIS BALTZ OU LA BEAUTÉ DU FAIT LITTÉRAL
SOIRÉE AUTOUR DE LEWIS BALTZ

JEUDI 26 JUIN AU BAL
18H - 22H

Le BAL invite cinq personnalités, artistes, historiens, écrivains à interroger l'œuvre de Lewis Baltz dans le contexte des années 1970-1980 et son influence aujourd'hui.

Introduction et modération par Dominique Païni, co-commissaire de l'exposition

Interventions de:

Larisa Dryansky, « Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni et le courant New Topographics »
Larisa Dryansky est maître de conférences en histoire de l'art contemporain à l'université Paris Paris-Sorbonne. Elle est l'auteur de plusieurs articles sur les photographes de New Topographics et le cinéma.
Éric de Chassey, « Lewis Baltz et la scène américaine »
Éric de Chassey, historien de l'art, est directeur de la Villa Médicis à Rome, il est l'auteur de plusieurs ouvrages portant sur l'abstraction picturale. En 2006, il a publié *Platitudes*, Une histoire de la photographie plate chez Gallimard.
Raphaël Zarka, « Regarder le sol »
Raphaël Zarka est un artiste français. Par l'inventaire, la réplique, les occurrences historiques, il appréhende notamment l'espace public et les contours du monument, les instruments de mesure du mouvement. Son travail a été récemment exposé au Palais de Tokyo, au Centre Pompidou et à la Tate Modern.
**Didier Semin**, « De ces paysages, on serait tenté de dire que personne ne leur a passé la main dans les cheveux » (T.W. Adorno, Minima Moralia, 1951)
Didier Semin est professeur d'histoire de l'art à l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-arts à Paris. Il a été conservateur au musée des Sables d'Olonne, au musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris et, de 1991 à 1998, au Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou.
Bertrand Schefer, « Running on empty »
Bertrand Schefer, philosophe de formation, a consacré ses premiers travaux à la redécouverte de textes fondateurs de la Renaissance italienne sur la théorie des arts visuels. Ecrivain et réalisateur, il a notamment coréalisé avec Valérie Mréjen le film En ville (2011) et publié Cérémonie aux éditions P.O.L en 2012.

Cet événement a reçu le soutien de la Artwork's Retirement Society.
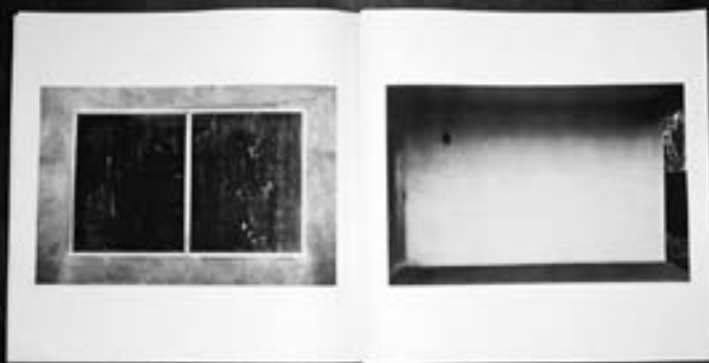
ÉDITION

A l'occasion de l'exposition, LE BAL et Steidl co-éditent, en collaboration avec Pierre Hourquet, le livre « Lewis Baltz - Common Objects ».

LEWIS BALTZ - COMMON OBJECTS

Textes inédits de Dominique Païni et David Campany
Conception et design par Pierre Hourquet / Temple

Avec le soutien de Neuflize Vie

112 pages
27.5 x 27.5 cm

62 photographies

Quadrichromie
Papier brillant et rhodoïde

Couverture brillante avec vernis agrafée
et pochette en plastique sérigraphiée
4 couleurs