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Sympathetic Materialism: Allan Sekula's Photo-Works, 1971–2000

by

Benjamin James Young

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Judith Butler, Chair  
Professor Julia Bryan-Wilson  
Professor Ramona Naddaff

Summer 2018

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## Abstract

Sympathetic Materialism: Allan Sekula's Photo-Works, 1971–2000

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Benjamin James Young

Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Judith Butler, Chair

This monographic dissertation analyzes the photography-based artwork of Allan Sekula (1951–2013) by focusing on the contested status of the human figure in his works made from 1971 to 2000. The first part situates his photography within a struggle over documents and documentation in Southern California during the Vietnam-War era, showing how his early works engage not only with the use of photographic documents by conceptual art, but also with activist antiwar journalism in underground newspapers as well as surveillance photographs and mug shots made by the police. In addition to exploring evidentiary photography's role in both art and politics, the dissertation also investigates how Sekula adopts a performative model of portraiture that acknowledges the social relations and material infrastructure that allows for picture-making to take place, especially the relation between viewer and subject. It contextualizes this performative portraiture as partly a struggle over realism that rejects photorealism in painting while adopting Brechtian aesthetics in photography. The second part explores how Sekula revives the neglected genre of the group portrait, contrasting his works that depict crowds of workers or his own family with the representations of public life by both the business corporation and liberal social documentary. It argues that Sekula's artworks ultimately aim, through their use of sequential montage, or the quasinarrative sequencing of multiple still images, to make visible transindividual forms of social life. It shows how Sekula's works weave together singularity and collectivity in ways that contest the usual partitions of social and economic life, especially the global division of labor, which he addresses in his late works that document maritime space, containerized shipping, and the political and spatial changes wrought by globalization. It concludes by demonstrating how Sekula's practical aesthetics involve a documentary ethic of responding to the given that is implicitly in tension with the iconoclastic model of ideology critique at work in many of his critical texts. This documentary ethic can be described as what Sekula called "sympathetic materialism," an ethico-political orientation of sensitivity, receptivity, or exposure to bodily vulnerability and suffering that goes beyond the iconography of labor and Marxian politics with which he is commonly associated.

*For my parents*

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and enlivened by time spent organizing with the Arts and Labor working group of Occupy Wall Street; I thank all those I met through A&L who helped illuminate the difficult intersection of theory and praxis. Also in New York, Anjuli Raza-Kolb, Genevieve Yue, and Kate Stanley each sustained this work, just by their friendship, in different ways. Tom Keenan has been a model of scholarship, theoretical rigor, and pragmatic engagement with media and politics, and his friendship and support over the years have been invaluable.

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I was lucky to be able to meet with Allan Sekula and consult materials in his studio prior to his death in 2013, and I remain grateful for the generosity he showed in speaking with me and making his work available for study. After his death, Sally Stein has been equally generous in providing access to his archive, and I especially thank her for her support at what was such a difficult personal time for her. This project has since been touched not only by her considered handling of the archive, but also her thinking and writing about photography. Ina Steiner of Allan Sekula Studio has been equally indispensable in providing images and information, and I'm grateful for her work and broad knowledge of Sekula's oeuvre. I also thank fellow Sekula scholars Marie Muracciole, Hilde Van Gelder, and Jeroen Verbeeck for invitations to present my work in public forums, and the ensuing discussions they have generated.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, for their patience, quiet encouragement, and understanding, and for all they have given me over the years.



## NOTE ON THE TEXT

I consulted the archive of Allan Sekula while it was still housed in his studio in Los Angeles—and, in a sense, before the materials therein were institutionally codified as an archive. Most of the materials have since entered the special collections of the Getty Research Institute as the Allan Sekula Archive, which is still being catalogued at the time of writing. His estate, the Allan Sekula Studio, retains copyright over the images by Sekula and from his archive that are reproduced here. I thank Allan Sekula Studio for generously providing digital versions of the images and granting permission to reproduce them here.

Part of Chapter 1 was previously published in Benjamin J. Young, “Documents and Documentary: San Diego, c. 1973,” in *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey, exh. cat. (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 112–161. Parts of Chapters 3, 4, and the Conclusion were published in Benjamin J. Young, “Arresting Figures,” in “Allan Sekula and the Traffic in Photographs,” special issue, ed. Marie Muracciole and Benjamin J. Young, *Grey Room 55* (Spring 2014): 78–115; a section from the Introduction was also included in the editor’s introduction of that special issue. Chapter 5 was published as Benjamin J. Young, “On Strike: Allan Sekula’s *Waiting for Tear Gas*,” in *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism*, ed. Meg McLagan and Yates McKee (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 148–181. I am grateful to the editors of each of these publications for their helpful suggestions and revisions; any remaining errors are my own.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Traffic in Photographs

In 1975 Allan Sekula published in *Artforum* a series of essays on the history of photography that responded critically to the emerging art photography boom of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>1</sup> Addressing key figures such as Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen in the developing canon of art photography—specifically as it was being formulated at the Museum of Modern Art—Sekula examined the way the selective construction of a modernist aesthetic tradition in photography served to legitimate the medium as a fine art, thereby securing its entry into the market and the museum. In his writing over the following decade, Sekula continually pointed out the exclusions on which this canon and its formalist criteria for entry were based, opening the charmed circle of modernist auteurs to a comparative analysis with other photographic modes: the aerial view in military photography, corporate advertising, paparazzo celebrity photography, commercial portraiture, industrial photography, police photography, and, crucially, documentary photography. The introduction to Sekula’s first book of collected essays, *Photography against the Grain*, summarizes this project as “a materialist social history of photography, a history that takes the interplay of economic and technological considerations into account.”<sup>2</sup> Sekula argued for a history of what he called “the traffic in photographs,” which denotes not just the material and discursive networks in and through which photographs are produced, circulated, and received, but also “the incessant oscillation between . . . the ‘antinomies of bourgeois thought’” that structures such circulation, especially between science and art, instrumental images and aesthetic ones, and realism and formalism.<sup>3</sup> This form of history writing played a central role in the photography debates of the 1980s and involved practitioners, critics, and historians such as Victor Burgin, Steve Edwards, Molly Nesbit, Martha Rosler, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Sally Stein, and John Tagg, and, in a different vein, Rosalind Krauss and Douglas Crimp.<sup>4</sup> And the effort met stiff resistance, to some

1. Allan Sekula, “The Invention of Photographic Meaning,” *Artforum* 13, no. 5 (January 1975): 36–45; Sekula, review of Ron Gallela, *Jaqueline*, *Artforum* 13, no. 8 (April 1975): 70–72; and Sekula, “The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War,” *Artforum* 14, no. 4 (December 1975): 26–35.
2. Allan Sekula, introduction to *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), xiv. In addition to the *Artforum* essays, this volume also includes the critical essays “Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)” and “The Traffic in Photographs.”
3. Sekula, introduction to *Photography against the Grain*, xv.
4. Along with *Photography against the Grain*, two other key essays by Sekula also appeared in the mid-1980s: Allan Sekula, “Photography between Labor and Capital,” in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948–1968*, ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 193–268; and Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64.

even threatening the very existence of art (or photography-as-art) itself. In an early skirmish in what became the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, Hilton Kramer misconstrued Sekula's essay on Steichen as "a bitter attack . . . on the making, exhibiting and marketing of photographs as works of art."<sup>5</sup>

However, Sekula had been making photographs since late in 1971, while training as an artist. In an alternate version of Jean-Luc Godard's quip about "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola," Sekula studied with both Herbert Marcuse and John Baldessari as an undergraduate at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).<sup>6</sup> Staying at UCSD to complete a master of fine arts degree from 1972 to 1974, Sekula collaborated with colleagues Fred Lonidier, Rosler, and Phil (later Phel) Steinmetz to link criticism of the high-modernist canon to a renewed practice of documentary cultural work. In the 1976 manifesto "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," Sekula calls for "a political economy, a sociology, and a non-formalist semiotics of media" that provides the framework for "a critical representational art, an art that points openly to the social world and to possibilities of concrete social transformation."<sup>7</sup> Such an art would be called documentary only insofar as it threw into question the myth of photographic truth, of the document as transparent record of fact; it would be realist only insofar as both its reflexivity about the medium and its social engagement contradicted the purportedly neutral objectivity of realism. This reinvented documentary would break with the aesthetics of liberal social documentary, which at best was tied to a politically suspect reformism or philanthropy and at worst supplanted understanding and action with only compassion, pity, or the aestheticization of suffering. As an artistic praxis, it would attend to the semiotic and formal complexity of realist and documentary modes even as it sought to both portray and indict what was seen as the impoverishment of daily life under capitalism. Formally, Sekula and his colleagues experimented with combining images and language; with the multi-image formats of slide

5. This may have partly been score settling, given Sekula's cursory dismissal of Kramer in the Steichen text, but it took place in the context of Kramer's larger fusillade against the editorial line of *Artforum*, which he denounced as "a tendentious sociopolitical analysis of all artistic events." Hilton Kramer, "Muddled Marxism Replaces Criticism at Artforum," *New York Times*, December 21, 1975. A year later, *Artforum* publisher Charles Cowles, acknowledging the influence of the Kramer article, publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the magazine's editorial direction and did not renew the contract of editor-in-chief John Coplans. In turn, executive editor Max Kozloff resigned. Editors Annette Michelson and Rosalind Krauss had already left the magazine to form *October*. See Grace Glueck, "Art People," *New York Times*, December 31, 1976.
6. Godard proposes the phrase as an alternate title for *Masculin féminin* (Masculine feminine, 1966) on an intertitle partway through the film. On Sekula's relation to Godard, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.
7. Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)" (1976/1978), in *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996*, ed. Debra Risberg, exh. cat. (Normal: Illinois State University, 1999), 120. The other key text that articulates many of the concerns of the group is Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" (1981), in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; New York: International Center of Photography, 2004), 151–206.



shows, photo-and-text installations, and video; and with the occasional recourse to theatricality or fiction in order to call attention to the place of the single, still image in larger networks of discourse and power.

Thus *Photography against the Grain* also collected many of Sekula's early photo-works, including *Aerospace Folktales* (1973), a sequence of photographs, text, and audio that documents the family of an unemployed engineer; *This Ain't China: A Photonovel* (1974), which consists of photographs and text booklets chronicling the routines and dreams of workers at a pizza joint; and *Meditations on a Triptych* (1973/1978), a short essay analyzing three family photographs orchestrated by Sekula's father, which Sekula appropriates almost as artworks themselves. As the introduction emphasizes, it is "a book *about* photography" and "a book *of* photographs, a book that speaks within and alongside and through photographs."<sup>8</sup> Preceding and standing apart from both the image-appropriations common in postmodern photography and the painting-like tableaux of pictorial photography, Sekula and his San Diego colleagues in the 1970s played an early, important role in opening photography onto an "expanded field" that enabled the proliferation of photography-, film-, and video-based works in the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> So, too, their rethinking of documentary practices needs to be considered as an important precedent for much of the so-called documentary turn of the last decade, and forms a counter-tradition of postmodern art practice opposed to discourses about the simulacrum and the passion of the sign.<sup>10</sup> Finally, their insistence on seeking ways to represent changing forms of industrial and service work, unemployment, injury, precarity, family life, education, consumption, and leisure in the sprawl of the Californian suburbs helped make visible usually unseen aspects of everyday life under changing conditions of capitalism, beginning with the dawn of neoliberalism in the early 1970s up to the present.

8. Sekula, introduction to *Photography against the Grain*, ix.
9. Although Sekula is cited as a historian, neither he nor his UCSD colleagues are mentioned by George Baker as practitioners who figure among James Coleman, Jeff Wall, and Cindy Sherman, "the great triumvirate [*sic*] of postmodern 'photographers' in the late 1970s" who staked out photography's expanded field. George Baker, "Photography's Expanded Field," *October* 114 (Fall 2005): 132. Baker's outline of an expanded field of photographic practice in the 1970s and after is of course indebted to Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44. On Sekula's practice in relation to Krauss's account of the art of the 1970s, see chapter 1 of this dissertation.
10. In addition to the watershed exhibition Documenta 11 (2002), at which Sekula's *Fish Story* was exhibited, see Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl, eds., *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College; Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008); and T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). See also the related artistic turn to the archive discussed in Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 3–22; and Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Photography*, exh. cat. (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2008); and a critical response to this trend in John Tagg, "The Archiving Machine; or, The Camera and the Filing Cabinet," *Grey Room* 47 (Spring 2012): 24–37.

Although by the 1980s and early 1990s Sekula's historical writing was better known than his artistic practice, this balance was altered by the appearance of the long-term, investigative photography-and-text piece *Fish Story* (1988–1995), which was realized as both an exhibition and a book.<sup>11</sup> Accompanied in the book version by a richly allusive cultural history of seafaring in modernity, *Fish Story* investigates maritime space, ranging from a derelict shipyard in Los Angeles to Rotterdam's automated docks to fishing villages, workers' housing, and industrial shipyards in Korea, among many other sites. *Fish Story* was followed over the next two decades by a constellation of related photography-based works, essays, and, later, videos and films that explore the sea as the often neglected material condition for the contemporary economy, countering the rhetoric of instantaneous, digital connectivity by attentively recording a world of manual labor, of the construction of vast new spaces and vehicles of industrial production, and of the slow, ponderous movement of material goods.<sup>12</sup> This body of work has, perhaps more than that of any other contemporary artist, both contested and expanded the picture-language of globalization.<sup>13</sup>

Yet while Sekula's critical and historical writing of the sort included in *Photography against the Grain* has become well known and influential, at least among historians of photography, his photographic works have been neglected. By offering close readings of many of his key works from 1971 to 2000, I argue that they offer a photographic account of the world as radical and unsettling as many of his texts on the history of photography. Challenging the division of labor between textual criticism and artistic production, as well as that between mental and manual labor, Sekula's photo-works also offer an aesthetic and material supplement to the sometimes anti-aesthetic critique of ideology at work in his texts. If in Sekula's texts photography sometimes seems impossibly bound to the "antinomies of bourgeois thought," and art itself remains trapped between a formalist aestheticism that denies its relation to political and socioeconomic realities and an instrumental realism that mobilizes photographs in the service of capital or the state, his photo-works attempt to formulate an aesthetico-political praxis that would begin to push beyond these limits. While Sekula's Marxian political framework ultimately maintains that a socialist political praxis, and not art alone, can transform the

11. Allan Sekula, *Fish Story* (Rotterdam: Witte de With; Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1995).
12. Books published include Allan Sekula, *Geography Lesson: Canadian Notes* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); Allan Sekula, *Dead Letter Office* (Rotterdam: Netherlands Foto Instituut, 1997); Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal: Illinois State University, 1999); Allan Sekula, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula: Deep Six/Passer au bleu* (Calais: Musée des Beaux Arts et de la Dentelle, 2001); Allan Sekula, *TITANIC's wake* (Paris: Le Point du Jour Éditeurs, 2003); *Allan Sekula: Performance under Working Conditions*, ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Vienna: Generali Foundation; Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2003); and Allan Sekula, *Polonia and Other Fables* (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago; Warsaw: Zacheta National Gallery of Art, 2009).
13. Here I modify Sekula's earlier formulation about the "picture-language of industrial capitalism," whose history he traced in Sekula, "Photography between Labor and Capital."

capitalist order, his photo-works provide the opportunity to practically integrate forms of political, critical, and artistic labor. Even more, his photo-works offer insights into aesthetics and politics not foreseen by his critical texts.

Based on Sekula's critical texts, one might surmise a certain disdain for sympathy in his work. He explicitly warns against the way documentary can turn violence and suffering into aesthetic objects, the way liberal aesthetics promotes "compassion rather than collective struggle."<sup>14</sup> And yet he follows his famous textual critique of Edward Steichen's 1955 book and exhibition *The Family of Man*, which Sekula denounces for its abstract, liberal humanism, by actively documenting in photographs what he sees as an effort to "re-float" *The Family of Man*: the circumnavigation of *The Global Mariner* and her crew, a container ship refitted by a confederation of maritime and transportation unions as a traveling exhibition on the legal, economic, and working conditions of global shipping.<sup>15</sup> Just as there might be something like humanism from below, something like compassion may have a role to play in collective struggle, and Sekula's photographic work, as well.

Sekula introduces his work *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* (1996)—photographs of both sides of the English Channel in Dover and in Pas-de-Calais, as well as a voyage of the ocean ferry *Sea France Renoir*—by imagining it as an illustrated edition of two books paired together: Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1792) and Catherine Porter's *Ship of Fools* (1962), a novel telling of an ocean voyage to Europe in the 1930s that hints at the rise of Nazism. (He specifies that the photographs "would be kept separate from the text.") He writes: "Paine and Porter belong, respectively, to the first and last generations of American writers to have been formed by the long duration of sea travel. They shared a sympathetic materialism, born of seasickness."<sup>16</sup> But the term "sympathetic materialism" can equally be applied to Sekula's own work: the patient, careful attention of the photographer to the conditions and details of everyday life seen from below, especially the impingements and labors of the body. As I argue throughout this dissertation, Sekula's photographic practice emerges as a form of modest observation, one that is not made from on high or without being seen or without having others look or

14. Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism," 131; see also the parallel critique of "victim photography" in Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)."
15. The main critique of *Family of Man* appears in "The Traffic in Photographs" but recurs throughout Sekula's writings. He first mentions the exhibition in "The Instrumental Image" and revisits it in Allan Sekula, "An Eternal Esthetics of Laborious Gestures," *Portrait d'un malentendu: Chroniques photographiques récentes* (Montreal: Dazibao, 1996), 27–36, reprinted in "Allan Sekula and the Traffic in Photographs," special issue, ed. Marie Muracciole and Benjamin J. Young, *Grey Room*, no. 55 (Spring 2014): 16–27. His photographic portraits of the crew of *The Global Mariner* were included in the photo-work *Ship of Fools* (1999–2000), which he discusses in Allan Sekula, "Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea (Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs)," *October* 102 (Fall 2002): 3–34.
16. Sekula, *Deep Six*, in Sekula, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. See also his use of the term in Allan Sekula, "On 'Fish Story': The Coffin Learns to Dance," *Camera Austria International* 59/60 (1997): 56.

talk back, but one that is predicated, essentially, on exposure. This exposure, both bodily and photographic, is a condition of solidarity with others, and, for Sekula, for a radically democratic politics. It amounts, perhaps, to a reworking of what used to be called humanism, a rethinking of the human not as universal identity, but as bodily experience, specifically that of suffering. And suffering not as an eternal and inevitable condition of life—as work appeared to be in *The Family of Man*—but as something that calls out to be mediated, assuaged, addressed in different ways, a shared suffering that might be political and is always a question of justice. As Roland Barthes said of work—in the text on *Family of Man* that inspired Sekula—that it is “an age-old fact does not in the least prevent it from remaining a perfectly historical fact.”<sup>17</sup>

As a writer, Sekula has criticized the latent humanism of much social documentary, on one hand, and the dream of autonomy in formalist aesthetics, on the other.<sup>18</sup> As a photographer, he has cannily reworked the photo and text-based series inherited from conceptual art, continually questioning the fullness and sufficiency of any single image. However, this emphasis on questioning images is not a simple negation or refusal of the particular, the phenomenological, or the aesthetic. Rather, by arranging pictures into sequences and often paring them with text, his is a materialism attentive to the manifold surfaces of the world, one that seeks to forge links within this profusion of details. It is also a materialism that returns again and again to the problem of how to picture the human figure in its milieu: not only laboring in the workplace or the home, but also the in-between spaces of transit, transport, and circulation, as well as the spaces of unemployment and unworking—at the margins of work and exchange.

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This dissertation is organized into two parts. The first part foregrounds Sekula’s treatment of the human body within the spaces of everyday life and work in the 1970s, showing how his work draws not only on the uses made of photography by pop and conceptual artists in the 1960s, but also the conventions of documentary photography, specifically photojournalism and police photography. In Chapter 1, I detail Sekula’s formation as an artist and show how his earliest photographs take place, on one hand, in the context of conceptual and performance art’s use of the index and of photographic documentation in particular to fundamentally challenge modernist assumptions about the nature and value of art. Looking at Sekula’s mentor John Baldessari’s use of documentation as a kind of evidence in Baldessari’s art of the early and mid-1970s, I outline the tensions between art and document produced by photoconceptualism. On the other hand, Sekula’s photographs of antiwar demonstrations and the San Diego Police Department’s Red Squad also take place within an intense political struggle over photographs as tools and effects of

17. Roland Barthes, “The Great Family of Man,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 102.

18. Sekula first thematizes this opposition in “The Invention of Photographic Meaning.”



power, specifically between police oppression and right-wing vigilantism on one side and activist journalism published in underground newspapers on the other. In the process, I show how Baldessari's and Sekula's works of the period curiously share the same medium: the San Diego Police Department. The conflicted status of the index and the photo-document, not only in artistic practices but also in the pitched battles over the representation of and dissent from the Vietnam War, forces artists to increasingly take account of the social uses of photography. Thus I demonstrate how Sekula's earliest works *Box Car* (1971) and *Meat Mass* (1972), as well as works by his colleagues Martha Rosler and Fred Lonidier, operate according to a model of performative photography developed out of the agit-prop sculptures and protest actions of the day as much as photoconceptualism.

