P·H·O·T·O communique



Arjen Verkaik

Unseen Skies: An Interview with Arjen Verkaik, A Blind Photographer

Out of the Victorian Era

Christo

PHOTOGRAPHY & ARCHITECTURE 1839 - 1939



Undisubtedly one of the finest photographic books ever

produced. Photography & Architecture: W39 9039 makes

accessible works from the Centre Canadien d'Architec-

ture/Canadian Centre for Architecture. From the ancient

to the avant garde, this important work presents a major

new study of world architecture seen through the eyes

of more than ninety grand masters of the camera. It is a

unique study in that it reveals the history of architecture

through photography and the history of photography

Here are some of the very first photographs of archi-

tecture taken by pioneers of photography. Tour through

the Paris of Atget and Baldus, Beato's Imperial Japan,

August Sander's vision of Cermany between the Wars.

In these pages one visits many of the world's greatest

monuments and revels in the architectural legacy of the

With more than 140 tripletone offset plates, this line

photography book has been printed on specially manu-

factured archival quality paper and bound in imported

cloth. The test includes an important essay by Eichard

Pare, Curator of Photography at the Centre Canadien

d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, and an

introduction by Phyllis Lambert, the Centre's Director.

Also included is an extensive catalogue of the plates with

the accompanying biographies of the artists by

For anyone interested in art, architecture, travel, cul-

tural history and photography, this extraordinary intro-

duction to the subject will be a volume to be treasured.

McClelland and Stewart

The Canadian Publishers

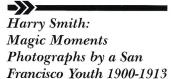
25 Hollinger Road, Toronto, Ontario M48 3G2

Catherine Evans Insbusch and Marjorie Munsterberg.

through architecture

world's great civilizations.

9% x 12 284 pages



tioners like Fred Lonidier have

already begun to implement

 is documentary work that gives a clear analysis of social

conditions, that is committed to "... the exposure of specif-

ic abuses caused by people's

jobs, by the financier's growing begemony over the cities.

by racism, sevien, and class

tographers, particularly how

in Canada where the docu-

mentary tradition remains femily entrenched, but little

attention has been given to critical analysis of the genre.

Louise Althor

The issues that Roder raises must be addressed by pho-

opposion.

Stephen White, Editor, Stephen White Editions, Los Angeles, California, 1981; 128 pages; hardcover, \$25

The Real Old West: Images of a Frontier Photographs by Frank Matsura

Text by JoAnn Roe, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1981; 144 pages; hardcover, \$20.05

The "new talent from the good old days" syndrome in photographic book publishing, which began with books such as E. J. Bellocg: Storyville Portraits and has continued with the likes of Disfarmer: The Heber Springs Portraits, has recently brought forth two similar volumes: Harry Smith: Magic Moments ("Photographs by a San Francisco Youth 1900-1913"), published by Stephen White Editions of Los Angeles, and The Real Old West ("Images of a Frontier / Photographs by Frank Matsura"), released by Douglas & McIntyre of Vancouver.

Each book has a lot of charm, each was a labour of love for those involved and

each presents virtually unknown work from just after the turn of the century. Frank Matsura, a Japanese whose origins are hardly traceable, came to the Okanogan Valley in the Pacific Northwest in 1903 and photographed in that region until his death in 1913. His glass plates came into the hands of the Okanogan County Historical Society in 1964, and were noted by JoAnn Roe (a Washington State journalist and photographer then working on a regional history) some ten years later; The Real Old West is largely the product of her interest and effort. Harry Smith, one of six children born to a Danish family in San Francisco, was a self-taught photographer who made images of family, friends, places and events in the San Francisco area between 1900 and 1913. His work was acquired by the gallery owner Stephen White in 1976; Harry Smith: Magic Moments is similarly the end product of White's fondness for and involvement with Harry Smith's photography.

From a historical point of view the Matsura book is considerably more important than Magic Moments: The Real Old West contains far more images, a greater variety of subjects, locations, attitudes and visual approaches, and vastly more raw information about a region and an era. Although stylistically mixed and somewhat erratically laid out, it provides a rich experience for the careful viewer. One sees many places, all seasons, a remarkable number of groups and individuals, and an incredible variety of events and circumstances, all photographed with an evident affection and fascination. Matsura was reportedly very popular with his Okanogan subjects; the ease and grace with which people, both old and young, Indian and white, posed for him is testimony to his popularity as well as his involvement with all aspects of life around him.

