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C O M M U N I Q U E

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In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space

Doug Curran



Ruth Norman heads the Unarius Educational Foundation, preparing Earth for the arrival of spaceships from the Intergalactic Confederation. El Cajon, California, Dec., 1980

that occurred with the lightest that she knew, whose image she would send around the world. "Covering" she defined within the limits of the randomness of events. "The experience that you open yourself up to daily". El Skader attempts to recreate the randomness by moving between its and proportion to our comprehension of events. Miesler's previous book, *New York: June 1958-1959*, was a more striking narrative that came through hell to a triumph that El Skader and other friends, but as well as published chapters, in early 1984, as fringe photographs are being framed, discussed or expelled from the background, we are at least informed of more facts. And with the publication of this extended photo document, we can at least be responsible for knowing.

Marka Langsdorf

Lives I've Never Lived: A Portrait of Minor White

By Fredrick,
At Press, P.O. Box 2020,
Cleveland Heights, Ohio,
1983, 80 pp., softcover,
\$18.95 plus \$1.50 for
postage and handling

The title *Lives I've Never Lived* is written out in Minor White's hand under the cover photograph: a portrait of White himself, dressed in his usual woody scarf and topped with a worn propagator's hat. He stands with his back to the wall and his neck, from which long mane more hairward resembles White's mane as well as short contemplative, somewhat guarded hands stuffed in jacket pockets and not altogether hands, are made to give up his ground. However, the same legible, as though it's the costume that he made him; I imagine that if he were to turn around and change into the soldier's tunic and striped

scarf costume he would transform into a grinning, spinning and horning-up White. The collection of hats ("the hat makes the man") and scarves is strongly reminiscent of childhood costume line which allow youngsters to transform into any role desired. "The teacher, the father, the cowboy, the stick maker."

And indeed the cover photographs quite aptly the photographs within, dated March-May 1958 which variously characterize White as a teacher, a father, a hippie, a Greek philosopher, a priest, a gardener, a dancer, an actor. White, in my mind, appears to have entered himself innocently in the making of these photographs. Especially when I understand — through reading the Fredrick's forward and journal notes — the circumstances that came together to make the book.

Fredrick, longtime working associate, student and friend of White's, speaks of his desire (often thwarted) by White himself to photograph White — whom Fredrick considered brilliant and for whom he had a great fondness. And White, speaking after a stroke in December, 1975, is quoted as saying, "During this crisis, my attitude has changed. How do I spend the rest of my life in front of the camera instead of behind it." And as Fredrick and White, each for their own reasons, became partners in the project *Work* began in March, which continued for only three months before White's death in June.

One photograph of White sleeping on a cot is shot through an adjacent window of old, ratty, sagging glass, and White's body is cross-hatched by sunlight and shadow patterns from the pane divisions. It is titled "Transition, 200 Park Ave., May 28, 1958". (This is their mutual address.) That word "transition" brings to mind the second stage of labor delivery, so-called because the baby has

begun to move down the birth canal but is not yet considered born, has not made the physical connection. White was in a similar transition in the months during which he and Fredrick produced the photos in this book. White, then surrounded while depicting his various characters, is dominantly quiet and white, with long, thin, manes that also hair flowing around his head. This, in combination with his often neutral gaze can catch you off guard: it's concerning. Well, so he is. White was dealing with his immense death and the certainty of being laid to ground.

In his lifetime Minor White became a legend among contemporary photographers, former professional, performance and private. *Lives I've Never Lived* is that personal photo album that only friends ever get to look at, cheerful, spinning and surprising.

Carole Naggar

William Klein

Centre Georges Pompidou
and Éditions Herscher,
Paris, France, 1983;
144 pp.; hardcover

By now most people are aware of the uproar that accompanied publication of the Aperture monograph on William Klein: Klein attempted to stop publication, Aperture sued; claim and counterclaim followed in rapid succession. If Klein were a minor photographer or Aperture a minor publisher, the matter might have been forgotten and the book remaindered, but the book is still around (in all its oversized, overpriced glory), and doubtless Klein still feels as if his work has been seriously misrepresented.