Sekula and his colleagues' use of photography has been portrayed as the heroic recovery of neglected forms of pre-World-War-II realism, specifically the politicized photomontage of John Heartfield and Soviet factography, but also documentary work by August Sander and Farm Security Administration photographers.<sup>19</sup> In Chapter 2, I show that although Sekula was becoming aware of such traditions as a young student in the early 1970s, some of his earliest, unpublished photographs demonstrate how he was also pictorially engaged with the rise of both figuration and photorealism in painting at that moment, which were being offered as alternatives to what was perceived as the late-modernist dogma of abstraction. By examining Sekula's photographs of Chuck Close's monumental pictures of heads, I show how Sekula disrupts both the superficial realism and crypto-modernism of Close's work. Literally reframing Close's pictures, Sekula's photographs, as well as his early audio installation *Gallery Voice Montage* (1970), reorient portraiture away from the picture plane and the gallery wall. Calling attention to the mug shots and identity photographs that haunt Close's work, I contrast the metaphorical criminality of Close's sitters with Sekula's investigation of photography as a tool of domination and social control amidst the ongoing criminalization of the counterculture in San Diego. Against the faux-naïf and literally superficial mimesis of photorealism as style, Sekula and his colleagues began to develop a photographic approach grounded less in the materiality of the medium or the reality of the referent than in the social relations between individuals. Indebted as much to Bertolt Brecht's writings on theater and to the cinema of Jean-Luc Godard as to painting, Sekula then develops a kind of performative portraiture that calls attention to the photographic situation in *A Short Autobiography* (1971–1972), *Self-Portrait as Sculptor/Painter/Photographer* (1972), *Masculine/Feminine Life in the Suburbs* (1972), *Two, Three, Many . . . Terrorism* (1972), and *Meditations on a Triptych* (1973/1978).

The reflexive and performative account of portraiture developed in Sekula's early works is integrated into a broader social survey in his two key works of the 1970s: *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) and *Aerospace Folktales* (1973). In Chapter 3, I explore how these two works begin to use photographic sequences as a means

19. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Allan Sekula, or What Is Photography?" in Allan Sekula and the Traffic in Photographs, special issue, ed. Marie Muracciole and Benjamin J. Young, *Grey Room*, no. 55 (Spring 2014): 120–122.

to rework the group portrait—a genre long in decline throughout the twentieth century, especially after the passing of the mass movements of the 1930s—and reinvent images of labor and everyday social life. In contrast with the photographic individuation required by police photography and social documentation, as well as the possessive individualism of bourgeois portraiture, *Untitled Slide Sequence* pictures a group of workers, over a short period of time, climbing the steps to leave the Convair aerospace factory at the end of a day shift. While the slide sequence provides the means to picture a group of workers in a coordinated, nonhierarchical composition, Sekula's personal opposition to the Vietnam War and the New Left's general distrust of the working class as an agent of progressive change make the viewer's glancing encounter with these figures strange and fraught. Attending to the space of everyday life, situated between the factory and the street, in an interval between work, leisure, and home, nonetheless calls attention to a kind of common space in which the consensus about economic self-interest and public good in the military economy might be contested. These economico-political concerns are literally brought home in *Aerospace Folktales* (1973), in which Sekula first develops what he called, in other contexts, "sequential montage," using photographic sequences to describe the conflicted and precarious family life of an out-of-work aerospace engineer, his homemaker wife, and their children. By attending as much to unemployment and unwaged work as they do to industrial labor, Sekula's photo-works develop a politics of human figures depicted in both their subjection and their possible freedom.

Part 2 of the dissertation focuses on Sekula's work made after 1989, when he primarily investigates maritime space, documenting the ports, cargo ships, and standardized shipping containers that make possible the modern world market. Growing out of works in the 1980s dedicated to landscape and the politics of space such as *Sketch for a Geography Lesson* (1983) and *Geography Lesson: Canadian Notes* (1987), these works also show how Sekula's ongoing criticism of liberal social documentary and of the disciplinary power exercised on the body through the photographic archive nonetheless does not lead to the exclusion of the human figure from his own photographic practice.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the account of a global spatial order built up in Sekula's magnum opus, *Fish Story* (1988–1995). *Fish Story*, and Sekula's maritime works that follow it, track the sea as the constitutive, if often neglected, matrix of the contemporary economic and political order. Photo-works from *Fish Story* to *Dead Letter Office* (1996–1997), *Deep Six/Passer au bleu* (1996–1998), and *Freeway to China* (1998–1999) record the latest developments in the rationalization and automation of production and transport: the standardized shipping container; the system of intermodal transport between ship, truck, and train it engenders; and the new global geography of production and distribution they enable. The works track the new material spaces and legal vehicles that emerge—from the new supersized container ships, ports, and warehouses required to handle the growing flow of goods; to the flag of convenience system of paper sovereignty that governs the shipping industry, one of the innovative legal maneuvers created by capital to

maximize profit, evade regulation, and shift labor costs and environmental risks elsewhere.

At the same time, Sekula attends not only to the movement of capital and the way it reshapes the world but also to the humdrum drudgery and manual labor still required to keep the system moving. In particular, I show how Sekula develops a doubled, pendant portrait to show individuals both at work and at rest, both identified and anonymous, both captured by and released from the camera and the machine or task at which they toil. Refusing the single, still image of the laboring body, Sekula's use of pendant portraits and sequential montage links that body to other tasks, other sites, and other bodies.

*Fish Story* and the works that follow it are partly dedicated to recording the disappearance of the old ports and ways of the sailor that were once part of the modern city, at the moment the dockyard workforce is shrunk through technology and the new "super ports" decamp to suburban and exurban sites. These works seek to register a proletarian cosmopolitanism of the sea, one that has at least partly vanished. However, the invocation in *Fish Story*, for instance, of a history of naval mutinies stretching back to the French Revolution is not simply a left-melancholic lament for an insurrectionary past. Through the aesthetic work of sequencing distant sites and figures, places of production, transport, and consumption, *Fish Story* also attempts to picture what I call the transindividual conditions of social life. By attending to the human figures caught up in the economic forces that encircle and transform the spaces of work and daily life, these works juxtapose the conception of the globe through which capital operates with the world community it both enables and prevents.

In the fifth and concluding chapter, I develop this opposition between globe and world by focusing on *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]* (1999–2000), a color slide sequence that depicts a collective political demonstration in the public space of the street: the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. Thus beyond the union of transport workers who organized a world tour for the agit-prop ship *The Global Mariner*, and who exemplify a sustained, ongoing effort by activists and workers to call attention to and thereby alter the terms of the world economic order, Sekula also seeks to document more provisional moments of association and cooperation. These include the volunteers laboriously cleaning by hand, almost speck by speck, oil spilled from a sunken tanker on the shoreline in Spain in *Black Tide/Marea negra* (2002–2003), or those temporarily assembled on the streets of Seattle to intervene in the negotiations of the global financial elite in *Waiting for Tear Gas*. The emphasis *Waiting* places on describing the sensations and experiences of these people as they assemble in the street suggests that the form of their collective appearance is fundamental to the makeup of this new politics. The collective depiction of these figures also raises issues of identification and absorption often assumed alien to Sekula's approach and, I argue, ultimately leads to the discovery of *proximity* and *exposure* as the key dynamics that animate the sequence. By depicting the way the demonstrators are exposed to the elements and to the violence of the police, *Waiting for Tear Gas* suggests the vulnerability and intimacy of these assembled bodies forms a kind of nongovernmental politics

premised on shared precarity as well as the particular kind of public refusal and inaction that is the general strike.

Although Sekula's work has been exhibited broadly in Europe, it has been mostly neglected in criticism and exhibitions in the US. Sekula began to be represented by a commercial art gallery only in the 1990s, and he has never had a solo exhibition in a major museum in the United States, although a retrospective exhibition was held in Vienna in 2003.<sup>20</sup> Only recently has the group of artists in San Diego in the 1970s and 1980s, in which he was a key figure, been featured in a survey exhibition in a major museum.<sup>21</sup> While his influence as a critic and historian of photography is more widely acknowledged, and his photographs remain a touchstone for the recent interest in documentary modes among a younger generation of artists, there is little scholarship on his artwork. No book-length monographic study of his photographs exists, nor does a broader survey of the other artists of the so-called San Diego school from which his work emerges in the 1970s. One important exception to his neglect in existing scholarship are texts by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, a longstanding interlocutor of Sekula's. Buchloh has produced the most sustained reading of Sekula's photo-works, comprehending them under the two major signs of *ideology critique* and of *realism*.<sup>22</sup> Buchloh offers the term "critical realism" as a way of making sense of Sekula's practice by overcoming the realism/modernism division, prioritizing previously subordinate forms of realism while retaining the critical reflexivity of modernist and avant-garde art practice.<sup>23</sup> Sekula's own critical writing on photography shares a similar language and set of commitments, and is clearly engaged with the 1930s debates in Marxist aesthetics from which Buchloh's account of the realism/modernism dialectic stems.

My focus on documents and documentary shifts the terms of these discussions. By grounding the development of Sekula's work in struggles over the index and document in the 1970s, I show that in addition to the aesthetic debates over the legacy of modernism, Sekula was deeply involved in the contemporary politics

20. *Allan Sekula: Performance under Working Conditions*, Generali Foundation, May 16–August 17, 2003; see *Allan Sekula: Performance under Working Conditions*, exh. cat., ed. Breitwieser. An earlier 1996 retrospective travelled to various university galleries in the US and galleries in Europe; see Sekula, *Dismal Science*.
21. *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, September 24, 2016–January 2, 2017; see David Antin, Jill Dawsey, Pamela M. Lee, Judith Rodenbeck, and Benjamin J. Young, *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey, exh. cat. (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Oakland: University of California Press, 2016). My contribution to *The Uses of Photography* is partly based on chapter 1 of this dissertation.
22. Both *ideology critique* and *realism* serve as the key terms in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Since Realism There Was . . . (On the Current Conditions of Factographic Art)," in *Art and Ideology*, exh. cat. (New York: New Museum, 1984).
23. *Critical realism* is elaborated in Buchloh, "Allan Sekula: Photography Between Discourse and Document," in *Fish Story*. The term was also the theme of a conference, papers from which are collected in *Critical Realism in Contemporary Art: Around Allan Sekula's Photography*, ed. Jan Baetens and Hilde van Gelder (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2006).



of activist counter-documentary, or what he will later call anti-photojournalistic, practice. Treating Sekula's photographs as part of a larger traffic in photographs, I also show how they alter inherited notions of critique, moving away from ideology critique as a knowing diagnosis of symptomatic, bourgeois cultural forms meant to be negated and overcome by political action. Instead, his photo-works model a form of critique as aesthetic practice that proceeds less by negating the given realm of appearances, and not only by creating a self-reflexively constructed and didactic artwork, but by observationally documenting and describing everyday life. By making visible transindividual forms of social life, specifically through multiple, changing configurations of the group portrait, Sekula's sympathetic materialism weaves together singularity and collectivity in ways that contest the usual partitions of social and economic life, especially the global division of labor.

At the same time, although Sekula's texts often rely on a humanist-Marxist account of social abstraction—in which, according to the labor theory of value, the surplus value extracted from the concrete, living body worker by capital is figured as abstract, reified, and dead—in his photo-works, the counter to abstraction is found not only in the living, productive labor of the worker, but in forms of lived precarity, of work and worklessness at the margins of production, in traffic and exchange, and in the empty spaces of everyday life, whose depictions rely on the virtual space of the photographic image. Similarly, although Sekula often portrayed his project as a self-consciously outmoded attempt to grasp the global economic system as a totality, close attention to his photographs shows their fragmentary and contingent sequencing. While Sekula aspired to map, through text, photographs, and film and video, the ways in which capital grasps and reorders the globe as an abstract totality, his aesthetic works also counter that quantifying logic of exchange by offering another a vision of an inhabited, qualitatively particular material world. His attraction to the lived, phenomenal world of transindividual bodily life suggests a kind of world-making at odds with the objectification produced by grasping the earth as a global totality, even if some notion of totality—perhaps fictive or anticipatory—was what first propelled Sekula to attempt to connect such disparate spaces.

Although Sekula continued to make primarily maritime works based around the problems first explored in *Fish Story* up until his death in 2013, I end my study at the turn of the century. The moment of explicit public outcry and debate on the merits of economic globalization depicted in my final chapter was shortly after eclipsed by the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and the so-called War on Terror that followed. After violent Islamist movements shattered the alleged global consensus about a new, neoliberal world order first heralded in the 1970s and seemingly realized after 1989, they have subsequently been joined, in an equally intolerant mirror image, by the rise of reactionary antiglobalization movements in the West. Precisely because many of the liberal and center-left political parties in Europe and America have proven incapable of advancing a progressive critique of neoliberalism in the last forty years, and because that vacuum is now being filled by religious fundamentalism and xenophobic, racist, and neofascist forms of nationalism, it is ever more important to look again at Sekula's photo-works.

They are crucial not only for understanding the forms of exchange and exploitation they chart, but also for preserving forms of resistance to state violence, histories of proletarian cosmopolitanism, and eruptions of social solidarity whose time has yet to come.

## CHAPTER 1

### Documents and Documentary: Photography between Art and Politics

#### The Beach

There is a strange correspondence between some of Allan Sekula's earliest negatives. In one set of black-and-white photographs, taken in November 1971, a pair of large, squared-off wooden beams are laid out parallel to each other among the sandy dunes of a California beach (fig. 1.1). In the following frames, a woman appears and pours liquid from a gas can into the space between them. She retreats and, with the frame again empty, flames leap up from the timbers as they burn. The camera retraces her footprints in the sand, again circling the now-burning wood, capturing the timbers both horizontally as a bar across the frame and vertically as a pair of rails that recede into depth. After the light wooden surfaces are blackened with char, the woman reappears with more fuel and the flames leap higher.

Burning timbers reappear in frames from another strip of film shot six months later (fig. 1.2). A helicopter hovers in a featureless white sky as distant observers peek over the roof of an industrial building. In the next frame, railroad tracks recede into the middle distance, orthogonal lines leading from the bottom corners of the frame to a vanishing point on the horizon: a white spot of flame from which emanates a plume of black smoke, thickening the air. A mass of people congregates around the fire on the tracks. Rows of policemen line the wayside of the railroad bed. The camera approaches the fire, recording the flaming timbers stacked across the rails that run up the middle of the frame. The neatly laid horizontal timbers block physical passage down the rails; the bright flames and dark cloud of smoke bar visual access to the horizon. As the crowd disperses, riot-helmeted policemen stride toward the camera; other helmeted officers run and leap down a sandy embankment to reach the scene. One frame is filled with a jumble of footprints in the sand, indexing confusion, chase, perhaps bodily struggle. In the calm after the melee, the photographer climbs up on the railroad bed where the police had encircled the anti-monument, arresting some young people and driving off the rest. In the final frame, a white-shirted officer in the foreground, arms crossed and gazing into the middle distance beyond the cameraperson, now blocks the way. Even as he stands guard, the chin strap of his shiny helmet hangs nonchalantly undone, suggesting the physical confrontation has passed. Another nearby cop turns away from the cameraperson to look back at the pair of young longhairs lingering behind the officers. They regard each other warily.

The visual echo between the sequences—the repetition of burning timbers, fire and smoke, footprints in the sand—seems to be an effect of chance, a misleading resemblance, pseudomorphism: the depicted events are unrelated (fig. 1.3).<sup>1</sup>

1. Pseudomorphosis is defined as “the emergence of a form A, morphologically analogous to, or even identical with, a form B, yet entirely unrelated to it from a genetic point of

Notwithstanding the strong similarity in their appearance, they are not the same timbers burning; the intention, meaning, and context of the acts are manifestly different. Despite their proximity in space and time, they belong to radically divergent social worlds, attested to in part by the relative absence of people in the first set of photos and the jumbled mass depicted in the second. The first depicts the production of an artwork, the second a political demonstration turned direct action. What to make of this apparently unmotivated formal repetition? At the least, the passing resemblance between these two beachside scenes of destruction opens the question of their difference.

In what follows, I illuminate the aesthetic and political stakes of these photographic documents and ones like them—which operate not only in the wake of minimal, performance, and conceptual art, but also of police photography, journalism, and political activism—in order to show how the conflicted status of the photo-document also gives rise to something like a counterdocumentary practice in work by Sekula and his colleagues in San Diego at the time. By attending to the use of photography not only in artistic practices but also in media and politics of the early 1970s more broadly, I explore how the social pressures of the era deform the aesthetics of the (photographic) document, forcing artists to develop new means in response.

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In the first scene, a young artist, still a student, documents with a camera the creation of his sculpture (fig. 1.1). The process recorded through photographs is not meant to be part of the piece—although by this time the confluence in art of postminimal sculpture, performance, and conceptual photodocumentation could make this photo sequence credible as an artwork in its own right. For now, though, the artist is making sculptures in the vein of Robert Morris, Larry Bell, Claes Oldenburg, but above all Robert Smithson. The artist ventures off campus to a nearby beach at Torrey Pines. An assistant helps him by charring the wood for later installation and display. He snaps the pictures. They appear on the same roll of film that later records the installation of the sculpture in a gallery space at the university. As with his other pieces of the time, photographs serve to document the process, the object created, and its final installation, but neither the photo nor the process are themselves presented as part of the artwork.

In the second scene, the photographer captures a group of antiwar protestors gathered half a year later in the California beach town of Del Mar, just a few miles up the road from the first scene. At a beach party of about five hundred people, also billed by students from local universities as an antiwar demonstration, a group of activists attempts to block the Santa Fe railroad, known to be a transit route for supplies and materiel destined for the war in Southeast Asia (figs. 1.2,

view,” in Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 26–27. See also Yve-Alain Bois, “On the Uses and Abuses of Look-alikes,” *October* 54 (Fall 2015): 127–149.

1.4–1.5). A group congregates around the tracks. Nearby railroad ties are dragged onto them and set aflame. As a helicopter arrives and hovers overhead to announce a garbled order to disperse, a small army of police—two hundred San Diego county sheriff’s deputies plus three busloads of county deputies and federal marshals as reinforcements—waiting on standby out of sight, rushes in to arrest those at the center of the gathering. When the police advance with batons drawn, demonstrators are attacked, clubbed, roughed up. Another photographer captures the “law-and-order pro-Nixon” Republican mayor of Del Mar attempting to prevent a cornered demonstrator from being beaten by the police (figs. 1.4, 1.6).<sup>2</sup> As the crowd disperses, some obstruct traffic on highway 101.<sup>3</sup> The police blockade the intersections of the small town, erecting checkpoints and imposing a curfew. Demonstrators and bystanders alike are arrested, thirty-nine in total.<sup>4</sup> A city councilmember later laments “a breakdown of civil control over the Sheriff’s Department” and the city council agrees to hold a plebiscite on the war.<sup>5</sup> The camera operator—suspending for a moment the question of whether he is an artist, an activist, a journalist, or simply a photographer—records the demonstration, as he had other rallies, protests, and demos he attended that spring. The same roll of film includes shots of Naval Air Station Miramar, with airplane hangars and

2. Logan Jenkins, “Del Mar, 1972: Something Happened Here,” May 12, 2012, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2012/May/12/del-mar-1972-theres-something-happened-here/>. Jenkins identifies Tom Keck as the photographer and the arrestee as Howard Fisher, a twenty-two-year-old veteran of Vietnam who had been wounded in combat. Although unmentioned by Jenkins, the photograph first appeared, uncredited, alongside the front page story “500 Blockade D.M. Rails,” *Triton Times* 16, no. 15 [17] (May 16, 1972): 1. The encounter with the mayor is also described in “Police Militancy at Del Mar Tracks,” *Crazy Times* 2, no. 9 [May 1972]: 3: “One man, arrested by the vamping officers, was beaten in front of the Del Mar mayor. When the mayor identified himself to the officers and ordered them to stop beating him, he was told it wasn’t his city anymore, and the beating continued.” Both the *Triton Times* and *Crazy Times* (later *North Star*) were UCSD student newspapers.
3. In addition to sometimes successful attempts by demonstrators that same week to obstruct highways across the state, including the Pacific Coast Highway near the Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach in Orange County, south of California State University Long Beach, students from UC Davis repeatedly blocked traffic on the South Pacific railroad; see Ted Thackrey Jr., “Police Break Up War Protests; Student Leaders Urge Restraint,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1972, A1. These efforts recall earlier, partly successful, attempts to block troop trains in Berkeley in August 1965. See W.J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 93–95; and the first issue of the *Berkeley Barb* 1, no. 1 (13 August 1965). See also Seth Rosenfeld, *Subversives: The FBI’s War on Student Radicals, and Reagan’s Rise to Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012), 270–271.
4. “500 Blockade D.M. Rails”; “Police Militancy at Del Mar Tracks”; “Bringing the War Home to Del Mar,” *Triton Times* 16, no. 15 [17] (May 16, 1972): 3; David Shaw, “Car Traffic Slowdown at Airport Thwarted: 30 Demonstrators Arrested in Del Mar,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1972, A3; and Robert A. Jones, “War Protests Go On but Violence Wanes,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1972, B.
5. “500 Blockade D.M. Rails”; and “Plebiscite on War Planned in Del Mar,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1972, C5.

fighter jets taking off, taken just before or just after the Del Mar actions, attesting to the proximity of the war and the military not only to the beach town but to the university campus, which lay just down the road from the air station. Other rolls of film from the period show these events and other demonstrations alongside scenes from everyday life, including monkeying around with friends, a road trip, or the environs of home or school, all in addition to documentation of his artwork. Over the course of these six months, the photographs shift from documenting the artist's experiments with sculpture and performance to standing apart as works in their own right.

Both events survive as photographic documents, taken by the same photographer, and resting in the same collection. It seems neither set of photographs has been exhibited and they remained unpublished. Despite the proximity in space and time between the original scenes—and their current closeness, as contact prints lying together in the same binder in the artist's archive—they span two incommensurate, if not antithetical, social spheres.