Harry Smith: Magic Moments is almost the obverse of The Real Old West. As a pho-

tography book, it is more satisfying, with better reproductions and layout and a far more consistent visual "feel"; as a record of virtually the same years in a different place, it is spotty and irregular and nowhere near as complete. Smith stuck close to home and involved himself primarily with relatives, acquaintances and familiar locations. Although he made a few excursions and extensively recorded the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake, his photography was personal and reflective rather than exuberant and curious like Matsura's. He had a finer sense of visual balance and a more distinct style than Matsura, at least judging by the work selected for these two books, and seems to have been as concerned with pictorial elements as he was with information, but he did not photograph as much or as widely. His output is nostalgic and evocative, but not terribly rich in specifics or broad in scope.

pictures of girls/women with

to clothes on, mostly out of

doors. So you file through the

book first, then seturn to the

front to begin reading the

4-page introduction in which

Schwartzman explains in with-

ering detail the 'how come'

of this book. His point of view

is a servicean liability to that pic-

tures: he speaks as with a mis-

sion of his pursuit of "ideal-

ited feminine beauty", gen-

erously crediting women with

innute gracefulness and com-

passion. (Schwartman photo-

graphs his subjects standing

in streams. Bung against or

lving on boulders, wandering

in fields: I can just imagine

him getting that artful portrar-

al, the calendar shot titled

in each woman I photograph' says Schwartzman, With few

enceptions he asks his subjects

to abort their eyes, preen their

heads, face downwards, up-

wards, around or out of the

frame and their heads are covered with plastic hags, clothes,

goore and the like. Perhaps

what Schwartsman would like to pormer as the idealization.

of Modesty could be Embarrangement. The bodies too are

posed in the most unnerving-

Is perkward, unnunural if minds.

unconfortable positions almost humourous encept you

know that Schwartsman wasn't

loughing. He unerringly dem-

onstrants a liking for women

of less than full figure so he's

always having to direct them.

to hold their arms above their

heads to help define the breast.

The indoors pictures are posed with flowers and brads, heds

and bathroom showers. Calm.

and nice - it all emacks of a

latent Lennon Sisters seam-

through some magazines that

sens sorth tossing out and

found a ten year old issue of

International Photo Tachnik

wherein I found an article by

New York commercial photog-

rapher Peter Basch (who in

1957 published Form and Fig-

set - as a pose-war ploment

of the Weston-Dienes-Gow-

Last week I was sorting

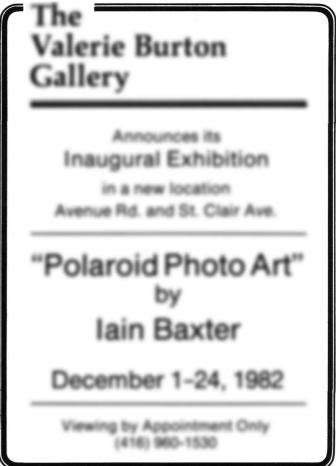
I my to being out the best

Suprambur Morn.".)

I would commend either book to anyone interested in regional photography from the first decade of this century. Both volumes provide pleasure and satisfaction (although of a relatively unchallenging sort), and the kind of contact with the recent, still-visible past that a rather disjointed contemporary society seems both to need and to enjoy.

Don Snyder





->>>

Sum Silvere

-

elies of Light:

Seven Schwarteman.

Austin, Toux, 1961.

44 Mack & white street photographs: streetpicon.

12 pages, softeners, \$18

Cood taste is the first sel-

age of the noncreative. It is

the last-disch stand of the am-

framed roades. It's a \$15" x \$15"

horizontally aligned wire

bound, softcover, black on

gloser white term. Inside are

Budies of Light mores in-

Infrared Steven Nudes



->>> B PNTME BEKA (Rhythm of an Era): Photographs by Izvestia correspondents

3. McLuhan & Parket, page

Connie Hitternth

day, I was truly solvered.

page 213.