This situation is regrettable, for Klein remains one of the major photographers of the last three decades. Some justice was recently done, however: in May and June of last year the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris mounted an ex-

tensive Klein exhibition that occasioned release of a new book, published jointly by the Centre Pompidou and Éditions Herscher.

The latter book, which can sometimes be found this side of the Atlantic, is everything the Aperture volume was not, although for the most part it reproduces the same photographs, often in similar order. For one thing, Herscher published the book in an intelligent size and paid considerable attention to reproduction quality as well as layout and sequencing. For another, Klein's work in other media (painting, design, film) is represented in reasonable proportion to his photography and is unobtrusively integrated into both text and reproductions. And for a third, the introduction (free-form interview excerpts, in French) by Carole Naggar is interesting, informational and accurate in addition to being engaging and spontaneous; and the book contains an excellent bibliography/filmography.

Klein's photographic career has been meteoric: between 1956 and 1964 he published four books (*New York*, 1956; *Rome*, 1958; *Moscow*, 1964; and *Tokyo*, 1964), all of which remain out of print classics. Since 1962 he has made thirteen major films and collected awards including the Grand Prix du Festival International de Tours and the Prix Jean Vigo. In 1978 he began exhibiting still photographs once again, and has had twenty-four exhibitions since that year (in France, Holland, the U.S., England, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden and Ireland), the majority of which have occurred since 1980. It seems appropriate that his interest should shift back toward still photography, and the reappearance of his work after twenty years gives an entirely new audience access to his vision — a vision which remains as startling and fresh as it was in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the post-Robert Frank era

of photography, all the attention given to the snapshot aesthetic and all the critical and material success achieved by the likes of Garry Winogrand and Elliott Erwitt is perhaps inevitable. But if one measures the work of the latter photographers against Klein's output, by any objective standard Klein emerges as the more versatile photographer, the more thoughtful artist and by far the more acute observer of society and behaviour. Erwitt may possess a keener sense of humor; Winogrand may be a sharper social critic; but Klein's work has a breadth, a daring, an insight and a raw energy that legitimately set his photographs apart from the work of so many of his contemporaries, both well-known and otherwise. This is superb photography, interesting and challenging, and it is published in a format that does it credit. If you are interested in Klein, this volume will provide considerable reward; if you aren't, you may find yourself pleasantly surprised.

Don Snyder



Wife of
Samudra
Sena,
c. 1920;
photographed
by Samudra
Sena; printed
by
Bhabendra
Sena, from
Through
Indian Eyes



**Through Indian Eyes:
19th and Early 20th
Century Photography
from India**

Judith Moss Gorman,
Oxford University Press and
the International Center of
Photography, New York,
New York, 1982, 198pp.,
hardcover, \$41.95;
softcover, \$21.25

Judith Moss Gorman began research for an exhibition and book on historical Indian photography in 1978. By making a series of visits to India, both to locate photographs and consult with experts, she began to define an "Indianism" about Indian photography. In many instances she found that her "eyes did not know how to look" at the photographs she saw. She realized she would have to do some studying of Hindu

philosophy to discover why the space and composition in the photographs were so disconcerting and confusing to her Western sensibility.

Unfortunately, Gorman never discusses this aspect of her research in any detail, and information on Hindu metaphysics could only have added to a reader's appreciation of the photographs reproduced in the book. Instead, she takes a narrative, anecdotal approach and leads us along from small town to tiny village in India, describing how she found photographs and met people who were able to shed

light on her inquiries. Although her account is enthusiastic, Gorman is not a brilliant writer. Her descriptions are often self-conscious, stilted and forced, and after a while her text becomes pedestrian and plodding. Of course most of us are not capable of translating an intense experience into words which will effectively convey the flavor and richness of travel. Perhaps given the common limitation, then, Gorman could have chosen a more appropriate format with which to structure her book — for example, a thematic one.

But, this aside, the author is perceptive and has an acute visual sense. What she has to say about the photographs themselves is fascinating and clearly expressed. And, in terms of scholarship, the book seems sound. Gorman has documented the work and activities of specific photographers and photographic firms; this is the first time such information has been systematically brought together and published.

Her main thesis is that the Indian view of reality is not the "objective", observable one to which we Westerners are so