The first scene is one of making art. It entails a journey into the wilderness that returns with an abstract sculpture, one that bears the traces of its making in the rough-hewn texture of the wood and the blackened, burnt surface touched by fire. What is new in sculpture at this moment is that making can also entail aging, weathering, or destroying that form and displaying the remnants of that process. When exhibited, it remains ambiguous whether the object was carved by the artist's hands from natural materials or had entered them as a found object or even just detritus of industrial manufacturing. It is difficult to tell artificial combustion from wildfire. This fiery destruction is signaled by the title, *Phoenix*, which also heralds the object's rebirth in artistic significance. The mythic promise of aesthetic redemption is perhaps too pat, even clichéd, indicating the work belongs to the artist's juvenilia. The maker and the destroyer are left behind in this process, and when the sculpture is photographed in the gallery later, the picture frame is empty again. When the object comes into contact with other bodies, they are those of the viewers. The objecthood of the nonrepresentational sculpture stands apart from—even against—the viewer whose bodily presence activates the broader spatial environment in which the sculpture rests. To what extent the object's nonhuman, material inertness contests or confirms anthropomorphism remains the matter of heated debate.<sup>6</sup> So too does the apparent neutrality or universality of the object and the space it activates, whether the bodies of viewers exist only individually or come together collectively, in sameness or difference. While the nonrepresentational, geometric shape of the sculpture gestures toward basic, universal forms of space and perception—even as destructive processes eat away at the integrity of those forms—any social reference has to be read out of the materials, their treatment, the placement of the object in the gallery, and the choreography staged with the viewer. Whether natural or artificial, inhuman or antihuman, the materials are not so large

6. See Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965); and Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–172.



that they can't be handled, although perhaps awkwardly, by one or two people.

In the second scene, politics takes the form of a collective act of resistance, strike or stoppage or blockage that becomes a bodily conflict with constituted power: both local police authority and, more indirectly, a superpower state that has extended its military reach to faraway corners of the globe. Those present are disenchanted with representative politics and those who govern in their name. After massive antiwar demonstrations, the invasion of Cambodia, the massacre at Kent State, and the leaking of the Pentagon Papers (the Defense Department's secret history of the war that presented a bleaker picture than that presented by the government at news conferences regularly broadcast on TV), and nearly four years after Richard Nixon won the presidential election on the promise to end the war, still it raged on. While the president was withdrawing ground troops under his "Vietnamization" policy and allegedly seeking to end the war, he was escalating the bombing campaign, giving full force to his Orwellian claim that the U.S. was waging a "war for peace."<sup>7</sup> Refusing to make concessions yet unable to end the war by force, later in January 1973 Nixon would settle a peace agreement on terms similar to those demanded by North Vietnam in negotiating with President Johnson five years earlier.<sup>8</sup>

Heeding a call to justice beyond law, those present turn to civil disobedience to oppose what they see as an unjust war waged in their name. Not only mindful of their fellow citizens killed or injured in the conflict, they attempt to respond to absent and faraway victims by intervening in the daily circulation of life at home, the large military-industrial complex that sustained the war and buttressed the local economy. Many in the crowd were technically in danger of being drafted to fight the war (although Vietnamization was shrinking the draft numbers, the educational deferment had recently been abolished), some had already returned from fighting overseas, and others were likely touched by those who never came back.

These are doubtless already partial, tendentious accounts of art and politics respectively, but they are ones that can be read out of the images at hand and that reflect the framing conditions of their time. Despite their differences, it may be tempting in retrospect to see the similarity in the two images as a convergence of

7. Richard Nixon quoted in James Pinkney Harrison, *The Endless War: Fifty Years of Struggle in Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 276.
8. Herring, 251. Further evidence has emerged that Nixon had secretly—and treasonously—tried to scuttle a ceasefire and negotiations to end the war in the fall of 1968, during the final days of the Johnson administration and Nixon's close presidential election run against Vice President Hubert Humphrey, by sending messages to the South Vietnamese government that they would get a better deal with Nixon as president. South Vietnam refused to participate in talks, Nixon was elected by a small margin, and the war continued for over another four years at the cost of more than 20,000 additional U.S. soldiers killed, over 100,000 wounded, and an estimated one million Vietnamese killed. Associated Press, "In Tapes, Johnson Accused Nixon's Associates of Treason," *New York Times*, December 4, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/05/us/05tapes.html>; and David Taylor, "The Lyndon Johnson Tapes: Richard Nixon's 'Treason,'" *BBC News Magazine*, March 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21768668>.

these two spaces, of art and politics, as if the demo put to work the forms offered up by advanced art: a sculptural anti-monument thrown onto the tracks of politics. By this time it was held that sculpture functioned not as a sited monument to, for example, the sovereign, but as a kind of breakdown of the autonomous object into an expanded field coextensive with the quotidian physical traffic of everyday life, if not actively interruptive of the material and symbolic power of the state.<sup>9</sup> Alongside, and in tension with, a shared rhetoric of materiality and directness, both acts share an implicit theater: in the documentation of the sculpture, the act of object-making is implicitly a performance for the camera, for an absent audience who watches later. And compared to the vast scale of the war effort, the “direct action” of delaying a train can also be seen as effective mostly at a symbolic level, as a piece of resistance theater.

Yet this pile of burning timbers blocking the railroad is no Vendôme Column. There is no single, towering icon of empire to be toppled; instead, an obstacle is thrown across one line in a vast, sprawling network of industrial economic relations, shipping routes, supply chains, and military power. And few at the gathering would have detected the lineaments of avant-garde sculpture in these forms of civil disobedience or sabotage. This is not to say that such a link was inconceivable: the ideal of abolishing art through revolutionary action that integrates creative practice into everyday life was clearly articulated in the 1960s by debates within the Situationist International (SI), which were becoming available to Sekula and his colleagues in English translation by the early 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Tom McDonough argues that these debates link revolutionary, “ritual iconoclasm” (such as the destruction of the Vendôme Column) with the Duchampian “reciprocal readymade” (“a Rembrandt used as an ironing board,” or the instrumental use of art) in the post-World War II neo-avant-garde.<sup>11</sup> And two of McDonough’s key artistic examples

9. See Rosalind E. Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” (1979), in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 276–290; and Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” in *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 35–69.
10. Guy Debord’s treatise *The Society of the Spectacle* became available in English translation in 1970 with an edition published by Black & Red. In addition to this Detroit edition, Sekula recalls that one could find other Situationist texts, including texts by Raoul Vaneigem and the SI manifesto *On the Poverty of Student Life* in Berkeley in the early 1970s, whether in bookstores or informally through communes, that one could not find in New York City, where he lived from parts of 1974 to 1975. Sekula, interview with author, Los Angeles, August 11, 2011; and Sekula, interview with author, New York, May 1, 2010. Sekula had certainly encountered *The Society of the Spectacle* by 1974, when Martha Rosler read aloud portions of the English translation in Sekula’s video *Mr. Fred Lux at the Lux Clock Manufacturing Company Plant in Lebanon, Tennessee, on Wednesday, September 15, 1954* (1974).
11. Tom McDonough, “The Reciprocal Readymade, or, Art on the Barricades,” in *“The Beautiful Language of My Century”: Revisiting the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945–1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 103. On the link between the readymade and minimalism, which includes not only the use of mundane, industrial materials but the serial, one-after-another placement that recalls commodity production, see also Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 38, 62.



from the French context block transit routes: in Christo's *Projet du mur provisoire de tonneaux métalliques (rue Visconti, Paris 6)* (Project for a Temporary Wall of Metal Drums [rue Visconti, Paris 6], 1961–1962), a four-meter-high wall of stacked steel drums completely and illegally barricades the narrow Rue Visconti, recalling not only the 1871 Paris Commune, but also ongoing struggles over control of public space during curfews imposed on the Algerian population at the time (fig. 1.7).<sup>12</sup> Anachronistically, but unavoidably, given the aftermath of the SI debates, the *Mur provisoire* also functions as an artistic premonition of the barricades of May '68. In Daniel Buren's 1968 exhibition at Galleria Apollinaire, an industrially printed sheet of paper with the artist's signature green-and-white stripes is pasted over the door to the commercial gallery exhibiting his work, effectively blocking the gallery entrance, simultaneously opening and closing the exhibition (fig. 1.8). One could construct, perhaps more fancifully, a similar genealogy of American minimalism, stretching from Robert Morris's L-beams or Carl Andre's firebricks laid across the path of gallery-goers in the mid-1960s to Robert Barry's *Closed Gallery* (1969) to Robert Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970) to Gordon Matta-Clark's *Garbage Wall* (1970) and his later building cuts. And as the movement of artists like Barry from minimal sculpture toward a text-based, conceptual practice further shows, such minimal obstacles and postminimal ruins can also point toward the "revolutionary iconoclasm" of certain strains of conceptual art developed by around 1970.<sup>13</sup>

12. McDonough, 87–97, 103–4. McDonough does not comment on the appearance in Christo's prospectus for the work of the phrase "*rideau de fer*" (iron curtain), a reference to the 1961 erection of the Berlin Wall. The work could thus also be seen as anticommunist. Of course, for the SI, it was not a contradiction to consider themselves communist and simultaneously to oppose both western capitalism and the "bureaucratic state capitalism" of the Soviet Union and its satellites. But Christo, who fled the People's Republic of Bulgaria for Paris in 1958, was likely far more ambivalent toward Marxism altogether.
13. John Roberts, "Photography, Iconophobia and the Ruins of Conceptual Art," in *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966–1976* (London: Camerawork, 1997), 22. Roberts's discussion of "iconoclasm" and "iconophobia" in conceptual art focuses mainly on text-based practices that combined analytic philosophy and Marxism, such as those of Joseph Kosuth and Art & Language. During Sekula's later stays in New York in 1974–75 and shortly thereafter, he became friendly with Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, who worked with Kosuth and Sarah Charlesworth on *The Fox* (1974–76), a publication of the New York wing of Art & Language. Through Burn and Ramsden, Sekula became aware of the debates over the relation between conceptual art and politics that ensued when those at the magazine split into rival camps. (Kosuth and Charlesworth would remain in the New York art world while Burn, Ramsden, and Terry Smith left the city, with Burn turning to activist and media work with unions.) See Allan Sekula, ". . . The Red Guards Come and Go, Talking of Michelangelo," in *Condé and Beveridge: Class Works*, ed. Bruce Barber (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia Collage of Art and Design, 2008), 45. On the debates around *The Fox*, see also Christopher Gilbert, "Art & Language, New York, Discusses Its Social Relations in 'The Lumpen-Headache,'" in *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 326–341.

By examining Buren's project, which took place in October 1968, McDonough tackles the problem of making art after May '68 and in that light helpfully questions the SI's ideal of totally abolishing art through creative revolutionary practice. Yet McDonough nonetheless concludes by returning, via the reciprocal readymade, to the art gallery as the locus of political significance, where Buren's swipe at the reified exhibition value of art serves as "an iconoclastic gesture that depends precisely upon the value bourgeois society accords to its protected enclave of culture."<sup>14</sup> What would it mean to pursue an art—or more broadly, a visual cultural practice—not so wholly dependent, however negatively or iconoclastically, on bourgeois ideals of culture or autonomous art? (And, absent a revolutionary proletarian class, is there even any way to think or to see beyond this bourgeois cultural horizon?) Although Buren's gesture forces the gallery visitor back into the street, the work mostly remains within the discourse of fine art and its history. The challenge remains to address the contradictions and class conflict McDonough rightly uncovers between "museum culture" and political activism, especially in other spheres of culture—a conflict, he shows, that stretches from the 1960s back to the Paris Commune (when, after the toppling of the column, the Commune's artists' battalion nonetheless allegedly prevented the partisans of proletarian de-alienation from burning down Notre-Dame).<sup>15</sup> Besides the iconoclastic gestures of postminimal or conceptual art, what other approaches to art and politics could artists pursue in the early 1970s?

Sekula's two beach scenes do not present the sublation of art or politics into a higher synthesis, but rather attest to a split between, on one hand, spaces of art-making and reception such as the gallery and the museum and, on the other, the street as site for public demonstration and direct action. Those who lived these two moments and trafficked between these spaces likely never imagined them together, but rather experienced them as incommensurable, if not antithetical. Despite the similarity between the images, visible in retrospect, it is precisely the noncommunication between the two spheres that will provoke Sekula.

Still, the sparks of the burning timbers, tracing an arc through time and space, expose the photographic emulsion in which the scenes converge and illuminate what the scenes share: less the passing resemblance of a visual icon or a similar pictorial ground than the medium in and through which they appear—the photograph. For an artist seeking to articulate these two disparate scenes, photography could provide the means.

As Sekula later recalled: "At that time [in 1971] photography seemed to me to afford an alternative to the overly specialized, esoteric, and self-referential discourse of late modernism, which had, to offer only one crude example, nothing much to say about the Vietnam War."<sup>16</sup>

14. McDonough, 128.

15. McDonough, 108–112.

16. Allan Sekula, introduction to *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), ix.

## The University

The first set of photos was likely taken near the northeast corner of the La Jolla campus of the University of California, San Diego, in the fall quarter of the 1971–72 school year.<sup>17</sup> Sekula was in his senior year as an art major and would graduate at the end of the academic year that spring. He would enroll the following fall in the UCSD graduate fine arts program, earning an MFA two years later, in the spring of 1974. The work under construction in the photos resembles others he made in 1971–72, which employed a mix of industrial and natural materials and engaged the breakdown of minimal sculpture into other postminimal modes. This was a change from some of his earliest documented works, a series of vacuumed-formed plastic sculptures from 1970 that appear in a pop-art register. One early slide shows many plastic fried eggs, nine inches across with brightly painted whites and yellow yolks, arrayed across a lawn. Another series is less representational, with two rows of clear plastic bowls or half spheres in various permutations: right-side up or upside down; empty and clear, or half-filled with a black tarlike substance, or fully filled and so totally opaque. In both cases, an iterative series of objects is formed from the plastic that had quickly become a ubiquitous medium for many Southern California artists in the mid- and late 1960s.

Continuing to refuse hierarchical composition and picking through the fallout of minimalism, the later works move away from exclusively slick industrial surfaces by adding rough natural elements. Self-contained, serial objects are abandoned for installations that use manufactured, industrial sculptural elements to break up a natural field or ground through processes such as stacking, propping, leaning, or scattering. In *Right Angle Mirage* (1971), a large, rectangular patch of sand is laid out on the floor with panes of mirror and clear glass standing vertically in it, perpendicular to each other. *Untitled (Opposition)* (1971) begins with a large rectangle of rough, yellow fiberglass insulation placed on the floor, with a medium-sized rectangle of plastic laid on top of it, off center and on the diagonal, topped by a small, rounded bag of flour. A clear plane of glass with one edge resting on the floor is precariously propped against a glass tube hanging unevenly from two cables at each end in *Crossing* (1971). In another suspended sculpture, *Decay 1* (1971), a four-foot-long tube made of what seems like plastic is hung from ceiling, allowing viewers to circumnavigate it and inspect the brown water, leaves, and twigs that fill it, partly filtering the light passing through it.

Finally, a pair of timbers like those being charred at the beach appear in *Phoenix* (1971) (figs. 1.9–1.11). One blackened wooden beam is laid on the floor. Sand is piled across one end of the beam with a tall tube of clear glass, further filled with sand, standing straight up out of the pile, perpendicular to the beam. At the other end a clear pane of glass stands upright, inserted into a notch in the beam, with a second beam resting obliquely over the end of the first. The right angles of the glass—its

17. The contact sheet is labeled “Torrey Pines,” the name of the park and beach near campus. Allan Sekula Archive, studio of Allan Sekula, Los Angeles; hereinafter referred to as Sekula Archive. The archive has since been transferred to the Getty Research Institute.

four corners, the plane ninety degrees from both the floor and the wooden beam to which is attached—echo those of the square four-by-four. The placement of the glass tube, also perpendicular to the beam, continues the regularity, yet its round form breaks with that of the square. The tube both contains and is contained by the sand in which it is placed. The oblique crossing of the second beam, no longer parallel to the floor, unaligned with the other elements, marks a break with straightness and rightness. It points to the formlessness of the sand and the changing, dissolving, deforming reflections of the sculpture and its gallery environment in the translucent, semireflective glass elements, both round and flat. The precision and balance of the piece—the careful articulation of its parts, even the messy ones—is repeated in a drawing of the sculpture, including a list of its components and their dimensions, categorized as either vertical (nine-foot-tall glass tube four-and-a-half inches in diameter; four-by-four foot glass pane) or horizontal (four hundred pounds of masonry sand; two four-by-four-inch charred wooden beams, ten feet long) (fig. 1.9). Although it could be a working or preparatory drawing, the nearly exact replication of the installation down to the small clumps of sand suggests it was made afterward, perhaps based on the photograph. Formally, the reach toward oblique stacking and unstructured, discoordinate elements manages only barely to counterbalance, but not to deform, either the geometry of the found industrial materials or the right angles of the gallery’s architecture. The drawing and photographic prints made of the piece mark it as a kind of culmination. They also signal Sekula’s willingness, even desire, to translate the work into other media. At the end of 1971, through the making of *Phoenix*, Sekula pushes up against the limits of his sculptural vocabulary and the gallery container.

The mirrors, glass, and earth piles recall the work of Robert Smithson, and the reference to natural systems resonates with the work of Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison at UCSD and, more distantly, of Hans Haacke.<sup>18</sup> The glass and sand works resemble similar installations by Laddie John Dill exhibited in a group show at the La Jolla Museum (with his brother Guy Dill, Vija Celmins, and Newton Harrison) and in a solo show at the Pasadena Museum, both in fall 1971, perhaps confirmation that Sekula was on the right path in tracking down the operative terms and grammar of contemporary sculpture, but also that others were a half-step ahead of him.<sup>19</sup> With this body of work assembled, Sekula turns away from sculpture.

18. Looking back on this early work in a later interview, Sekula cites the influence of *arte povera* in addition to Smithson. Allan Sekula and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Conversation between Allan Sekula and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh,” in Allan Sekula, *Performance under Working Conditions*, ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2003), 21. The Harrisons had begun featuring in their works natural, living systems (such as planting a field of living grass in the gallery) around 1970–71. Sekula would meet Haacke later in New York in 1974–75, after Haacke had transitioned from an aesthetic of natural systems to one of social systems and institutional critique.
19. *Earth: Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* (Vija Celmins, Guy Dill, Laddie John Dill, and Newton Harrison), La Jolla Museum, Oct. 9–Dec. 4, 1971; and *Laddie John Dill*, Pasadena Museum, fall(?) 1971. The latter was reviewed by Peter Plagens in *Artforum* (October 1971). Harrison’s piece in the La Jolla show, *La Jolla Promenade* (1971), involved an outdoor garden and duck pond in the museum courtyard, where local snails

It would take other materials and other procedures, including performance and photography, to break the formal deadlock, the careful balance between Dionysian destruction and Apollonian rightness and redemption struck in the gallery presentation of *Phoenix*.

Although the UCSD visual arts department was only a year old when Sekula entered the university, it was already in transition by the time he finished his undergraduate degree.<sup>20</sup> The art department had been founded in 1967 by Paul Brach, an abstract expressionist painter hired away from New York, who would leave UCSD in 1969 to become dean of visual arts at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Miriam Schapiro, a painter who made hard-edged abstractions and also Brach's wife, would leave her UCSD position a year later and co-found the influential Feminist Art Program at CalArts.<sup>21</sup> John Baldessari, then a painter and the only local artist Brach hired when founding the department, also followed Brach to CalArts in the fall of 1970. When Newton Harrison joined the department in 1967 he was exhibiting mostly abstract sculpture; it was slightly later in 1970 that in collaboration with Helen Mayer Harrison, his wife, they dedicated their practice to investigating ecology and the natural environment through performance, documentation, and installation. Other faculty worked mostly in a nonrepresentational, modernist vein. Michael Todd made abstract, open, welded geometric sculptures; although sometimes propped or leaned against the wall, his work was less in dialogue with minimalism than with earlier work by David Smith and Anthony Caro. Harold Cohen and Don Lewallen both made abstract paintings. Lewallen had left by 1970, when painter and film critic Manny Farber arrived. Around the same time, Cohen turned to using computers and plotters to create paintings and drawings, aided by Jeff (later "Jef") Raskin. Raskin, a polymath not trained as a visual artist, had studied electronic music at UCSD and was director of the campus computer center; after showing work in museum exhibitions of kinetic art, he was also hired to teach in the visual arts. He would leave by 1974 and later join Apple Computer (where he started the Macintosh project), becoming an influential designer of computer interfaces. Poet and art critic David Antin joined

were fed to ducks (who, rather than providing a solution to controlling the garden pests, also ended up eating the rest of the garden). It was the fourth *Survival Piece* the Harrisons made that year, after *RW Shumway's Annual Hog Pasture Mix* (Boston Museum of Fine Art), *Notations on the Ecosystems of the Western Saltworks with the Inclusion of Brine Shrimp* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), and *Portable Fish Farm* (Hayward Gallery, London).

20. See Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 220–221; and Jill Dawsey, "The Uses of Photography: An Introduction," in *The Uses of Photography: San Diego and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey, exh. cat. (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2016), 14–73.
21. On Brach's and Schapiro's roles in the early days of both UCSD and CalArts, see Barry Schwartz, "Paul Henry Brach Interview," ca. 1971, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; and Ruth Gurin Bowman, "Oral History Interview with Miriam Schapiro," September 10, 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



the department in 1968, directing the university gallery and taking over as chair after Brach left.<sup>22</sup> Antin, who would influence Sekula's graduate work, also hired Fred Lonidier, along with local photographer Phillip (later "Phel") Steinmetz, to start up a photography program in the department in 1972, just after Lonidier finished his MFA at UCSD. Together with Sekula and fellow graduate student Martha Rosler, they would all make a critical discourse and practice of photography central to the department. Eleanor Antin, a conceptual artist who would increasingly make performance and video works, moved to San Diego with her husband David and sometimes collaborated with artists at UCSD—she and David had been friendly with Rosler before they all arrived in San Diego, and Lonidier, Sekula, and Steinmetz would work as cameramen on a number of Eleanor's photo and video projects. First teaching at local colleges and the University of California, Irvine, she became a professor in visual arts at UCSD in 1975.<sup>23</sup> By the time Allan Kaprow arrived at UCSD from CalArts in 1974, Sekula had finished graduate school and moved to New York for the year.<sup>24</sup> Filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin was also hired in 1975, although he and collaborator Jean-Luc Godard had visited campus in the spring of 1973, with Sekula and his colleagues helping Farber to bring them. In just a few years, the department's emphasis shifted from abstract painting and sculpture to the multi-media forms of photography, video, film, performance, and installation, a shift driven as much by the students as by the faculty.