mich. 1972

the camera. Which is oker --

four-page introduction. Sch-

wartiman says of his use of

infrared film, "it minimizes sur-

face detail while emphasizing

underlying forms. Let's review the infrared black and white

image. It is made on specially

sensitized film that records

light rays that occur beyond the red end of the electro-

magnetic spectrum and that are invisible to the human

eve. The net result is a slight atmospheric hating on images

of gradient areas of light and shadow, as is the case in these

does. Which is acceptable

when desirable - but not in

3-D because the single most

important factor in producing

the ultimate 3-D is that all

planes must be in highly re-

solved focus. When you look

up from this magnitus, across

the room and back again to,

sex, your hands in front of

you, it is possible to concen-

trate on specific planar areas while your peripheral is also

in focus. You can "move about"

in your field of vision, while never losing focus on any plane. And this is simulated

when looking at a paired image with a stereogracon prism

viewer - but impossible to achieve if there are some

planes that have not been re-

corded and pricted in crisp

detail. So when Schwartonan

sums "it minimizes surface detall" he is quite correct, but

his rational "while emphasis-

ing underlying forms', while

values, is feeble and embar-

rassing it is impossible to procred through a poorly pro-

He pleds on. "My use of

stereo rather than convention

al photographs here is a move in the direction of greater di-

mension, greater progresses, an

Generally speaking, each pic-

ture is composed with the sub-

ject's torso planted in the on-

me with most other informa-

tion - rocks, water, branches

- only incidental. He does not integrate the two distinct

components in his 3-D photos.

Actually, I feel that all be was

concentrating on was the un-

dressed girl in front of him and

expansive attitude toward 16s.

duced 3-D image

Globe Publishing House, Moscow, U.S.S.R., 1981; 88 pages, softcover

Roughly translatable as "Rhythm of an Era", the recent Soviet publication B PNTME BEKA is devoted to some seventy-five photographs by Izvestia correspondents, and contains at least one example of every important cliche about

'the good life in the Soviet Union' that the Soviet press has cranked out and sent abroad. Because of the patent falsity of its relentless optimism, the book is an easy target. As information it is close to ridiculous. Every photograph shows people who are happy, busy, eager to learn, proud of Soviet accomplishments, healthy, modern and productive; the land is rich and beautiful, the armed forces are strong, the factories and cities are energetic, the athletes are vigorous, the mix of cultures and ages is vital and free of tension or conflict — in short, one would get a much more accurate impression of the way things really are in the Soviet Union by looking at U-2 or spy satellite photographs. As photography, it is neither inspiring nor awful: most of the pictures look like they were made by Margaret Bourke-White clones, which is probably interesting if one has never seen her work, but a bit alarming if one has (the

copyright date of his book is 1981). As a book — well, the reproductions are quite varied in quality and the layout and design are uniformly artless.

This is the best that now comes out of the nation where War and Peace was written? No wonder Solzhenitsyn is a recluse in Vermont and Nureyev was overjoyed to finally get a Swiss passport. One wonders how many frustrated photographers there are in the Soviet Union and what they might accomplish if they were permitted: some of the images in this book show skill, imagination, involvement and even humor underneath the rigidly programmed subject matter.

One could go on in this way at some length, but to do so would be to miss an important point. Everyone knows that when political concerns control the arts or the press the results are predictable and disastrous, and most people assume that communist and totalitarian nations represent the only flagrant or really un-

fortunate examples of this sort of control. And yet the citizens of Ontario still acquiesce to the decisions of film censors, the voters of Canada still elect and re-elect officials who allow public money to be used for government advertising, and the U.S. government continues to pay for the making of propaganda in the guise of information (some extreme examples can be seen out of context in the recent film "The Atomic Cafe") — so the North American democracies are not above the very same abuses of the creative impulse that make B PNTME BEKA such a useless volume for anyone who is looking for real information, objective truth or individual expression. These practices are even less excusable here than in the Soviet Union. A book such as this should remind its viewers what the consequences can be should they be ignored on a large enough scale; in addition to criticizing, one should also take note.

Don Snyder

4 Bitterrarest Romance

Edward Casell and Jon White

Altitude Publishing Etd.

L29 pages, software, \$16.97

The Rockies are always

good for a book. Small pul-

lisher Altitude, judging from

the partial listing at the end of

their current number, is dedi-

cated to popularizing these

western craps. Rocky Moun-

sain Madnes is this season's

comic relief, balanced by the

same publisher's glowier look

the title page aprily summarts-

es what the title itself begs to

office Here is a mountain book

with a difference, a cadoos of

the tragic and the sublime.

the melancholy and the par-

ently absurd, or as close to the

alreard, as one can come in

Journeys to the Far West (1979), and Jon Whete, au-

thor of three books, have col-

Edward Cavell, pathor of

the mountains.

The lengths description on

at the range called Rockin.

Band, Alberta, 1962