When Sekula entered UCSD as a first-year undergraduate in 1968, Baldessari was the only faculty member aside from the outsider Raskin and the poet-critic Antin not working in a fully modernist, nonrepresentational mode. Sekula's interaction with Baldessari as a teacher was brief but influential. In a first-year art class, Baldessari was the first person to tell him he could be an artist, which was formative. They remained in touch after Baldessari left UCSD for CalArts, with his former teacher later inviting him to come to CalArts for graduate work; Sekula instead stayed at UCSD from 1972 to 1974, when he completed his MFA.<sup>25</sup> Of Baldessari's class assignments, Sekula recalls that "He sent us out to photograph the least aesthetic arrangements of detritus we could find, and use these snapshots as the basis for faithful copy-like paintings, again eschewing any aesthetic treatment of the material."<sup>26</sup> The assignment reflected a transition in Baldessari's own practice

22. David Antin, introduction to *Radical Coherency*, 4–7.

23. Eleanor Antin, Smithsonian interview.

24. Although David Antin was instrumental in bringing Kaprow to UCSD, no works by Kaprow are listed as part of the Fluxus exhibition Antin curated in March 1969 at the university art gallery (featuring Alison Knowles's *Big Book*), which Sekula apparently saw. However, after Sekula had returned to Southern California in 1975, Sekula recruited Kaprow, likely through the Antins, to play the role of an art professor in Sekula's *School Is a Factory* (1978/1980). Sekula mentions being acquainted with Fluxus as a "more open, democratic" alternative to the "slick and institutional" look of pop art in Sekula and Buchloh, "Conversation," 29.

25. Sekula, interview with the author, May 1, 2010, New York.

26. Sekula and Buchloh, "Conversation," 29. A legendary teacher, Baldessari's inventive, open-ended, and sometimes absurd assignments in his post-studio course at CalArts are notorious. For examples from this era, see his list of 109 assignments, *CalArts Post-*

at the time, in which he began basing his paintings on photographs, exploiting their apparently anti-aesthetic, mechanical transcription of detail. In 1966 he began to create photo-paintings by painting photographic emulsion directly onto canvas and exposing and developing the surface.<sup>27</sup> The photo-paintings often included captions lettered by a professional sign painter, further removing the artist's touch from the work. Other paintings simply presented text alone on the canvas, appropriating phrases from existing sources such as aesthetic tracts or art criticism. At first glance, the class assignment and Baldessari's own work at the time seem to obscure the role of photography in the process, reducing it to merely a transparent vehicle silently folded into the making of the final, painted artwork. However, these works do not simply mark the subordination of photography to the higher, traditional medium of painting. Rather, the process of making them alters the very conception of what counts as painting. Although Baldessari continued to produce rectangular, stretched, primed, and pigmented canvases, he had more fundamentally adopted photographic indifference and photography's semiotic status as an index as a model for all of his artmaking, including painting.

In the photo-painting *Wrong* (1966–68; fig. 1.12), Baldessari forgoes any relational working up of paint on the canvas by placing in its center a black-and-white photographic snapshot. Like a family photo, the image shows the artist standing outside his suburban house south of San Diego. It is a poor self-portrait: unidealized to the point of banality, little of the subject's face is revealed by the blocked-up shadows and generally crude quality of the image, which Baldessari likened to “newspaper photo-reportage.”<sup>28</sup> The one-word caption, “Wrong,” lettered in black beneath the image, presumably points to the unartistic, amateurish composition, in which the framing of the snapshot has apparently accidentally placed the tall, lanky artist directly underneath a palm tree, so that, in forced perspective, the tree appears to grow out of his head. The quasi-automatic, indifferent transcription of detail provided by the photograph fails to conform to the conventional norms of beauty promoted by painting instructors and “how-to” photography guides alike. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau argues, “The negation of the artist's touch (both photo and lettering are the work of other hands) uncompromisingly rejects the fetishism of authorship as much as it does the fetishism of the beautiful object. Instead, *Wrong* offers a different range of pleasures: the *jouissance* of anarchic subversion, the libertarian joy of upsetting rules, hierarchies, and conventions.”<sup>29</sup> And if by transgressing those aesthetic conventions—by parodying the aesthetic authority that solemnly pronounces the taken-for-natural rules of art—*Wrong* nonetheless succeeds as an interesting

*Studio Art: Class Assignments (Optional)* (1970), in *John Baldessari*, ed. Pardo and Dean, 1:160–161.

27. On the process, see Coosje van Bruggen, “Interlude: Between Questions and Answers,” in *John Baldessari* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 38.
28. Van Bruggen, 30.
29. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Rightness of *Wrong*,” in *John Baldessari: National City*, ed. Hugh M. Davies and Andrea Hales (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 1996), 35.

“painting,” it thereby alters and expands what counts as a “good” painting or even “painting” as such.

Key to this strategy of subversion is the photograph and its function as an index. By now a familiar trope in the history of photography, Charles Sanders Peirce’s tripartite classification of signs defines an *index* as a sign that points to its referent by means of a physical connection of causality or contiguity rather than by resemblance (an icon) or convention (a symbol).<sup>30</sup> Insofar as a photograph is “an effect of the radiations from the object” that strike and alter the photosensitive surface, it is an index.<sup>31</sup> The photo-painting indifferently records the configuration of light on the emulsion with no regard to the aesthetic qualities of the semblance that results. This contrast between the indexical function of photography and the aesthetic work of the artist is exaggerated further in Baldessari’s photo-painting *An Artist Is Not Merely the Slavish Announcer . . .* (1966–68; fig. 1.13). The centered photograph features three horizontal bands: a white sidewalk in the foreground, an area of planted shrubs in the middle, and a suburban parking lot in the background. A slender tree trunk runs vertically through the center of the image—an out-of-place element that “ruins” the vista (which otherwise adheres to the “rule of thirds” said to produce beautiful compositions). It is captioned at bottom with the claim that “An artist is not merely the slavish announcer of a series of facts. Which in this case the camera has had to accept and mechanically record.” Like the picture in *Wrong*, the quasi-mechanical photographic record has produced a “bad,” unartistic picture. But by adopting as his own the photograph and the text, appropriated from an instructional manual on art photography, Baldessari also acts as a slavish announcer of facts. The enunciated content of the phrase (asserting the creative freedom of the artist) is contradicted by the form (slavish copying of both text and photographic image), producing an unstable irony. This irony throws into doubt the stated idealist opposition between the inspired composition of the creative, artistic genius, implicitly coded as mastery, and the merely mechanical transcription of the camera-slave. The photographic apparatus is figured as a slave because it is not self-determining: because the camera and film are receptive to and affected by a previous action, they cannot be autonomous. And insofar as the artist relies on this receptive structure as the basis for his art, his tools threaten to overtake him, undermining his own autonomy, self-determination, and freedom as master over them and over the world.

Clearly, Baldessari modeled his work on the index in ways that are possibly slavish. In the *Commissioned Paintings* (1969), Baldessari provided amateur painters with various photographs of a forearm and hand with forefinger extended, pointing at everyday objects, and asked them to copy the images. He then had the images captioned by a local sign painter as “A painting by . . .” and the name of the amateur artist (fig. 1.14). (The paintings are nonetheless exhibited and sold as paintings by Baldessari.) According to Baldessari, the series was set off

30. Charles Sanders Peirce, “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,” in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), 114.

31. Peirce, 106, 119.



by a comment attributed to painter Al Held that conceptual art was “nothing but pointing to things”—implicitly merely an index of a preexisting idea or a slavish copy without transformative aesthetic value.<sup>32</sup> And indeed, the pointing fingers of the commissioned paintings, the appropriated phrases that “sample” and point back to broader texts, the photographs and copies of photographs are all quasi-automatic, indexical derivatives of a preexisting reality. Yet like much of pop art that mines low or popular culture for content, does Baldessari’s apparently slavish copying of existing, “low” material also generate a “higher” aesthetic artifact? Although he commissions paintings from amateurs, themselves copying photographs, and gives them a byline, the paintings are still attributed to him. By pairing the mute document that is the photograph with a text that points beyond it in works such as *An Artist Is Not Merely the Slavish Announcer . . .*, is Baldessari only *playing* the slave, only employing the dumb recording of the index for another, clever purpose? By gesturing beyond the merely transcriptive use of photography (and, more broadly, the index) on the surface of the canvas, does Baldessari remain master after all? Has art making finally made the leap from manual-mechanical labor to intellectual labor? (By delegating the manual labor of painting to others in the commissioned paintings, Baldessari assumes the role of white-collar manager.<sup>33</sup>) Or if Baldessari takes photographic indifference and indexicality as the model for all art making, does he, however ironically, remain a slave?

The force of Baldessari’s work may largely hinge on subverting the terms of this question, on suspending the opposition between master and slave, manual and intellectual, original and copy. But in addition to the joys of “anarchic subversion” highlighted by Solomon-Godeau, I want to underline the persistent, erratic referentiality of the photograph, especially as it may exceed the “use” conceived for it by the artist. The image in *An Artist Is Not Merely the Slavish Announcer . . .* is more than *just* a bad photograph: it is also an image of a suburban parking lot, which is not merely a generic symbol of vacuous, anti-aesthetic banality. From Baldessari’s series of National City photo-paintings (1966–68)—which reproduce images of nondescript buildings, parking lots, and intersections—to works by Ed Ruscha, Robert Smithson, and Lewis Baltz, parking lots serve as a critical topos for 1960s and 1970s photoconceptualism. Then consider Sekula’s *Aerospace Folktales* (1973), which begins in a Lockheed Corporation parking lot, and Phel Steinmetz’s photo-books such as *Oil, Profit, Control* (1973), and it becomes clear these parking lots are necessarily tied to a broader social and historical world, one of industrial and managerial capitalism, a postwar consumer culture of cars and commuting, the nuclear family, and suburban ideals of pastoral beauty that clash with the realities of

32. Moira Roth, “Interview with John Baldessari (1973),” *X-tra* 8, no. 2 (Winter 2005), available online at <http://x-traonline.org/article/interview-with-john-baldessari-1973/>. Excerpts of this interview were published earlier in *John Baldessari*, exh. cat. (New York: New Museum, 1981) and *John Baldessari*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: LACMA, 1990).
33. See Helen Molesworth, “John Baldessari,” in *Work Ethic*, by Helen Molesworth et al. (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art; University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 165.

sprawl, gridlock, waste, economic crisis, and pollution.<sup>34</sup>

While conceptual art often used photography to illustrate and document artworks, by the early 1970s photographic images could no longer be treated as merely transparent or illustrative of artistic ideas; photography's indexical, erratically referential function could no longer be ignored. Baldessari marked the extent to which the text- and photo-based works broke with his earlier paintings when, prior to his departure from UCSD for the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in summer 1970, he took the canvases he made before 1966 still in his possession to a mortuary and had them cremated. Few negations of the traditional conventions of art-making are as clear, final, and succinct. And yet, to be communicated to an audience, such a manifest negation of art must also somehow be represented. Thus photographic and textual documentation of the *Cremation Project*, including an "obituary" published in the local newspaper, formed Baldessari's contribution to two landmark 1970 exhibitions in New York that drew heavily on conceptual art: *Software* at the Museum of Modern Art and *Information* at the Jewish Museum. At about the same time, Baldessari encountered a friend who had quit his job in the photo archive of the San Diego Police Department because he was unsettled by the gruesome images there, which aroused Baldessari's interest "in photographs that weren't done to be beautiful, and the whole idea of photographs as . . . document[s] rather than as art began to emerge. I began to look for such situations."<sup>35</sup> Baldessari's use of photographic documentation as a means of antiaesthetic negation, common in conceptual art at the time, doubles back to consider the aesthetic dimensions of allegedly antiaesthetic documentary mediums, especially photography. Baldessari's interest in police photography led to a number of works that conceived of art as a document and even a form of evidence.

For the thematic exhibition *Monoprints*, curated by Helene Winer at Pomona College Museum of Art in 1970, Baldessari created *Evidence (Bowl Handed to Helene Winer, Dec. 1, 1970)*, a cream-colored vessel, allegedly handed to the curator at a dinner party, on the side of which a set of fingerprints was conspicuously taped off and dusted with black substance as if to isolate them for collection and analysis (fig. 1.15). But the evidential object itself (the bowl) is presented to the viewer through further documentation: photographs and typewritten sheet with a single, factual sentence describing the place, time, and circumstances under which the fingerprints were made. Because these documents remain silent about the prior transgression that motivated this record-keeping, *Evidence* points to the way that this indexical trace, like all legal evidence, requires supporting documentation, if not also testimony and argument, to establish its meaning, whether in court or the realm of art.

Also for that show Baldessari made *A Potential Print* (1970), in which a typewritten page explains that the pile of ashes in the corner of the gallery are the remains from his cremated paintings (fig. 1.16). Mysteriously, a single footprint

34. On the Lockheed parking lot that appears in both Ruscha's *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* and Sekula's *Aerospace Folktales*, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

35. Van Bruggen, 57.

appears in the center of the ashes. The text describes a Yorkshire tradition whereby matching a footprint in the cold ashes of a hearth with that of a family member predicts that person's coming death. Despite the intimation of the artist's own death, the text maintains that the work should be read (mostly) as an analogy, as a "potential" fine art print. Of course, footprints in the sand are a classic example of the index, and the footprint also figures photography itself, calling attention to the unremarked, nearly transparent medium between the footprint and (the idea of) the fine-art monoprint: the *photographic* print that documents the work, which both preserves the singular mark of the footprint and has the potential to reproduce it endlessly, destroying the uniqueness that characterizes the artist's monoprint.<sup>36</sup>

For *Police Drawing* (1971; fig. 1.17) Baldessari entered an art class as a guest lecturer, silently set up a tripod and video camera, started it rolling, and walked out. As the resulting video shows, an off-duty police sketch artist (recruited from the San Diego Police Department) enters the classroom and students describe Baldessari as best they can, resulting in a portrait that, according to the police artist, was good enough to have led to Baldessari's arrest.<sup>37</sup> Despite the different mediums (sculpture, text as caption or narrative, video, and drawings), the fingerprints, footprints, and visual likenesses of these works nonetheless circle around the "idea of photographs as document rather than as art."

Baldessari soon moved away from his interest in the document as recording an artifactual given that must be interpreted or reconstructed in the wake of a "crime" or event that precedes the efforts of the investigator. Instead, with the series *Choosing (A Game for Two Players)* (1972), he focused on the act of choosing one of a set of given, everyday objects, such as three carrots or three green beans (fig. 1.18). With no discernable rules or criteria to explain why the index finger poking into the frame selects one object over another, *Choosing* restores aesthetic agency to the artist and, vicariously, to those viewers willing to imagine their own role in this absurdist "game." By the late 1970s and 1980s Baldessari had adopted the act of choosing as the basis for many of his works, selecting found photographs, often press photos or Hollywood film stills, in order to redeploy them. This strategy of appropriation would become a hallmark of photographic postmodernism from Richard Prince to Cindy Sherman. In contrast with such a game of aesthetic choices, Baldessari's attraction to indexical procedures in the early 1970s pointed in the direction of the crime scene, opening onto questions of how documents are

36. On footprints as an index in the context of photography, see Rosalind E. Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1" (1977), in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 203. Peirce also referred to a footprint in the sand—the one found by Robinson Crusoe—as an index, but not in the text cited by Krauss; see Charles Sanders Peirce, "Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmatism," in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, vol. 4, *The Simplest Mathematics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 414. Susan Sontag also invoked the footprint as a figure for photography shortly after Krauss did, in Susan Sontag, "Photography Unlimited," *New York Review of Books*, June 23, 1977.

37. See John Baldessari, artist's statement for *Police Drawing*, in *John Baldessari: Catalogue Raisonné*, 1:377.

generated through operations of power and violence and how interested acts of interpretation, or even forensic analysis, make sense of them.

At this same moment, a number of young artists at UCSD began to engage programmatically with photographs as documents—although not necessarily because they were aware of any of these particular works by Baldessari (the evidentiary works were made just after Baldessari left UCSD).<sup>38</sup> Rather, the works of the San Diego group address some of the structural problems turned up by the use of the index and photographic documents in conceptual and performance art. As Baldessari would elaborate in 1973, in addition to the precedent of conceptual art, because of the limited skills required to operate both super-8 film and video, and the speed with which images could be obtained, such media were also a way of “just pointing at something, like doing a snapshot.”<sup>39</sup> In 1977 Rosalind Krauss would argue more broadly that the use of the index could explain much of what the art of the 1970s shared, despite the great stylistic differences between “video; performance; body art; conceptual art; photo-realism in painting and an associated hyper-realism in sculpture; story art; monumental abstract sculpture (earthworks); and abstract painting.”<sup>40</sup> For Krauss this use of the index was a way for artists to contest the purported autonomy and self-reflexivity of high modernism. However, it also tracked a broader crisis in social reference at the end of the long 1960s.<sup>41</sup> That is, following serious challenges to tradition and to social and institutional authority, indexical procedures could point to the world beyond art-making even as, or because, traditional conventions of both political and aesthetic representation were undergoing rapid social and semiotic transformation.

Unlike Krauss, and many writers on photography before and after her, who advances a “realist” account of photography that draws on André Bazin’s ontology of the photographic image and Roland Barthes’s “message without a code,” many

38. The majority of Baldessari’s photo-and-text and text-only paintings were exhibited at the Molly Barnes Gallery, Los Angeles, October 6–November 7, 1968, a show reviewed in Jane Livingston, “Los Angeles,” *Artforum* 7, no. 4 (December 1968): 66. A few photo-and-text paintings also appeared in local group shows: at UCSD in 1968 (including *Wrong* and *The Spectator Is Compelled ...* [1966–68]) and at the Long Beach Museum of Art and at the Newport Harbor Art Museum in 1969. Sekula remembered seeing some of the photo-and-text paintings while at UCSD, including some of the *Commissioned Paintings* in Baldessari’s studio. Allan Sekula, interview with the author, May 1, 2010, New York, New York. Rosler recalled being impressed by *Wrong* in 1968 in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “A Conversation with Martha Rosler,” in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Life World*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 38.
39. Roth.
40. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 1,” 196. See also Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2” (1977), in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 210–19. Krauss’s account of the index focuses on Marcel Duchamp’s *Tu m’* (1918), which Baldessari specifically mentions he was aware of when making his late 60s work, in Roth.
41. See, for example, Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006).



of the artists at UCSD did not insist only on photography's indexical status.<sup>42</sup> In the mid-1970s, Sekula would argue that, contra Barthes, photography is not *primarily* indexical or "denotative" and only *secondarily* invested with cultural, connotative meaning: "Any meaningful encounter with a photograph must occur at the level of connotation."<sup>43</sup> The indexical aspect of photography, its documentary capacity either for art or for evidence, is necessarily received in a social milieu, one of competing interpretations and differences in power and visibility.

Yve-Alain Bois has argued that Baldessari contested conventional notions of artistic agency first by "deflating" the artist's subjectivity (with a "motivated" or indexical art object) and then later in his career by "inflating" that subjectivity (with an apparently "arbitrary" act of choosing).<sup>44</sup> Rather than inflating the artist's subjectivity or appropriating photographic evidence as a model for art making, as Baldessari had, Lonidier, Rosler, and Sekula shaped their artistic and critical practice in relation to the political stakes of documentary and evidence and were attuned to the forces that differentiate the police and their suspects. This is not simply a turn from the index as generator of the arbitrary sign (as in early postmodernism) to the index as inherently referential (as in a renewed realism). The index involves a logic, or rather semiotic, of *both* indifference *and* reference, *both* anarchic subversion *and* slavish copying. What follows is an engagement with the questions of evidence and documentary, the contestable meaning of all documents, and the interestedness of all interpretive judgments that necessarily follow from them, as they occur not only at the level of individual preference or aesthetic form but also at the level of the unconscious or ideology. These artistic approaches involve not just anarchic subversion but also attention to the way hierarchies of power structure the dynamics of making and looking. They also involve attention to the uses of photography in other spheres, especially the ways in which photography's documentary function was central to contested political struggles over dissent from corporate and state power.

Despite the deadpan, uninflected, "cool" attitude toward photographs and their

42. When Krauss turns from Peirce to Bazin and Barthes, she overstates the "uncoded," indexical aspect of photographs. Few critics who follow in her path recall that Peirce himself maintained that an "absolutely pure index" was impossible; that the index was only one aspect of photographs, even if it was the most remarked upon for his philosophical purposes; that insofar as photographs were pictures based on resemblance, they also functioned as icons; and that "any material image . . . is largely conventional in its mode of representation" and thus functions as a symbol. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic," 108, 106, 105. Compare Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1," 203; and "Notes on the Index: Part 2," 211–12.
43. Allan Sekula, "The Invention of Photographic Meaning," in *Photography against the Grain*, 5. This article, first published in *Artforum* in 1975, was based on his 1974 MFA thesis, advised by David Antin.
44. Yve-Alain Bois, "'Is It Impossible to Underline in a Telegram?'" in *John Baldessari: Catalogue Raisonné*, 1:8. For the claim that even the apparently arbitrary effects of Baldessari's games of choosing and chance may remain motivated specifically by the ways "the military-industrial complex instrumentalized chance during the early years of the cold war," see Robin Kelsey, "Playing Hooky/Simulating Work: The Random Generation of John Baldessari," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 767–68.

potential references in the photo-paintings, *Potential Print* includes what Baldessari called, in the text that accompanies the photo, the “overtones” of myth: the footprint and its photographic record are linked to death, to the foreseen disappearance of the referent, but a disappearance that is still to come, a kind of death sentence in the tense of the future anterior.<sup>45</sup> Of course, footprints in the sand are a classic example of the index, and have been explicitly linked to the operation of photographs.<sup>46</sup> In *Potential Print*, the unremarked, nearly transparent middle term between the footprint and the (idea of the) fine-art monoprint is the actual *photographic* print, which both preserves the singular mark of the footprint and retains the potential to reproduce it endlessly, destroying the uniqueness that characterizes the monoprint. The footprint thus also figures photography itself and its trace-making structure, one whose reproduction of singular marks involves a semiotic of iteration, the deconstructive self-othering of unique presence.<sup>47</sup> But this destruction of presence, this testament to the absence or death of the *referent* does not necessarily lead to the death of *reference*—as is commonly held about photographic postmodernism. On the contrary, it leads to a struggle over the significance of that trace and its possible references, over meaning and myth. The footprints on the beach in Sekula’s photographs in Del Mar similarly lead to a struggle of interested interpretation, but one that goes beyond divining artistic meaning or intentionality or the disappearance of the author into automatism and death hinted at in *Potential Print*. The questions multiply: Who was here? What did they do? Is this evidence of a crime? Of an illegal assembly? An act of sabotage? An act of resistance to an unjust and immoral war? An excessively violent attack on peaceful protestors by the police?

This use of photography, then, is not just a reassertion of a literal referent, a return to the real. Rather, this version of the (photographic) index, as a process of reference or simply deictic pointing at a single thing, singles that thing, or those things, out from a conflictual field of power, through which the photograph’s meaning emerges and is contested—or, rather, emerges in and through contestation. There is not one footprint here, but many, and their crossing forms a kind of palimpsest. By following one path through the footprints, we shift from Baldessari recruiting the police and *playing* the allegorical criminal to Sekula among the demonstrators being targeted by the police and potentially arrested as an actual, legally defined criminal. As I demonstrate in the next section, Baldessari’s and

45. On the future anterior (future perfect) as the tense of photography, see Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96. See also Eduardo Cadava, “Lapsus Imaginis,” *October* 96 (Spring 2001); and Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
46. Krauss, “Notes on the Index, Part 1,” 203. Peirce refers to a footprint in the sand—the one found by Robinson Crusoe—as an index but not in the text Krauss cites; see Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, 531. Susan Sontag also invokes the footprint as a simile for photography shortly after Krauss does, in Susan Sontag, “Photography Unlimited,” *New York Review of Books*, June 23, 1977.
47. On *trace* in the sense employed here, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, corr. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1997), 57–73; on *iteration*, see Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307–330.



Sekula's work is also linked by the curious way in which the San Diego Police Department serves as a medium for both.

### **The Street, the Railroad, the Highway**

The railroad crossing pictured in the second set of Sekula's negatives lies in the small oceanside town of Del Mar, just a few miles north from the beach where the first negatives of Sekula's sculpture were exposed. The protest in Del Mar on May 12, 1972, that he documented was in many ways the culmination in the San Diego area of a resurgent wave of demonstrations and student strikes that swept across college campuses and American city streets that spring. Renewed opposition to the war and the Nixon administration was sparked by an intensified U.S. bombing campaign in the spring, followed by the May 8 announcement of the mining of Hanoi and Haiphong harbors, all allegedly waged in the name of peace in Vietnam. The demonstrations in San Diego were also tied to larger political issues of the early to mid-1970s: the attempt by Governor Reagan and other conservatives to seize control of public universities in California in order to stifle campus dissent, sometimes with violent results; the wide-reaching corruption and illegal acts of the Nixon administration, some of which was already being traced back to local San Diego politics by the local underground press and which would increasingly be brought to light by the inquiries following the Republican National Convention scandal and Watergate Hotel break-in of spring and summer 1972; the revelation of federal government, military, and local police surveillance, harassment, and sometimes terrorism directed at left-wing political organizers, including the widespread use of "red squads" within local police departments to quash lawful dissent and harass those with anti-establishment views.

In San Diego, these struggles played out in the streets and in the pages of the underground press more than in the conservative media empire of the Copley press—run by prominent conservative and Reagan and Nixon supporter James Copley—which controlled both major dailies in the city, the *San Diego Union* and the *San Diego Tribune*.<sup>48</sup> These struggles occurred not only *in* the pages of the underground press but *over* those pages, over the printing presses and means of distribution themselves, and also over cameras and photographs, in battles over the right of citizens to publicly dissent from the government and its war policy and over the very right of dissident media to exist and to publish at all.

48. Copley, "a former Navy officer whose only combat experience during [World War II] was fighting off hostesses in Washington *haute* society, turned the *Union*, in particular, into an ersatz warship with retired Navy and Marine brass at every level of management. Already notorious for its reactionary politics, the militarized *Union* surpassed all other national dailies in the shrill, inquisitorial fervor of its anti-Communism during the 1950s and 1960s. The *Union* moreover automatically backed the Navy in any controversy, even against the Chamber of Commerce, and almost never saw a scandal, even when one was screaming at its doorstep." Mike Davis, "The Next Little Dollar: The Private Governments of San Diego," in Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller, *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* (New York: New Press, 2003), 79. See also "Herb Klein's Old Paper," *Newsweek*, January 5, 1970.

Sekula's practice took shape in this context of political antagonism, in which photography played a crucial role, simultaneously as a medium of social control and as a vehicle of dissent, not just in the bourgeois container of the art gallery but as part of a network of dissident media.

Even on campus, it was difficult to avoid the war. The university itself had taken root in a decommissioned marine corps base and the art studios were located in old military Quonset huts. As David Antin recalls, "the art gallery had taken over the commissioned officers' bowling alley. . . . It was the darkest art gallery I ever saw."<sup>49</sup> As a first-year student at UCSD in 1968, Sekula participated in protests near a marine corps recruiting depot, where the recently inducted would approach demonstrators through a fence and ask for help escaping; later Sekula and his roommates helped hide two deserters in their dorm, learning of how they'd been beaten in motivation platoon.<sup>50</sup> The nationwide antiwar movement had again surged throughout the spring of 1970, with the invasion of Cambodia, the subsequent nationwide student strikes, and the killing of protesting students by National Guardsmen at Kent State University. That year also marked a turning point for on-campus politics: starting in the winter of 1969–70, students assembled to stop marine corps and navy recruitment interviews, earning the ire of the local community.<sup>51</sup>

In early 1970, Sekula assembled and hauled into Revelle Plaza, a central commons on the UCSD campus, a square sandbox enclosed with barbed wire and adorned with an official university sign stolen from nearby, declaring "Property of the Regents of the University of California / Permission to Enter or to Pass Over Is Revocable at Any Time." Titled *Sculpture Commemorating the 102nd Anniversary of the University of California*, the work was documented by Sekula in a small booklet of pasted-in black-and-white photos and typewritten text that indicates it remained in place from February 5 through April 7, when the university administration forced him to remove the work (fig. 1.19).<sup>52</sup> By reminding viewers that the regents not only ultimately controlled policy but claimed ownership of the ostensibly public space, the sculpture showed that equal access, faculty governance, and student democracy were all subordinate to the authority of often wealthy individuals appointed by the governor, while the barbed wire highlighted the militarized character of the university and the threat of force that guaranteed their authority. Despite, or because of, the victories won by Berkeley's earlier Free Speech Movement, Governor Ronald Reagan was still pushing the regents to crack down on student dissent, having recently attempted to bar Eldridge Cleaver from giving a series of lectures for class credit on the Berkeley campus the previous fall, as well as continuing to push for budget cuts and successfully reaching an agreement in

49. D. Antin, introduction to *Radical Coherency*, 6.

50. Sekula and Buchloh, "Conversation," 30–31; Allan Sekula, interview with the author, August 19, 2011, Los Angeles.

51. Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 121.

52. Allan Sekula, *Sculpture Commemorating the 102nd Anniversary of the University of California* (1970, self-published), in Sekula Archive; and Young, interview, August 19, 2011.

early 1970 to impose tuition for the first time.<sup>53</sup> Previously, in the spring of 1969, Reagan had ordered the police to recapture a plot of university land in Berkeley that had been occupied and declared a People’s Park by demonstrators. The police tear-gassed and beat demonstrators and bystanders and shot 110 people, killing a student and injuring many others. A state of emergency was declared, public assembly banned, and the National Guard was sent in, occupying the city for over two weeks.<sup>54</sup> Scenes of peaceful demonstrators carrying flowers and facing down the bayoneted gun barrels of National Guard troops resembled earlier iconic scenes such as the 1967 march on the Pentagon. Harkening back to those scenes, on the day Sekula removed the sculpture, Allen Ginsberg, who had popularized carrying flowers to hand to police and using chants and mantras in antiwar demonstrations in Berkeley, happened across Revelle Plaza with a larger group after a poetry reading.<sup>55</sup> Seeing Sekula dismantling the work, Ginsberg began chanting a mantra for the end of an event.<sup>56</sup> Astonishingly, on the very same day, April 7, Reagan defended the use of state violence in Berkeley and at other universities, making the widely reported threat, “If it takes a bloodbath, let’s get it over with. No more appeasement.”<sup>57</sup>

And while Sekula recognized in an early sketch for the work that the work’s implicit claim that “the university allows free speech as long as it is a harmless sandbox activity (rational discourse)” might contradict itself if the university allowed the sculpture on the plaza, he was prescient in other ways.<sup>58</sup> Not only were Reagan and the UC regents in the midst of launching investigations into faculty whom they sought to fire for their “inflammatory oratory” and “militant activism,” attempting to bypass the protections of academic freedom or First Amendment rights.<sup>59</sup> At UCSD, Chancellor William McGill would soon take out a restraining order barring demonstrating students and faculty from campus. And McGill’s apparently principled liberalism in which he defended academic freedom in the

53. Cleaver was apparently invited to speak at UCSD in response; Chancellor McGill then “appeared on local television and denounced Cleaver as a racist.” “UCSD: A Political History, 1957–1972,” *North Star* 5, no. 3 (June 1975): 20–22, reprinted from UCSD Radical Coalition, *Disorientation Manual* (University of California, San Diego, 1972).

54. Rorabaugh, 155–166.

55. A key figure in the counterculture and the antiwar movement, Ginsberg had helped pioneer the use of flowers, songs, chants, and mantras in advice to Berkeley demonstrators for a 1965 antiwar march threatened with violence from the Hell’s Angels and police; see Allen Ginsberg, “Demonstration as Spectacle, as Example, as Communication,” *Berkeley Barb* 1, no. 15 (November 19, 1965), 1, 4.

56. Sekula, *Sculpture Commemorating*, n.p.; and Young, interview, August 19, 2011.

57. Reagan’s remark alone was run as the front page of the *Berkeley Tribe* 2, no. 14, issue 4 (April 1970); variations on the phrase were reported in mainstream newspapers, including Ed Meagher, “Reagan Assails Militants, Then Tempers Words,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1970, 3.

58. Allan Sekula, sketch labeled “Beginning Sculpture #1 (Wood),” in Sekula Archive. Intriguingly, Sekula also notes “this work will be a continuation of another work: a dada box entitled ‘Vivisection Ward’ done for Miriam Schapiro’s Studio Practice course.”

59. William Trombley, “Hitch Will Give Regents Data on Four Professors,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1970, 3.

face of politicians' attacks on philosophy professor Herbert Marcuse would soon turn out to be hypocritical. While McGill publicly resisted political pressure from the right, he engineered a backroom exit for a politically unpalatable figure on the left: Marcuse would be forced out of his job as a philosophy professor at UCSD at the end of that academic year. Earlier, when the San Diego community had learned through newspaper reports that Marcuse had been in Paris during the May '68 uprising, where he met with striking students, he became public intellectual enemy number one. Marcuse was attacked in the local press as a dangerous Marxist leader of the New Left and instigator of student revolt, and received death threats that summer. The American Legion and other conservative groups and politicians in the San Diego area waged a public campaign first offering to buy out Marcuse's contract, then demanding that UCSD Chancellor McGill fire Marcuse. When Governor Reagan and other conservative UC regents pressed for Marcuse's dismissal, McGill organized a faculty committee to investigate the professor and on their recommendation reappointed Marcuse for the 1969–70 school year. Yet McGill betrayed this liberal stance when, "in a dangerous moment for academic freedom," he simultaneously "took the extraordinarily cowardly measure of issuing an ad hoc arbitrary mandatory retirement policy [for professors over seventy years old] in order to force Marcuse to retire (the policy was subsequently dropped and ignored)."<sup>60</sup> As with Baldessari, Sekula had studied with Marcuse his first year at UCSD. While Sekula was influenced by Marcuse's thought and the legacy of Western Marxism with which he was in dialogue, it was especially the critique of industrial capitalism, consumer culture, and technological society, including the role of the university in it, that would influence Sekula's work.

Around the time in April when Sekula dismantled his sculpture, students affiliated with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) walked into the contracts and grants office and removed a file of government-research contracts, including a CIA contract with a lab at the Scripps Institution for Oceanography, which was quickly published in the *Street Journal*, a local underground newspaper started by former students of Marcuse.<sup>61</sup> By early May, amidst the nationwide student strike,

60. The philosophy department resisted this move by naming Marcuse "honorary professor" and letting him keep an office on campus where he could meet with students. Monte Ransome Johnson, "From Historical to Eliminative Materialism (via German Idealism): A History of the UCSD Philosophy Department 1963–2011," *Philosophy*, Spring 2011, p. 6, [https://philosophy.ucsd.edu/\\_files/news/newsletters/newsletter-50th.pdf](https://philosophy.ucsd.edu/_files/news/newsletters/newsletter-50th.pdf). See also Nancy Scott Anderson, *An Improbable Venture: A History of the University of California, San Diego* (La Jolla, CA: University of California, San Diego, Press, 1993), 119–21; and William J. McGill, *The Year of the Monkey: Revolt on Campus, 1968–69* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 92. The latter reveals that the retirement policy was an *ex post facto* justification drafted only after Marcuse had been notified of his dismissal and concocted in order to appease other enraged faculty members.
61. "Students Face Discipline over Contracts Incident," *Triton Times*, April 24, 1970; and Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 124. "More classified and dangerous research was done at Scripps than in any other UCSD area, but the public did not know it, for the institution had a long history of painting projects white and presenting its defense-



offices and buildings believed to be involved in war research were occupied and sometimes forced to cease operation. Off campus, students moved to block workers from entering the Naval Electronics Lab on Point Loma, a navy research site where UCSD-run labs were also involved in classified research.<sup>62</sup> Chancellor McGill took out a restraining order barring more than a hundred demonstrating faculty members and students from campus and later testified against twenty-one who were arrested for returning, of whom nineteen were convicted. On May 10 graduate student George Winne set himself on fire in Revelle Plaza with a sign next to him that read, “In God’s name, end this war.”<sup>63</sup> That same year UCSD communications professor Herbert Schiller published an anthology in which Senator J. William Fulbright attacked the “military-industrial-academic complex” as a betrayal of the university’s educational mission.<sup>64</sup> In January 1971 the UCSD faculty passed a resolution calling for the university to dissociate all “educational activities” from classified research, but, as Nancy Scott Anderson later observed, “with some \$40 million in outside funding and some 135 contracts current, it would be difficult for the campus to comply with the call to decrease its mission-oriented work.”<sup>65</sup>

Also in the spring of 1970, Lonidier documented a collective antiwar action—today known as *Body Bags* or *Meat Piece* (figs. 1.20–1.22)—in which Sekula and professor Anthony Wilden, among others, participated. Students in Newton Harrison’s sculpture class, including Sekula, had wanted to participate in the student strike, but Harrison encouraged them to meet off campus and make or do

related work in its most pacific colors” (182). Students focused on the Department of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering Sciences, some of whose faculty members also worked in the Institute for Pure and Applied Physical Sciences, principally funded by the Atomic Energy Commission, the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, the Advanced Research Projects Agency (later to become DARPA), and NASA (146).

62. Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 128; and “NEL Hell-ed Up,” *The Indicator*, [May 1970], 2. The latter also includes “On Campus Disorder,” a defense of student militancy by UCSD professors Carlos Blanco, Harry M. Bracken, Reinhard Lettau, and Herbert Marcuse.
63. Owen Joyner, “Student Sets Self Afire; Dies to Protest War,” *Triton Times*, May 12, 1970.
64. J. William Fulbright, “The War and Its Effects: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex,” in *Super-State: Readings in the Military-Industrial Complex*, ed. Herbert I. Schiller and Joseph D. Phillips (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 173–78. Fulbright’s text was originally delivered as a speech to Congress on December 13, 1967. Edited by UCSD communications professor Schiller, *Super-State* also includes Charles J. Hitch’s “The Defense Sector: Its Impact on American Business” (131–55), which argues that market competition and “the disinterested results of systems analysis” would avert the risks that the military-industrial-academic complex posed to democracy. Hitch, a former defense economist at the RAND Corporation and assistant defense secretary under Robert McNamara, had been appointed president of the University of California in 1967 after Governor Reagan and conservative regents fired Clark Kerr for being too liberal and not cracking down hard enough on campus dissent. For Marcuse and his students, the war clearly showed that McNamara’s technocracy was far from disinterested or democratic. On Reagan and Kerr’s ouster, see Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 368–378.
65. Anderson, *An Improbable Venture*, 128.

something as a response.<sup>66</sup> Harrison lent his studio to the effort, where the activists stuffed military uniforms with bloody offal, placed them in semitransparent body bags, and carried them to the center of campus, where they used two stretchers to lay them out in a disturbingly neat line on Revelle Plaza.<sup>67</sup> The bags piqued the curiosity of passersby, which soon turned to disgust when they discovered the abject mess inside; the symbolic order that gave war its meaning quickly dissolved into blood-soaked rags and shapeless guts. Campus police removed the bags late that night on the grounds that this display violated health codes; the demonstrators marked their removal with a sign claiming the war violated health codes far more than their sculpture.<sup>68</sup> And Lonidier's photos carry the demonstration beyond the bounds of those few days in Revelle Plaza.

Thus photography played an important role in documenting student anti-war protest actions in which Sekula and his compatriots engaged at UCSD. While both *Sculpture Commemorating . . .* and *Body Bags* could provide a model for agit-prop sculpture that would integrate art and political engagement, it is their apparently secondary photographic documentation that offers Sekula attractive new aesthetic-political ways forward. By late 1971 and early 1972, when Sekula turns away from postminimalist sculpture to make his first photographic artworks, it is less in the context of an ongoing investigation into the pictorial and aesthetic traditions of the medium than in a context of photographic documentation—both of political demonstrations and protest theater.

*Box Car* (late 1971), a single black-and-white photograph of a chemical company at which Sekula had worked, was shot from a moving train boxcar (fig. 1.23). The out-of-focus telephone pole in the foreground, the off-kilter framing, and the motion blur of passing railroad tracks give *Box Car* a snapshot aesthetic. The blurred, black-and-white documentation of train-hopping may seem out of place amidst the ubiquitous hitchhiking of the early 1970s, possibly conjuring a nostalgic view of hobos in the Great Depression. On one hand, the photos attest to Sekula's lack of access to that key technology of bourgeois individuality and self-worth, especially in Southern California: the automobile, notably eschewed by more ecologically and communally minded, if not also explicitly anticapitalist, hippies. On the other hand, the photos record a kind social mobility that allows Sekula to adopt a perspective from outside the factory, looking back at a summer job he had left behind. The work functions simultaneously as a form of identification with

66. Newton Harrison, "Meat Piece: Backstory, 1969–1970," unpublished manuscript. I thank Jill Dawsey for sharing this with me.
67. Sekula and Buchloh, "Conversation," 30; and Lonidier, interview with the author, March 11, 2014, New York.
68. Harrison recalled that campus officials had attempted to discover whether he had broken any laws so that he could be fired but were unable to uncover anything serious. The university reportedly disposed of the bags in an incinerator without consulting the demonstrators; as a result, sand used to weigh the bags down turned to glass and destroyed the very expensive equipment—a fact the university apparently kept quiet. Harrison, "Meat Piece." Sekula relayed a similar story about the incinerator in an unpublished interview with Terry Smith, "The Modesty of Photography and the Work of the World" (1995).



the jobless, lumpenproletarian vagrant outside capitalist wage relations and a testament to Sekula's socioeconomic ability to leave his factory job—partly obtained through his high-school training in chemistry encouraged his chemical-engineer father—for enrollment in the university during the rest of the year. *Box Car* begins to chart Sekula's economic position, particularly in relation to traditional notions of the industrial working class, in ways that he will explore in other self-reflexive autobiographical works made over the next few years. While *Box Car* hints at social movement between classes (both upward and downward) that might give rise to class consciousness, it also sketches possible ways of life outside waged work. Interestingly for Sekula's later artworks, this movement is tracked not only through photography but also through a transport network that serves as a medium linking sites of production, sale, and consumption—a space for movement that connects but remains apart from the spheres of work, leisure, and home.

While *Box Car* was shot from Sekula's perspective, in *Meat Mass* (early 1972) the artist performs actions that are documented by a photographer-assistant (figs. 1.23–1.24). The sequence of twelve black-and-white photos depicts the artist shoplifting high-end steaks from the supermarket and tossing them onto the highway to be run over by passing traffic. According to Benjamin Buchloh, when looking back on the work, “What must have appeared at the time as an utterly implausible mapping of unrelated elements (LA traffic and meat consumption) in an enigmatic performance reads now . . . as an uncanny literalization, alerting us to the deep connection between ecological destruction and socially enforced compulsive consumption.”<sup>69</sup> The sacrificial destruction of steaks undoubtedly functions as a desublimating attack on idealized forms of consumption. And the inexorable motion of the auto traffic that crushes animal parts under its wheels certainly conjures up the pollution and destruction of nature created by masses of individual workers and consumers mobilized by industrial capitalism—social costs that had largely been ignored or accepted in the name of technological progress but were beginning to be debated within a burgeoning ecology movement. Yet the piece also involves what could be called the politics of food: although made right at the beginning of a rapid rise in monetary inflation and subsequent economic recession of 1972–1975, the rising price of basics like food and fuel would soon become major political issues—hardships that hurt the poor more than the rich. Even more immediately, the supermarket was also emerging as an arena of political contestation: farmworkers and their supporters had been boycotting the Safeway grocery store chain—whose store façade and sign are prominently featured in the opening shot of *Meat Mass*—because of the nonunion lettuce they carried. Appeals to heed the boycott and for solidarity support for the United Farm Workers (who were battling growers and sometimes corrupt company-run Teamsters locals to unionize farmworkers and negotiate better contracts) appeared regularly in underground leftist and student newspapers as workers went on strike and the boycott was extended to grapes, wine

69. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Allan Sekula, 1951–2013,” *Artforum* (January 2014): 45.

stores, and wineries like Gallo.<sup>70</sup>

Food, then, was a nexus of political economy, ecology, and labor, and one increasingly attended to by California artists dealing with everyday life. In 1974, Sekula would create *This Ain't China*, a photo and text work recording the dreams and organizing efforts of workers in a pizza joint, based on his own experiences working there. That same year, his companion Rosler would also begin a series of artworks dealing with food, fine dining as class expression, and the service workers who serve it.<sup>71</sup> More distantly in San Francisco, Bonnie Sherk documented her work in food service roles in *Waitress* (1973) and *Short Order Cook* (1974), nominating her performances as art and documenting them with black-and white snapshots.<sup>72</sup> Slightly later, in the video and photo series *Learn Where the Meat Comes From* (1976), building on an earlier performances involving raw meat such as *Maps* (1973), Suzanne Lacy would interrupt the television genre of the middle-class cooking show by adopting the persona of Julia Childs while cavorting with a dead lamb. Performing a mimetic identification with the imaginary life of the dead animal, Lacy further mocked the alienation from nature experienced by the average consumer of both industrial agriculture and gastronomy.

Yet *Meat Mass* also extends beyond the politics of food. When the penultimate shot of the sequence shows a close-up of steak crushed to a shapeless pulp on the roadway, the mass described in the title recalls the formless guts that had been stuffed into army uniforms in the demonstration now called *Body Bags* or *Meat Piece*. And it is Sekula's body that provides the key connection between the onrushing traffic, the smooth lanes of concrete smeared with gray tracks of oily dirt, and the mass of meat: a close-up shows his hand gripping the steak and subsequent shots show him on the roadway, raising his arms up and down to throw the meat down. Smeared on the roadway, the meat loses its form, structure, and clues to its origin—it could be animal or human, animate or inanimate. Sekula's body serves

70. Conditions in the fields did not improve greatly until 1975, when the UFW, led by César Chavez, succeeded in securing new workplace votes and won the right to represent most farmworkers, following the election of Jerry Brown as governor and the passage of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. See Miller, 241–242.
71. Rosler's food-related works include the performance and installation *A Gourmet Experience* (1974); the video *The Budding Gourmet* (1974); the scripts *The Art of Cooking: A Mock Dialogue between Julia Child and Craig Claiborne* (1974) and *Kitchen Economics: The Wonder of (White) Bread* (1975); the postcard novels *McTowersMaid* and *Tijuana Maid* (both 1975); the video *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975); the illustrated text *North American Waitress, Coffee-Shop Variety* (1976); and the video *The East Is Red, The West Is Bending* (1977). To these works on the politics of food, Annette Michelson appends the illustrated text and video *Losing: A Conversation with the Parents* (1976–77), about eating disorders, to form what she sees as a feminist "Food Chain." See Annette Michelson, "Solving the Puzzle," in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Life World*, exh. cat. (Birmingham, UK: Ikon Gallery; Vienna: Generali Foundation; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 184–86.
72. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, "To Move, to Dress, to Work, to Act: Playing Gender and Race in 1970s California Art," in Constance M. Lewallen et al., *State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 196–216.

as the vehicle for the meat's passage between these states and is similarly meat as well, which could meet the same end. The end of the sequence shows Sekula crouched over the flattened animal matter almost as if in lamentation, before the final shot shows his back as he flees over the adjacent hill. With references to the "war machine" abounding, it is hard not to see Sekula's life-threatening foray onto the road in front of the one-way traffic as another allegory for the risk and loss of life in Southeast Asia, especially for those young men facing the draft. And this association recalls the other, liturgical meaning of *mass*, which invests the piece with a sense of ritual sacrifice. But unlike the Catholic mass with which Sekula was familiar growing up, this sacrifice leads not to transcendence or divinity but to senseless, unredeemable loss. In a kind of reverse transubstantiation, the idealized is made abject, the commodity fetish turned into disgusting waste. Consumption leads to destruction, if not to war and death. Similarly, the interstate highway that cuts through UCSD, where the piece was performed, destroys the pastoral ideal and connotation of the term *campus*, which cannot be regarded only as a bucolic retreat from the world. The Bataillean *basesse*, the low or base materialism, of *Meat Mass* thus forms a counterpoint to the levity of Baldessari's *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)* (1973). Baldessari's photo-series, published as an artist's book, creates an amusing, gravity-defying game in which the artist attempts—not entirely successfully—to generate meaning out of an arbitrary operation. Although the imaginary line Baldessari attempts to conjure between the small red rubber balls set off against a deep blue sky is never very straight, the viewer's pleasure in connecting the dots, in fitting an approximate pattern to a messy and contingent reality, is mirrored by the magical freezing of the balls in midair, in a kind of eternal present, by the photograph. In contrast, in Sekula's sequence the meat falls down to the hard concrete where it is destroyed, its visual identity blotted out in a smear on the roadway as it moves from idealized form to formlessness.

Both *Meat Mass* and *Throwing Three Balls* can be considered as what Margaret Iversen calls "performative photography": photographs that arise from a structuring idea, set of instructions, or event score that "precedes" the images, but which generates an act with an uncertain outcome not wholly governed by the artist or the setup.<sup>73</sup> While the instruction for *Throwing Three Balls* . . . is clearly contained in the title, *Meat Mass* is accompanied by a short typewritten caption explaining the premise of the work. However, for Iversen, because the outcome is not fully scripted in performative photography, "the instruction is a device for evading authorial or artistic agency and generating chance operations and unanticipated

73. Margaret Iversen, "Auto-maticity: Ruscha and Performative Photography," in *Photography after Conceptual Art*, ed. Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Balckwell and Association of Art Historians, 2010), 13–27. Iversen relies on the account of post-Cagean performance and photography in conceptual art advanced in Liz Kotz, "Language between Performance and Photography," in *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 175–212.

outcomes.”<sup>74</sup> And because neither the performer nor the camera operator wholly creates or controls that which is pictured, the underdetermined character of the performance has what she considers an “intrinsic connection” with a certain “snapshot use of photography,” which brings together “authorial abnegation, indexicality and openness to chance.”<sup>75</sup> In addition to the precedents of artworks by Duchamp (especially his *Three Standard Stoppages* [1913–1914], which also involves throwing things to the ground), as well as music and performance scores by John Cage and various Fluxus artists influenced by him, Iverson concentrates on Ed Ruscha’s photo-books as a paradigm for the approach. Photo-works documenting performances by Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci would equally fall under the rubric, while other California artists unmentioned by Iverson like Baldessari, but also especially Eleanor Antin, also made formally similar works. Despite the pun on “auto-maticity” in Iverson’s title, and her analysis of Ruscha’s *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), *Royal Road Test* (1967), and *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*, she does not further pursue a connection between performance, photography, and a third medium that mixes instruction-following and the generation of chance views: the automobile. Iverson does note that Rosalind Krauss proposed the automobile was the medium that linked many of Ruscha’s photobooks.<sup>76</sup> Yet the car is also key to many other works of performative photography in Southern California, including works by Baldessari (especially the photo-paintings shot while driving around National City and the slide work *The Back of All the Trucks Passed While Driving from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, California, Sunday 20 January 1963* [1963, apparently not exhibited until decades later]), as well as by Sekula and Steinmetz. And, as I have already argued with regard to other works by Baldessari, indexicality involves not just chance, but chance *operations*, a putting-to-work of chance, a multiplication of possible references in a competing field of social forces.<sup>77</sup> These factors all give social and historical weight to the apparently chance operations of driving around and making snapshots, or throwing things out of or in front of moving traffic. These practices derive from more than a genealogy of avant-garde art; they also emerge out of a postwar socioeconomic order in which the automobile, the interstate highway system, and the rise of the suburbs had all remade earlier forms of family life, work life, and leisure, as well as the natural environment.

Performative photography also has other formal implications that stretch beyond the generation of chance outcomes and that Iverson only begins to develop. First, performative photography subverts the incipient idealism of much

74. Iversen, 16.

75. Iversen, 16–17.

76. Iversen, 18. For more on the automobile in Ruscha’s work, see Rosalind Krauss, “‘Specific’ Objects,” *Res* 46 (Autumn 2004): 222; Kevin Hatch, “‘Something Else’: Ed Ruscha’s Photo Books,” *October* 111 (Winter 2005): 107–126; and Jaleh Mansoor, “Ed Ruscha’s One Way Street,” *October* 111 (Winter 2005): 127–142. Compare also Jeff Wall’s *Landscape Manual* (1969), which employs auto-maticity for an exercise in formal, “autoanalytical” self-reflexivity, told through a conceptual snapshot-and-text essay, a format Wall would later famously eschew.

77. Again, on the operationalization of chance by Cold War game theory in the context of Baldessari, see Kelsey.



language-based conceptual art by insisting on the specific, material, photographic instantiation of an act. Partly for these reasons, in 1969 conceptualist Joseph Kosuth famously dismissed Baldessari's work as joke art: Baldessari's "pop paintings" were "'conceptual' cartoons of actual conceptual art."<sup>78</sup> For Kosuth, "actual" conceptual art, leaning heavily on analytic philosophy and logical positivism in particular, presented ideas, often through linguistic propositions. Yet by acting out in literal-minded ways various instructions, scripts, and critical dicta, Baldessari presents often botched, failed, boring, funny, ironic, or banal results that undercut the seriousness, stability, and objectivity of the concepts to which they refer. The erratic referentiality and materiality of performative photography undermines the linguistic idealism of conceptualists like Kosuth, who seek to communicate ideas—more specifically, self-reflexive ideas about ideas in and as art—independently of any particular material form. As Jack Burnham put it: "Conceptual art's ideal medium is telepathy."<sup>79</sup> In the series of works subtitled *Art as Idea as Idea*, Kosuth made large copies of dictionary definitions (including of the word *art*) through the Photostat process, an early form of photocopying that relied on silver-halide photography rather than xerography. At the time, he remarked

I always considered the photostat the work's form of presentation (or media); but I never wanted anyone to think that I was presenting a photostat as a work of art. . . . The idea with the photostat was that they would be thrown away and then re-made—if need be—as part of an irrelevant procedure connected with the form of presentation, but not with the "art."<sup>80</sup>

Although often mistaken for paintings, Kosuth's copied definitions are in fact photographs. However, Kosuth's attempt to divorce the semantic content of the utterance from its presentational form thus runs aground on "one of the paradoxes of conceptual art. Linguistic or analytic conceptual art was largely an attack on the primacy of the visual: yet the majority of the forms which went under the heading of conceptual art were photographic, just as analytic conceptual art was mediated through photographic reproduction."<sup>81</sup> Although Kosuth's analytic propositions aspire to the condition of pure tautology (art about art, thinking about thinking, ideas of ideas), by the time of the Art & Language debates of the early 1970s, Kosuth was confusingly justifying this work in explicitly political, dialectical, and Marxian terms.<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, however, his project amounted to a defense of the tautological

78. Joseph Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy" (1969), in *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966–1990*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 29; originally published in three parts in *Studio International* (October, November, and December 1969).

79. Jack Burnham, "Alice's Head: Reflections on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* (February 1970): 37.

80. Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy," 30–31.

81. Roberts, "Photography, Iconophobia, and the Ruins of Conceptual Art," 9. This paradox had been clearly outlined by 1976 in Nancy Foote, "The Anti-Photographers," *Artforum* 15, no. 1 (September 1976): 46–54.

82. See Joseph Kosuth, "The Artist as Anthropologist," *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 18–30; Joseph Kosuth, "1975," *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 87–96; and Joseph Kosuth, "Work," *The*

uselessness of modernist autonomy in the face of capitalist instrumentalization, but one that could proceed only by repressing the material instantiation of the works—by attempting to exclude the photographic medium from the frame of the artwork proper. As Roberts puts it,

Kosuth dissolves the function of material and sensuous characteristics of art, only to reinstate them for the purpose of defining art as qualitatively different from other disciplines. . . . [H]ow is it possible to theorize away the sensible dimension of art by divorcing the propositional truth of the object from its material support, at the same time as covertly relying on this dimension to define art's autonomy?<sup>83</sup>

What Roberts calls the “material support” has, of course, a history and social meaning. For instance, Benjamin Buchloh has argued that conceptual art's radical critique of visibility and aesthetic value perversely adopts the textual and systematic means of bureaucracy (from typewritten texts, instructions, Photostats, and Xeroxes to filing systems, seriality, and the destruction of authorhood), miming an “aesthetics of administration.”<sup>84</sup>

In contrast, performances for the camera by Baldessari and Eleanor Antin in San Diego, but also by Ruscha, Vito Acconci, Douglas Huebler, and Bruce Nauman among others, were explicitly made to be captured—sometimes carefully, sometimes haphazardly—by the camera and circulated through photographs, which constitute the primary medium of the work. This leads to the second major implication of performative photography: the use of photography as the main way to exhibit performance dismantles the metaphysics of presence that so often accompanies live performance. Circulating the performance through photographs suggests that the “you-had-to-be-there” singularity of the event is only knowable through mediated repetition, and that the significance of the artwork does not depend wholly on the presence of the performer's body. Iversen reserves the term “performative photography” for “the work of those artists who are interested in displacing spontaneity, self-expression and immediacy by putting into play repetition and the inherently iterative character of the instruction.”<sup>85</sup> Yet whether intended by the artist or not, *all* photographic documentation of performance follows the logic of the supplement: the photograph not only extends the circulation of the performance through other spaces and times, but that photographic representation also threatens

*Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 116–120.

83. John Roberts, “Conceptual Art and Imageless Truth,” in *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, 316. In contrast, Roberts sees the antivisual, theoretical investigations of art's social conditions of production by other members of the New York branch of Art and Language—primarily Ramsden, Burn, plus Karl Beveridge and Carol Condé, with whom Sekula would be in contact in New York in 1974–1975—instead moving in a progressive direction, toward a dialogical praxis of “conversation, learning, and writing” (317). It would also lead them beyond art-making and into activist media work with unions and community groups.
84. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions.” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–143.
85. Iversen, 15.



to destroy the singular presence of the performance.<sup>86</sup>

Photographic documentation of both performance and conceptual art leads to the practical deconstruction of the difference between what art dealer Seth Siegelau called the “primary information” that was the work and the “secondary information” that was its documentation. As Siegelau explained to an interviewer, the documentation of traditional art mediums such as painting or sculpture in “illustrations, slides, films” differs significantly from the material properties of the original work.

But when art does not any longer depend on its physical presence, when it has become an abstraction, it is not distorted and altered by its representation in books and catalogues. It becomes *primary* information, while the reproduction of conventional art in books or catalogues is necessarily *secondary* information. For example, a photograph of a painting is different from a painting, but a photograph of a photograph is just a photograph, or the setting of a line of type is just a line of type. When information is *primary*, the catalogue can become the exhibition *and* a catalogue auxiliary to it, whereas in the January, 1969, show [at Siegelau’s gallery] the catalogue was *primary* and the physical exhibition was auxiliary to it. You know, it’s turning the whole thing around.<sup>87</sup>

On one hand, Siegelau suggests that with conceptual art an abstract, disembodied quantity of information can be relayed through any medium, which means those media formerly considered secondary documentation can become primary. As Alexander Alberro has argued, Siegelau nonetheless still seems to maintain, as Kosuth did, an “idealist conception of meaning as an a priori construct existing before its embodiment in form.”<sup>88</sup> In other words, “primary information” seems to mean the ideational content of conceptual art, which can be localized in an inessential material vehicle of photography or text still considered secondary and excluded from the artwork proper. Yet by conflating both the idea and the form together as primary information, Siegelau’s formulation opens onto another possibility. That is, on the other hand, the printed matter of the catalogue becomes primary and exhibitions in physical gallery spaces become secondary. This inversion overthrows and displaces the reigning values of originality, uniqueness, and physical presence typically associated with art—“turning the whole thing around.” For

86. Here and below I use the terms *supplement* and *deconstruction* in the specific senses given to them in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, esp. 141–157. Iversen also draws on Derrida, but more on his discussion of the performative speech act in the ordinary language philosophy of J.L. Austin; see Derrida, “Signature Event Context.”

87. “November, 1969, New York: Seth Siegelau interviewed by Ursula Meyer for Her Projected Book on Anti-art (Excerpts),” in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 . . .*, ed. Lucy Lippard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 125.

88. Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 56; see also pp. 152–163; and Alexander Alberro, “At the Threshold of Art as Information,” in *Recording Conceptual Art*, 12. Alberro argues that Huebler also still maintained a split between the concept as primary information and its documentation as secondary (69, 75).

Alberro, it is artists represented by Siegelauab such as Lawrence Wiener and Douglas Huebler who insist on the priority of so-called secondary information, and Siegelauab had to invent a system to show and sell both kinds of conceptual art. Siegelauab finds a way to bring both tendencies to market through the mass-media techniques of advertising and publicity.<sup>89</sup>

Siegelauab was one of the first to extensively exhibit photography and text works not just in the gallery space but also sometimes exclusively in books, exhibition catalogues, newspapers, and art magazines, which helped conceptual art to strike a critical blow against the uniqueness of the art object and its traditional materials. To Siegelauab's credit, he recognized that the forms usually considered as secondary information, the documentation as supplement, could actually constitute the primary form the work. This was something Dan Graham had already realized by the time he made his magazine pieces in 1965, which could exist entirely within a mass-produced print publication, such the version of *Homes for America* (1966–67) he created for *Arts Magazine*.

Yet, as Alberro has argued, Siegelauab still attempted to maintain the some of the values associated with primary information, through which printed works could be copyrighted, owned, and sold like other artworks.<sup>90</sup> Thus although text- and photo-based works supplanted the originating idea, the bodily presence of the performer, or the physical site of an artwork, they didn't necessarily achieve the democratic potential of mechanically reproduced modes of distribution implicitly advanced by their makers. In this sense, they are similar to the problems of raised by artists who began making videos around this time. Such are the contradictions of artists needing to control and sell on the market works that are, hypothetically at least, copies without an original. Nonetheless, when secondary information like photographic documentation can be seen as constitutive of the work, the mediated reproducibility of the work comes to the fore. Documentation takes on an increasingly central and contested role in art-making.

This use of the snapshot and documentation of an artistic action situates Sekula's works within some of the problems and working methods of photo-conceptualism of the early 1970s, including serial photography; everyday, task-based actions; images paired with deadpan, descriptive text; systems discovered in the world; and indifference to the conventions of hierarchical, ordered composition. Nonetheless, *Meat Mass* and the essayistic photoworks that follow it also mark an important departure from conceptual photography as it had been practiced earlier. Focused on the actions of a single protagonist, the coordinated sequence of photos in *Meat Mass* also presents the rudiments of a narrative, as the dramatic tension created by the threat of apprehension by the authorities is resolved once the actor successfully accomplishes the deed and flees over the hills. Whatever the connections between industrial agriculture, the grocery store, and the dangers of the automobile and its environment suggested by the theft and sacrifice of the meat, the piece

89. Alberro, *Conceptual Art*, 122.

90. Alberro, *Conceptual Art*, 55–57, 152–163; and Alberro, "At the Threshold of Art as Information," in *Recording Conceptual Art*, 12.

marks a turn toward storytelling, while the alternating shots of wide angle and close-up, high angle and low angle (with the camera first above then below the actor as he scrambles up and down the highway embankment), employ the conventions of cinema. Sekula recalls that during this time “I developed an interest especially in the grainy and offhand look of performance documentation photos published in *Avalanche* and elsewhere, such as those of Acconci’s actions. . . . [However,] Godard’s take on the pathetic lumpen-imperialist blandishments of photography in [*Les Carabiniers* (1963)] seemed much more compelling than anything I could find in conceptual art. But what I did see and appreciate in conceptually-oriented photography was a systematic and aesthetically uninflected way of describing the unfolding of an action, more or less in the spirit of Muybridge.”<sup>91</sup> Sekula nonetheless doesn’t persist in his use of photography to document performance actions: “the observational and more strictly ‘photographic’ properties of the exercise had won out by the third effort [i.e., *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972), made after *Boxcar* and *Meat Mass*] . . . . I was convinced the documentation was more interesting than the action itself.”<sup>92</sup> In other words, Sekula recognized at the time that the “secondary” information of photographs documenting the “primary” information of the action may come to supplement and finally replace that action. I will return to *Untitled Slide Sequence* in chapter three. For now, I want to emphasize that while these early photographic works by Sekula employ photography in much the same way performance art of the period did—to record an action or event—they also took place as much or more in the context of both political demonstrations and protest theater, as well as avant-garde and documentary film.

If much conceptual, performance, and land art of the late 1960s and early 1970s could more properly be called “documentation art,” to borrow a wry formulation from David Antin, it often took the art magazine not only as its context but also as its medium and site of exhibition.<sup>93</sup> For example, in 1970 Siegelau invited David Antin and five others to curate an exhibition of conceptual art in an issue of the magazine *Studio International*. (In addition to other artists, Antin selected five from San Diego: Eleanor Antin, Baldessari, Harold Cohen, Fred Lonidier, and George Nicolaidis.)<sup>94</sup> However, this proliferation of documentation need not only function, as has been argued in Siegelau’s case, as a seal of legitimization for the art market, collapsing art into the advertising spaces of art magazines, into the destruction of

91. Sekula and Buchloh, “Conversation,” 23.

92. Sekula and Buchloh, “Conversation,” 22.

93. David Antin, “Lead Kindly Bright” (1970), in *Radical Coherency*, 40. See Anne Rorimer, “Siting the Page: Exhibiting Works in Publications—Some Examples of Conceptual Art in the USA,” in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 11–26; and Gwen Allen, *Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

94. *Studio International* 180, no. 924 (July/August 1970).

the referent by the spectacle or the simulacrum.<sup>95</sup>

Rather, the overlap between photographic documentation and other modes of documentary photography—visible in Baldessari’s appropriation of amateur, newspaper, and police photography—can throw into relief the broader political stakes of photographs as documents. The turn to photography in the wake of conceptual art by artists at UCSD provided the occasion to critically reexamine earlier, prewar documentary traditions, such as the Farm Security Administration’s photography program, worker photography, politicized photomontage, or Soviet factography.<sup>96</sup> Of course, the book or magazine, rather than the art gallery, had also been the primary form for the distribution of photojournalism and documentary photography for a long time. These are traditions usually marginalized from accounts of artistic photography and which Sekula’s critical writing later sought to recover and evaluate. Yet more immediate was the political urgency of war photojournalism and antiwar activism and its contested representation in the mass media—specifically the need to document and circulate images of dissent in the face of public opprobrium and state repression. While the artists at UCSD were doubtlessly reading the art magazines, their work engages with another context, medium, and occasional site of exhibition: journalism, specifically the underground press. For these artists, the volatile set of references called up by images of protest could not be bracketed.

These contests over dissident media and antiwar activism provided the immediate context for a number of works by artists at UCSD. David Antin spent a month photographing the front pages of newspapers displayed in glass-faced newspaper dispensers across San Diego for what would become *Thirty Days of the News* (1971; fig. 1.25). The headlines are dwarfed by the empty streets and storefronts and further miniaturized when Antin cut up the contact sheets and used the series of small frames as the cover for his book *Talking* (1972).<sup>97</sup> Antin recalled that when seen in the context of his “untroubled San Diego neighborhood”—“the sunny streets in front of the quiet little markets, the sleepy auto repair shops and local bank branches, libraries and drugstores”—the headlines communicating far-off disasters were one of the few ways you could tell “the war was going on and long-

95. Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 149–51; and Alexander Alberro, “At the Threshold of Art as Information,” in *Recording Conceptual Art*, 5–12. See also the claims that photography is the “currency” of conceptual art, in Foote, 52; and that a major paradox of all conceptual practices is that “the campaign to critique conventions of visibility with textual interventions, billboard signs, anonymous handouts, and pamphlets inevitably ends by following the preestablished mechanisms of advertising and marketing campaigns.” Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art,” 140.
96. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Allan Sekula: Photography between Discourse and Document,” in Allan Sekula, *Fish Story* (Rotterdam: Witte de With; Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1995), 197–98; and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Allan Sekula, or What Is Photography?” *Grey Room* 55 (Spring 2014): 119–21.
97. David Antin, *Talking* (New York: Kulchur Foundation, 1972).

haired teenage boys disappeared one by one into the navy or the marines.”<sup>98</sup> While the war initially may have felt distant to Antin after moving to San Diego—surging into his consciousness with the invasion of Cambodia, the subsequent nationwide student strike, and the killing of protesting students by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in May 1970—this was not the case for others who joined him at UCSD.

Rosler had begun a series of photomontages, *Bringing the War Home* (1967–1972), which stitched together images of war photojournalism with glossy lifestyle spreads, in 1967 in New York and she continued working on them while living in San Diego before she enrolled at UCSD. One photomontage, now known as *Tron (Amputee)* (fig. 1.26), superimposes a young Vietnamese girl with a bandaged, amputated leg onto an empty, spacious, modern living room with a television at its center. Rosler was appropriating the language of documentary photojournalism—the image of twelve-year-old Nguyen Thi Tron, taken by war photographer Larry Burrows, appeared on the cover of the November 8, 1968, issue of *Life*. Burrows’s photo essay on Nguyen’s life after the trauma was accompanied by a patronizing *Life* editorial, in which her wounding by American soldiers in a helicopter gunship shooting into a “free-fire zone” is depicted as “one of those random wartime tragedies” and Burrows serves as her caring and redemptive father figure.<sup>99</sup> Nguyen became a poster child for Vietnamese casualties and was showered with gifts sent by American readers—in a follow up piece one year later, after she receives a second prosthetic leg because she had outgrown the old, Burrows takes her shopping for six pairs of shoes.<sup>100</sup> Yet because *Life* portrayed Nguyen as an innocent victim and her wounding as a tragic accident, only some Americans would view her experience as the intentional and inevitable outcome of the systematic destruction of a faraway country by their government. Using montage to rearticulate and reinforce the relation between soldiers and victims on the battlefield and consumers and citizens on the home front, Rosler sought to connect the two realms by distributing the pictures first as flyers at antiwar demonstrations and later in the underground feminist newspaper *Goodbye to All That!*<sup>101</sup>

By placing her work in an underground newspaper, Rosler turned journalism

98. David Antin, “Looking Back at *Talking*” (2001), in *Talking* (1972; Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press, 2001), 187, 189–90. Although Antin later stated, “I never showed it anywhere” (190), *Thirty Days of the News* appears on a list of works in a visual arts department faculty exhibition in the UCSD gallery, October 3–22, 1971.
99. “Haunted by the a horror of their lives, he sought to a way to convey the peasants’ stoic acceptance of their fate. He found it in the tale of Tron, a little girl who lost a leg in one of those random wartime tragedies.” George P. Hunt, “The Way Tron Feels about Larry,” *Life*, November 8, 1968, 3. The photo essay itself, anticipating an imminent peace settlement under President Lyndon B. Johnson, was prematurely titled “The Edge of Peace,” text by Don Moser, *Life*, November 8, 1968, 26–37.
100. “For Tron, Gifts and a New Leg,” *Life*, December 12, 1969, 85–87.
101. Back cover, *Goodbye to All That!* no. 3 (October 13, 1970). Several months later, Rosler’s *Vacation Getaway* (1971) was published in *Goodbye to All That!* no. 10 (March 9–23, 1971). The series became visible as artworks that circulated as photographic prints only later.



against the mainstream press: when combined with the slick advertising world of upper-middle-class lifestyle magazines (the source of the living room image), the documentary photograph's look of objectivity, or, at best, distant sympathy, is replaced by agitational indictment—not only of the conduct of the Vietnam War but also of the complicity of everyday consumerism on the home front that sanctioned it. Like the other works in *Bringing the War Home*, the montage seeks to accomplish what many protestors had sought to do by marching on Washington: to bring the overseas conflict to the center of American political life, to confront a perhaps willfully oblivious public with the human cost of the war. Yet as the television in *Tron (Amputee)* suggests, the Vietnam War was in some ways already in everyone's living room, either on television or in newspapers and picture magazines. However incomplete a picture Americans had of the war, if willing to look, they had a more graphic view than they had of previous conflicts; documentary photography in particular did more to record the atrocities of the war than did the talking heads of television. In at least some picture magazines, such as *Life* or *Look* (although not *House Beautiful*, from which this work also draws), the documentation of war injuries appeared alongside the advertising dream world of the commodity (fig. 1.27). The question that Rosler's pictures raise, then, is whether bringing (pictures of) the war home is enough. Documents alone, conceived as indices, do not serve as explanation or condemnation: they must not only be made visible; they must also be framed, articulated, argued about.

Among those most directly involved in popular resistance to the war was Fred Lonidier. Lonidier had opposed the war as an undergraduate at San Francisco State University and, after graduating, entered the Peace Corps in 1966. Despite the common understanding that those serving in the corps would not be drafted—and despite appeals by the Peace Corps at the state, federal, and presidential levels—Lonidier was given a 1-A draft classification and was called home for induction while serving in the Philippines in 1967. As the first person to be drafted “out of the peace corps and into the war corps,” he published an article in the *Manila Times* questioning the president's commitment to peace, and the American press closely followed his journey home. When he refused induction after moving to Seattle, he was indicted, convicted, and sentenced to two years in jail in 1970; while others in similar straits had received suspended sentences provided they go to school or get a job, Lonidier suspected the press coverage he continued to receive had made it impossible for the judge to do the same for him. After he enrolled at UCSD in the fall of 1970, his conviction was thrown out on appeal due to a technicality.<sup>102</sup> In Seattle, he had worked as an activist with the draft resistance movement and SDS. It was in this context that he began making photographs documenting antiwar demonstrations, young men burning draft cards, arrests, trials of resisters, and portraits of organizers with their offices, placards, banners, flyers, and news clippings, as well as the police and military officers, often holding cameras or

102. The events recounted here are based on Lonidier, interview with the author, March 11, 2014, New York; and Fred Lonidier, “Autobiography/History,” *Journal: The Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art* 7 (August/September 1975): 30–31.



guns, monitoring them.<sup>103</sup> Some of these photos were distributed in underground publications such as *The Draft Resistance Newsletter* and *The Agitator* (fig. 1.28). Not seeking simply to avoid military service by declaring themselves conscientious objectors or evading the draft, members of the draft resistance movement employed principled civil disobedience—publicly refusing conscription by returning or burning draft cards and refusing to serve when inducted—to indict the conduct of the war.<sup>104</sup> They therefore relied on representation in both the mainstream and underground press to make their actions known. Photos like those taken by Lonidier played an important role in publicizing the antiwar movement and demonstrating resistance to the draft. Such publicity was also a terrain of political struggle in the mass media.

When the Republican Party, at Nixon's behest, chose San Diego to host the Republican National Convention in 1972, Sekula and other students decided that spring to make a film investigating what they imagined would be an aggressive police response to the thousands of demonstrators expected to descend on the city and the provocations into which they might fall.<sup>105</sup> (The project was abandoned when the convention was subsequently moved to Miami because of a corruption scandal linking favorable treatment of the ITT corporation by Nixon's Justice Department with ITT's agreement to secretly fund the convention, compounded by national coverage of corruption among Nixon associates in San Diego.<sup>106</sup>) Doing research in February, Sekula sought to document the new San Diego Police Department northern substation being constructed on the edge of campus, a photograph of which just recently appeared on the cover of a radical student newspaper without comment: these students clearly saw the building as part of a move for greater police control over the campus.<sup>107</sup> As Sekula detailed in a subsequent article in the student newspaper, he and two companions were detained outside the station, threatened with death, photographed, and his camera and film were impounded with "paramilitary zeal" and "bizarre paranoia/bloodlust," despite the fact that "My camera had not left its case; I had at all times remained on

103. See Fred Lonidier Draft Resistance—Seattle Collection, Pacific Northwest Antiwar and Radical History Project, University of Washington, Seattle, <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/zenPhoto/antiwar/lonidier/>. Lonidier's collection has also been acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, as Fred Lonidier, *Draft Resistance Seattle, 1967–68*.

104. See Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

105. Sekula, interview by the author, August 11, 2011, Los Angeles; on the San Diego Convention Coalition organizing the demonstrations, see "Convention Coalition," *Crazy Times* 2, no. 5 (February 7, 1972): 3.

106. See Denny Walsh and Tom Flaherty, "Tampering with Justice in San Diego," *Life*, March 24, 1972; and Vincent S. Ancona, "When the Elephants Marched Out of San Diego: The 1972 Republican Convention Scandal," *Journal of San Diego History* 38, no. 4 (Fall 1992), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/92fall/elephants.htm>. According to Ancona, "The *Life* article brought to the surface what the local underground newspapers had been claiming for months; San Diego was riddled with a trail of corruption that led all the way up to President Nixon himself."

107. *Crazy Times* 2, no. 5 (February 7, 1972).

public property.”<sup>108</sup> Sekula further warned activists to know their rights, anticipate harassment and illegal arrests, and avoid provocative actions that would lead to retaliatory police violence, which he felt threatened the movement. Remarkably, after pressure from a university dean who was a lawyer, the camera was returned the following day and Sekula learned the police were developing his negatives for evidence of conspiracy. Even more remarkably, the station commander responded in a letter to the editor, claiming that police fears of left-wing terrorism provided “some justification to the paranoia.”<sup>109</sup> Referring to an image of a police officer allegedly found on the roll of film developed by the police, the commander snidely accused Sekula of lying about the closed camera case, intimating that he had violent motives against the officer or “his children.” Most remarkably, at least some of the photos shot by Sekula and apparently printed by the police have survived in Sekula’s archive, tucked into a police property envelope labeled in Sekula’s handwriting “Police Confiscation 1972” (figs. 1.29–1.38). The prints that have survived seem to show that it was the police commander, not Sekula, who was lying: the photographs do not show any uniformed police officers nor the northern substation, but rather the county jail in downtown San Diego, which he had presumably shot prior to arriving at the North County station, where his camera remained in its case. The photos document the technical apparatus of legal and police control: the blank facades of the prison building with its tiny windows, large signs prohibiting communicating with prisoners, weatherized surveillance cameras, the empty front seat of a patrol car with a shotgun prominently attached to the dash. The relatively intimate, head-and-shoulder portraits of two young men who appear in the series appear to have been shot on the wooded UCSD campus, making the figures shown there more likely to be students or colleagues than cops. Although apparently never exhibited, Sekula’s photos sought to describe the system of repression and control being mobilized behind the scenes apart from the spectacular images of confrontation expected at the convention—a kind of visual parallel to the itemized budget acquired and published by the underground press of military equipment being specially acquired by the San Diego police in anticipation of the RNC.<sup>110</sup> Importantly, this exchange was part of a much larger contest over the right of citizens to report on and photograph the police—and to dissent publicly at all—was also being fought in and around the underground press more broadly.

The death threat against Sekula was not unusual: similar threats against activists were often reported in the underground press. Later that year the *Door* would report threats against activists arrested for staging a boycott, and earlier the *Street Journal* had claimed that after it exposed the true identity of an undercover SDPD officer who had infiltrated the Movement for a Democratic Military, engaged in vandalism, and tried to provoke others into smashing windows during demos downtown and even blowing up the Coronado bridge, other activists were arrested and threatened with death if anything happened to the officer, his wife,

108. Allan Sekula, “Notes on a Specific Case of Police Harassment,” *Triton Times* (February 18, 1972): 3, 11.

109. Veon D. Nyhus, letter to the editor, *Triton Times* (March 27, 1972): 5.

110. See “Police Request for August,” *Crazy Times* 2, no. 5 (February 7, 1972): 9.

or children.<sup>111</sup> And the commander's invocation of left-wing terrorism (he refers to the shooting of an officer in San Francisco) was a red herring in the conservative context of San Diego. Not counting illegal but officially tolerated police harassment such as continual arrests of vendors selling underground newspapers on the streets, one author tallies not less than thirty-five separate incidents of terrorism conducted against underground newspapers and leftist groups and individuals in San Diego from 1969 to 1972. These included surveillance, burglary, and file thefts of membership and mailing lists from the *Street Journal*, the Student Mobilization Committee, and the Friends of the Black Panthers; making death threats against Marcuse, former San Diego State economics professor Peter Bohmer, the president of the Associated Students at San Diego State, the local Democratic Party chairman, and a city councilmember; the ransacking of an alternative school and of the offices of the *Street Journal*, whose printing press was fouled and destroyed; firebombing and cutting the brake lines of the cars of activists, including that of a *Door* newspaper staff member and participant in the San Diego Convention Coalition; bombings targeting the home of a socialist student and black students in dormitories at San Diego State; and firing bullets into a bookstore, the offices of the *Street Journal*, the offices of the Movement for a Democratic Military, which published important antiwar newsletters for soldiers (one wounded), and a communal house where Bohmer and others who published the *Door* lived (another wounded; *Goodbye To All That!* collected donations for her recovery).<sup>112</sup> While much of this activity can be laid at the feet of the Secret Army Organization, a paramilitary anticommunist offshoot of the Minutemen that was sponsored by the FBI, their efforts harmonized with ongoing harassment of the same groups from the police. As Geoffrey Rips concludes, "In San Diego, local business leaders, the city police force, the district attorney, the U.S. Navy, the FBI and a paramilitary group all conspired against the constitutional rights of the free press."<sup>113</sup> It was only after an SDPD officer and local prosecutor were injured in the SAO's June 1972 bombing of a screening *I Am Curious Yellow* at a porn theater (the officials were apparently there to evaluate whether it was obscene) that the FBI gave up its informant in the SAO and the SDPD found the means to arrest and break up the group.<sup>114</sup>

111. Doug Porter, "Red Squad Terror," *Door* 4, no. 11 (December 2–17, 1972): 1, 11; and "John Murray, the Pig Exposed," *Street Journal*, March 1970.
112. Miller, 231–232. See also Donner, 442–445; "Shots Fired Into Bohmer's Home; Woman Hit," *Los Angeles Times* 7 January 1972, A2; "Leaflets Suggesting Attack on Teacher Probed by Police," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 January 1972, B1; and "Righteous Patriots Shoot San Diego Movement Woman," *Off Our Backs* 2, no. 6 (February 28, 1972): 24. On the war on underground newspapers in particular in San Diego, see Geoffrey Rips, "The Campaign against the Underground Press," in *Unamerican Activities: The Campaign against the Underground Press*, PEN American Center Report, ed. Anne Janowitz and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1981), 130–134.
113. Rips, 134.
114. Donner, 440–445. See also Milton Viorst, "FBI Mayhem" *New York Review of Books*, 18 March 1976; Richard Popkin, "The Strange Tale of the Secret Army Organization (USA)," *Ramparts*, October 1973; and Peter Biskind, "The FBI's Secret Soldiers," *New Times*, January 9, 1976.

When another wave of student protests crested in the spring of 1972, both Sekula and Lonidier were there with their cameras. In response to the Nixon administration's renewed bombing campaign in the spring, protests intensified across the country and another call for a student strike went out. Lonidier and Sekula both were both on the scene on May 4 when antiwar demonstrators staged a sit-in blocking the doors of the Naval Supply Center in San Diego, through which war materiel was shipped to Southeast Asia.<sup>115</sup> Sekula's negatives of marchers with their signs and crowds sitting down in the street in front of the Naval Center apparently went unprinted aside from the contact sheets he made.<sup>116</sup> Lonidier's *Twenty-nine Arrests, 11th Naval District, May 4, 1972* consists of twenty-nine small prints that show an individual arrestee held in the center of the frame by a pair of riot-helmeted police officers (figs. 1.39–1.40). Although the demonstrator in the first frame seems to be looking and smiling at the camera, by the second shot viewers realize there are actually two cameras and two photographers on the scene: Lonidier shot over the shoulder of an officer bearing a Polaroid camera and making booking photos of each arrestee, his domed helmet often blocking the view. Presented in the same order they were shot, the frames adopt the serial logic of photoconceptualism, of minimalism, and certain strains of pop art. Yet, as Benjamin H.D. Buchloh has pointed out, *Twenty-nine Arrests* substitutes an image of interested political struggle for the indifferent transcription of banal swimming pools and parking lots familiar from Southern Californian photoconceptualism, specifically Ed Ruscha's photo-books such as *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963).<sup>117</sup> Jostling next to the police photographer amidst the struggle to arrest and control these bodies, Lonidier was caught in a field of conflicting forces—despite the apparently arbitrary selection of subjects captured one after another, the act of photographing was neither indifferent nor disinterested.

Not just a sendup of Ruscha, *Twenty-nine Arrests* is also an engagement with police photography. Yet this engagement further contrasts with its immediate avant-garde precedents in conceptual art that, in addition to scouring non-art genres such as amateur snapshots and photo-reportage, also appropriated photography by the police. In *Duration Piece #15 (Global)* (1969), Huebler reproduced an FBI wanted poster for an alleged bank robber along with a signed typescript stipulating that the cost of the work was \$1,100 (the same amount as the reward for the suspect's arrest and conviction); that the artist would pay an informer the reward in full in the first month after the piece was made, with the amount declining each subsequent month until it reached zero; and that the purchaser of the work would then assume the obligation to pay the reward, although she or he would be reimbursed for the cost by the artist. David Antin discussed the work in his first "talk poem" in the spring of 1972, wondering whether Huebler had become an "auxiliary policeman," then entertaining the idea, attributed to Huebler, that the work was instead a "non-committal . . . non-referential or non-symbolical . . . sculptural system," a

115. "85 Arrested in War Protest," *Triton Times*, May 5, 1972; and "83 War Demonstrators Arrested in San Diego," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1972.

116. Allan Sekula, contact sheet no. 0029, in Sekula Archive.

117. Buchloh, "Allan Sekula, or What Is Photography?" 123.



“self-enclosed system” set up between artist and collector that could have had any number of triggers or mechanisms.<sup>118</sup> Yet Antin also detected an irony about this formalism: “the idea that formal concerns applied to things that might be interesting / in human space / would turn out to be obscene.”<sup>119</sup> While Huebler allegedly presented *Duration Piece #15* as a “formal non-representational piece,” for Antin it was “a representational piece of sculpture,” partly because “police action only occurs in real space.”<sup>120</sup> Whatever uses Huebler made of the wanted poster, the indexical status of the police document points to an apparatus of power, of identification and arrest, that art cannot simply neutralize or negate. Huebler simultaneously bet against the criminal’s capture (the artist made money from the sale only if the reward went unpaid) and proposed a potentially Robin Hood–like transfer of wealth from the well-to-do collector to the informer, but in order to do so he had to insinuate himself into the existing documentary apparatus of the police. (Huebler’s statement specifies that should the suspect be apprehended and convicted before 1971, when the piece will be considered finished, “copies of all attendant documents concerning his conviction” will also become part of the work.<sup>121</sup>) The adoption of this apparatus for merely formal or aesthetic reasons—with no regard to the justice of the outcome—is, as Antin suggested, both “violent” and “disturbing.”<sup>122</sup>

Unlike Huebler in his role as auxiliary policeman or Baldessari with his hiring of the police sketch artist, Lonidier does not directly adopt the viewpoint of the police. By standing just to the side, Lonidier includes the police photographer within the frame, illustrating the hierarchical relation of enforced visibility that produces the photograph. At the same time, those pictured do not assume the guilty look of the recently nabbed criminal: many pose nonchalantly, some grin ear to ear, and two flash peace signs. Despite the physical coercion that holds them in place before the camera, the arrestees reverse the hierarchy of the photographic situation. However, this reversal does not rely on the logic of celebrity—converting the infamous criminal into a famous folk hero—but that of collective civil disobedience. Parallel to but distinct from police photography, another circuit of counterpublicity is set up between the sitters and the activist photographer (and implicitly the viewer), one that turns the sitters’ public law-breaking and arrest into an occasion to denounce the war and the military-police state. Although the state attempts to assign responsibility for a crime to each individual, the series of similar photos in

118. David Antin, “Talking at Pomona,” in *Talking*, 148–49. Originally performed at Pomona College in April 1972, this piece was also published in *Artforum* 11, no. 1 (September 1972): 39–47.

119. D. Antin, “Talking at Pomona,” 177.

120. D. Antin, “Talking at Pomona,” 178, 176. Antin defines sculpture not as an object anchored in physical space (a notion Huebler had discarded) but, in the wake of minimalism, as a displacement in experiential, lived space, which necessarily includes conceptual elements (178).

121. The piece was never updated and the fate of the suspect remains unknown. A man of the same name, Edmund Kite McIntyre, appears to have been convicted in Florida, the location of one of the robberies; see his denied appeal for postconviction relief, *Edmund Kite McIntyre v. State of Florida*, 559 So.2d 388 (1990).

122. D. Antin, “Talking at Pomona,” 180–81.



*Twenty-nine Arrests* registers a collective indictment of the state by its citizens. This logic of civil disobedience partly relies on its representation by the media, indexed by the reporters with microphones or video cameras who occasionally intrude into the frame. Yet in the context of San Diego, with both daily newspapers held by the same conservative media company—the Copley Press was known for its jingoism and anticommunism—and unlikely to provide sympathetic coverage of their act, the activists depended on other activists and citizen journalists to document and publicize the scene.<sup>123</sup>

Made quickly and shown two weeks later as part of Lonidier's MFA thesis show at UCSD, *Twenty-nine Arrests* was further contextualized by three other pieces that addressed the politics of documentation. *Conceptual War* (1972) consisted of copies of documents related to Lonidier's experience of being drafted, including a news article in which he denounces the "brutal and immoral" Vietnam War and telegrams from the Peace Corps relaying his orders to report for induction, tacked to the wall alongside a large white piece of paper on which visitors were invited to write their own experiences of the war. In two related pieces, *Pornography* (later known as *Girl Watcher Lens*, 1972; fig. 1.41) and *Surveillance* (1972; fig. 1.42), Lonidier employed the same technology that gives the photographer the power to look at his subjects without approaching them or being seen: the telephoto lens. *Pornography* pairs the blatantly sexist advertising for a "Girl-Watcher lens" with snippets from porn magazines and close crops of women's clothed bodies taken from Lonidier's photos, made with the lens, of women going about their day on campus. *Surveillance* similarly enacts a voyeuristic drive: Lonidier assembled informational dossiers on students from university records (taken from the visual arts department office), assigned identifying numbers, tracked with whom students spoke and associated in group photos, and created cropped headshots identifying the students. Crucially, *Surveillance* makes visible the larger bureaucratic apparatus of the archive on which police photography relies, instantiated by the filing cabinet Lonidier installed in the gallery alongside the files and manila folders. Sekula would later theorize the centrality of the filing cabinet as a media technology to archives in general and

123. The publishing company was run by James Copley until his death in 1973, when it was taken over by his widow, Helen Copley. James, "a former Navy officer whose only combat experience during [World War II] was fighting off hostesses in Washington *haute* society, turned the *Union*, in particular, into an ersatz warship with retired Navy and Marine brass at every level of management. Already notorious for its reactionary politics, the militarized *Union* surpassed all other national dailies in the shrill, inquisitorial fervor of its anti-Communism during the 1950s and 1960s. The *Union* moreover automatically backed the Navy in any controversy, even against the Chamber of Commerce, and almost never saw a scandal, even when one was screaming at its doorstep." Mike Davis, "The Next Little Dollar: The Private Governments of San Diego," in Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller, *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* (New York: New Press, 2003), 79. See also "Herb Klein's Old Paper," *Newsweek*, 5 January 1970; and Matt Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Copley Press," *San Diego Reader*, February 28, 2008, <http://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2008/feb/28/cover/>.

police photography in particular.<sup>124</sup>

This surveillance was neither imagined nor hypothetical: students had been recently appealing to the campus administration about police harassment, citing black and Chicano students arrested, held for long periods, and released without charges as well as the revelation that campus police had created intelligence files on students and were perhaps sharing them with other local and federal agencies. At one point, the dean stated he was concerned about the files and would look into how they were created, accessed, and destroyed.<sup>125</sup> Chancellor McGill would later claim that the FBI had requested files on Angela Davis and other organizers working to establish Lumumba-Zapata College (to be dedicated to third-world and ethnic studies; a new college was instead founded as Third College in 1970), which he allegedly declined to provide; however, a Third College resident dean suspected the FBI also had agents under cover at the university.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, it was revealed that the FBI and CIA had been collecting thousands of student records at UC Berkeley and that the red squad of the Los Angeles Police Department had infiltrated the UCLA campus, its student organizations, and even classes.<sup>127</sup>

As at Berkeley, the struggle over police power at UCSD was fought not only in mainstream newspapers but especially in the underground press, part of a much larger contest over the rights of citizens to report on and photograph the police—

124. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64.

125. See Manuel Hernandez, "Students Confront Officials" and "Relations Strained by Police Paranoia," *Crazy Times* 2, no. 2 (December 6, 1971).

126. McGill, *Year of the Monkey*, 259 n. 14; and Jim Miller, "Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America's Finest City," in *Under the Perfect Sun*, 225, 383 n. 391.

127. In 1967 a worker in the UC Berkeley registrar's office "discovered that campus officials were letting FBI and CIA agents review student records. Soon Jerry Rubin went public with it, and campus administrators eventually admitted that government agents on average examined 10 student files a day, or roughly 2,500 a year. Chancellor [Roger] Heyns publicly promised to restrict access to the files, but he privately told [FBI] Agent Jones not to worry." Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 386. Among UC faculty, both Angela Davis (who had taken a teaching job at UCLA) and Marcuse (at UCSD) were targeted by the FBI's secret COINTELPRO program, designed to harass and disrupt the New Left (673). As Frank Donner has documented, "Files in the office of the Los Angeles city attorney established in 1970 that the LAPD had infiltrated the UCLA campus to gather information for use in the compilation of dossiers on organizations and individuals (students and professors) suspected of 'conspiratorial activities.'" Two "individuals arrested as students," one of whom sat on the steering committee of SDS, turned out to be undercover cops. A third undercover officer, while not enrolled, was active in dissident campus activities. An LAPD spokesman acknowledged the infiltration program, and the academic senate received an investigative report in October 1970 "confirming the existence of the police infiltration program and concluding that the evidence established the presence of spies who acted as agents provocateurs." A first lawsuit filed in federal court by students and professors was thrown out; a second lawsuit filed by UCLA professor Hayden White proceeded to the state supreme court, which struck down the surveillance program in 1975. Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 256–57.

and to dissent publicly.<sup>128</sup> Just one week after the sit-in in downtown San Diego documented in *Twenty-nine Arrests*, hundreds of police descended on the antiwar demonstration in Del Mar described at the beginning of this chapter, breaking up the crowd with beatings and arresting thirty demonstrators and bystanders, targeting those who arranged a blockade of the Santa Fe railroad, a transit route for war materiel.<sup>129</sup> The subsequent trial of Peter Bohmer and other arrestees revealed the extent to which police had infiltrated antiwar groups.<sup>130</sup> Rosler attended the protest at Del Mar, and Sekula photographed it, recording agents who photographed the crowd from a distant rooftop and closely approaching officers to make their portraits.

In *Red Squad (San Diego, 20 January 1973)* (1973/2005; fig. 1.43), Sekula engaged in another act of countersurveillance as he had in the Del Mar negatives. The date is that of Nixon's second inauguration and the last major protest against the Vietnam War in San Diego: the Paris Peace Accords would be signed shortly thereafter, and the United States would soon withdraw from the conflict.<sup>131</sup> The

128. The FBI considered increasing pressure on Marcuse to resign by linking him to the underground press: in one memo, the San Diego office proposed mailing a subscription of the *Teaspoon Door* (later just the *Door*) to his address at the UCSD philosophy department and following up with a faked letter to the chancellor from a scandalized "father of a coed." Federal Bureau of Investigation, San Diego office, memo 100-449698-46-9, October 10, 1968, available in "COINTELPRO\New Left—San Diego," FBI Records: The Vault, <http://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-san-diego-part-01-of-01/view>.
129. The city council remonstrated the police for their heavy-handedness and for the checkpoints that blockaded downtown Del Mar for the rest of the evening, and approved a plan for a plebiscite on the war. "500 Blockade D. M. Rails," and "Bringing the War Home to Del Mar," *Triton Times*, May 16, 1972; "Police Militancy at Del Mar Tracks," *Crazy Times* 2, no. 9 [May 1972]: 3; David Shaw, "Car Traffic Slowdown at Airport Thwarted: 30 Demonstrators Arrested in Del Mar," *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1972; and Robert A. Jones, "War Protests Go On but Violence Wanes," *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1972.
130. Bohmer, a Marxist also attacked in the press and fired from his job as an economics professor at San Diego State for his political activism, was a key figure in the antiwar movement, tied to the underground newspaper the *Door*, and a target of the SAO. He was convicted for blocking the railroad after chairing the impromptu meeting at which the action was organized and encouraging people onto the tracks. The trial revealed not only that the demonstrators had been infiltrated by multiple undercover agents, who photographed and audiotaped the discussions, but also that the police paid a former San Diego State and UCSD student to spy on Bohmer's meetings with his attorney and defense committee. See *People v. Bohmer*, 46 Cal. App. 3d 185 (1975); Narda Trout, "Took Transmitter to Meeting, Court Told: Spied on Indicted Professor, Witness Says," *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1974; "Police Informer Exposed"; and the coverage of the trial in the *Triton Times*, *Door*, and *North Star* from fall 1972 to early 1974.
131. Shot on the day of the demonstration in Balboa Park, where the thousand-person march through downtown ended in a rally, *Red Squad* was printed and first exhibited in its current form in 2005. On the march, which made its way past the Eleventh Naval District Headquarters, and the rally that culminated with a talk by Tom Hayden, see "Thousands Demonstrate!" *North Star* 3, no. 16 (January 22–29, 1973): 1, 11, which includes photographs of the demonstration on pp. 6–7; and Lin Hi-sing,

top half of this pair of triptychs shows three frames of undercover agents seen from the waist up: one in a leather jacket and dark glasses directly faces the camera with a smirk; in the middle frame an officer approaches the camera, confrontationally sticking his middle finger into the center of the picture; in the last the same officer goes back to drinking his soda and milling about with a group of agents. In the second triptych, hung below the first, Sekula slyly gives us a look at the bottom half of their torsos as they stand around, draped with cameras, walkie-talkies, and, in the center frame, an absurdly long telephoto lens that dangles between an agent's legs, hanging down to his knees. On one hand, the work is a crude sendup of the officers' machismo, suggesting that their laughably phallic technological prostheses compensate for other, more private, feelings of inadequacy. On the other hand, the act of photographing the police was a charged and risky political act, one that sought to shift the balance of power and publicity in the favor of citizens.<sup>132</sup> While the ongoing campaign against the New Left in San Diego was successful in shutting down underground newspapers such as the *Street Journal*—snuffing out its ongoing reporting of corruption among the most powerful local businessmen and politicians (including the mayor and city council), many of whom had ties to President Nixon—other publications survived and kept reporting.<sup>133</sup> Beginning in summer 1972, the *Door* ran a yearlong series of “undercover agent trading cards”—photographs of incognito officers captioned with their aliases or real names and agency affiliations—in every issue. By the end of 1973 it reported a growing citizen-led movement to investigate the San Diego police, especially the red squad.<sup>134</sup>

“Demonstrators Demand Nixon Sign . . . He Does!!” *Door*, January 25–February 7, 1973. Thanks to Fred Lonidier, Sally Stein, and Ina Steiner for confirming the location in other negatives Sekula made that day.

132. In “The Body and the Archive,” Sekula cited as examples of “counter-testimony and counter-surveillance” such documentary films as *The Murder of Fred Hampton* (directed by Howard Gray and Michael Alk, 1971); *Attica* (Cinda Firestone, 1973); and *Red Squad* (Pacific Street Film Collective, 1972), in which the filmmakers trail the red squad of the New York Police Department with confrontational results. Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 62. It is unclear whether Sekula had seen these when he was making his own works on the topic. He taught a documentary film class after returning to California in 1975, and it is possible he did not discover them until researching the syllabus.
133. The culmination of the *Street Journal*'s reporting on these issues is Lowell Bergman and Maxwell Robach, “Nixon's ‘Lucky City’: C. Arnholt Smith and the San Diego Connection,” *Ramparts*, October 1973, reprinted in *Big Brother and the Holding Company: The World behind Watergate*, ed. Steve Weissman (Palo Alto, CA: Ramparts Press, 1974), 185–204.
134. Larry Remer, “Cop Watch,” and Bill Ritter, “F. B. Eye,” *Door*, December 6–30, 1973; see also the exposés “Police Informer Exposed,” *Door*, June 18–July 1, 1973; and “Police Spy Snagged,” *Door*, July 3–17, 1973. Although red squad surveillance was never publicly reviewed and restricted in San Diego as it would be in other cities—an attempted review by the city council was foiled by the city manager and red squad records were allegedly lost or destroyed—public criticism of other police misconduct and corruption led to several city and federal investigations: Bill Hazlett and Narda Z. Trout, “San Diego Police Feeling Heat of New Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 1974. The red squad did not take the scrutiny lightly and subsequently targeted



As historian Frank Donner argues, “The core of the red squad operation was identification—of anyone and everyone involved in protest activities. . . . Lists and dossiers of subjects were coded, stored, indexed, and disseminated to other intelligence agencies (federal, state, and urban).”<sup>135</sup> These were not simply neutral documents: when the police blotters were combined with a political biography, “a collection of innocuous events (signature on peace petition, presence at demo protesting welfare cuts, receipt of left-wing literature, speech on a panel about police brutality)” could add up to “the conclusion that the subject is ‘subversive’” and therefore a legitimate target of harassment or political intimidation. “Files, in short, became a form of ‘documentation,’ really a kind of aggression, deepening and reinforcing the chilling effect produced by surveillance.”<sup>136</sup> In San Diego, the SAO member working for the FBI amassed an “informational haul about his leftist targets,” including stolen membership lists of the Student Mobilization Committee and the Friends of the Black Panthers, that “traveled through three separate channels: the SAO file collection, with its estimated 20,000 entries; the Bureau; and the San Diego Police Department’s redoubtable red squad.”<sup>137</sup> By circulating such files—not only within police agencies but also among government officials, nongovernmental authorities such as university administrators, right-wing terrorists, and even the press—targets could be attacked or discredited. And just as such documentation could be circulated in the press, so too the mainstream press, interested in protecting the existing social order, could aid the police in identification.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, in *Red Squad*, undercover agents can be seen jovially talking with a man wearing a jacket with the logo for TV 8, the local CBS television affiliate; although perhaps a reporter or TV cameraman whose duties recording the demonstration overlap with those of the red squad, he could also be an informant or an undercover officer himself.

The camera was thus an important tool in this struggle over the rights to assemble and speak in public, which red squads could directly suppress:

Like other aspects of the intelligence process, photography became an end

police-reform groups: “San Diego Cops to Sue, Investigate Citizen Complainants,” *North Star*, November 18, 1974.

135. Donner, 66.

136. Donner, 70.

137. Donner, 443.

138. “Not infrequently, surveillance photographers acquired spurious press credentials, and bona fide cameramen were induced to share their photographs with the police.” Donner, 69. Journalist Larry Remer recalls that the *Door* “reported how [San Diego] *Union-Tribune* photographers would turn over their photographs of antiwar demonstrators to the FBI.” Remer quoted in Neal Matthews, “Notes from Underground: An Incendiary History of San Diego’s Counterculture Press,” *San Diego Reader*, November 25, 1992, <http://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/1992/nov/25/cover-notes-underground/>. See also the claim that “Copley [Press] photographers recall being dispatched to the rallies at UCSD and taking thousands of pictures of the student demonstrators; few if any of the photographs ever made the paper. The rest, the old-timers believed, were being sent to the FBI for analysis,” in Potter, “The Rise and Fall of the Copley Press.”



in itself, a means of intimidating the subject. To achieve this objective, subjects were sometimes photographed from as close as three feet. A team tactic was typically employed: a policeman or detective pointed to a particular target for a cameraman to photograph. Some police officers extolled the deterrent effect of open photography and even resorted to pretending to snap pictures long after they had run out of film.<sup>139</sup>

And the central figure in *Red Squad* returns us to the congruence of the indexical gesture of pointing with making photographs: even when arbitrarily picking out a subject, such an act remains motivated by a whole field of social and political forces. In response to this use of the camera as a tool of surveillance and intimidation, *Red Squad* turns the camera back on its users. Sekula denies the police the power of distance their technology is designed to grant them, approaching the officers as they uncomfortably laugh or look away, forcing them to face a targeted other who looks back at them. Much like the arrestees who grin and wave at the camera in *Twenty-nine Arrests*, *Red Squad* both acknowledges police power and laughs at its limits; it proposes that an image circulated in the context of dissident counterpublicity can take on an entirely different meaning, one of resistance. Much later, Sekula will describe this practice as “anti-photojournalism,” to which I return in chapter 5. Yet the term could be applied equally to a number of documentary-based practices developed at UCSD in the 1970s that investigated the politics of photographic documentation not only in art but also in the hands of the police, the state, and mass media.<sup>140</sup> This approach stands in contrast to Baldessari’s video *The Meaning of Various News Photos to Ed Henderson* (1973), in which the artist asks a student to speculate on the circumstances of newspaper photos that Baldessari cuts out and pins on the wall, freeing the image from its context in order to appropriate its semiotic richness for art (fig. 1.44). In response to one photograph, Henderson reverses cause and effect when he presumes that because two police officers are pointing their guns at a figure lying face down on the sidewalk, then the prone figure must be guilty of “a pretty serious offense.” Conversely, against the presumption in mass media that those targeted by the state are necessarily guilty, the anti-photojournalism practiced by Rosler, Lonidier, and Sekula addresses the contested status of photographic documents and insists on the social stakes involved in the uses of photography beyond the realm of art.

139. Donner, 69.

140. See Allan Sekula, preface to *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]* (1999–2000), in Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, *Five Days That Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond* (London: Verso, 2000), 122.

## CHAPTER 2

### Photography between Painting and Cinema: From Figurative Realism to Performative Portraiture

#### The Gallery

Some of Sekula's earliest photographs, taken in the fall of 1971, show the backs of spectators as they stand in front of large-scale paintings of heads at Chuck Close's first solo museum exhibition at the *Los Angeles County Museum of Art*.<sup>1</sup> In one image, two young viewers stand slightly off center, blocking the bottom half of Close's *Keith* (1970; fig. 2.1). The painted face is centered in the frame and stretches to the edges of the photo, staring straight out at the camera. The eyes loom through mammoth eyeglasses over the bodies of the gallery-goers, who are slightly turned toward each other, apparently intimately conversing even as they direct their gazes to the canvas. The off-kilter framing of another photo shows a crowd of older women strolling in front of *Kent* (1970–71), partially obstructing the view and breaking up the integrity of the painting's surface and edges (fig. 2.2). Seen from a more distant vantage point than in the picture of *Keith*, the crowd grouped to the side of the frame, reading the wall label or scanning the space, has about the same visual weight as the painting at the center, whose shadowed edges call attention to the way its flat surface is subtly set off, as an object, from the larger, blank architectural container that is the white cube. Although these photos by Sekula were, as far as we know, never exhibited, they reproduce in the visual realm a similar structure of audience reception Sekula had explored in an earlier sculpture. *Gallery Voice Montage* (1970), reconstructed for Sekula's 2003 retrospective in Vienna and the earliest artwork by him exhibited there, conceals a pair of speakers behind two blank, stretched canvases hung on the wall, which play back a recording of audience comments on unseen artworks from different museum exhibitions, including those at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the La Jolla Museum, and the 1970 Andy Warhol retrospective at the Pasadena Museum (fig. 2.3). While *Gallery Voice Montage* qualifies the absolute values of the abstract, modernist monochrome that verges on minimalist sculpture by situating the canvas within a sonic field of popular, vernacular reception, his pictures of the Close exhibition present a photographic response to the return of painterly realism. By remediating painting into other, less vaunted mediums, both *Gallery Voice Montage* and the Close pictures foreground audience response through an observational, almost sociological, documentary recording.

1. Allan Sekula, contact sheet no. 3, in binder labeled "Proofsheets v. 1, 0001–0050, Nov 1971–Nov 1972," Allan Sekula Archive, Los Angeles. Unlike other images from the contact sheets of this time, both of the images discussed here were also made into small prints that Sekula retained in his collection, indications that he had selected and worked on them further after developing the negatives. The exhibition depicted was *Chuck Close: Recent Work*, September 21–November 14, 1971, *Los Angeles County Museum of Art*.

By allowing the audience to speak back to the work, *Gallery Voice Montage* reframes the unilateral, authoritative, institutionally legitimated address of the artwork on the gallery wall. The voices and accents of the unseen spectators provide clues to a mix of ages, genders, geographic origins and sometimes classes and ethnicities, from the no-nonsense older businessman-cowboy and his culture-minded wife to the presumably middle-class teachers, docents, and art enthusiasts to the young African-American schoolchildren. The comments include predictable dismissals of modern art in the vein of “I/my child/my dog could do that” and speculation from suspicious viewers that modern artists were simply con-men seeking either to hoodwink a gullible public or, when regarded with a mix of admiration for artistic daring and lower-class belief in the foolishness of elites, to separate the rich from their money. Yet they also point things out in surprise and wonder, and debate with each other what it is they’re seeing, how they believe it was made, and what its significance or value may be. The collage of audio snippets reaches few conclusions, instead churning through the active negotiation over the value and terms of modern art by its viewers.

Over the course of the audio track, high art, if not made low or popular, is then at least embedded in the informal dialect of the spectators, whose dialogical process of reception is reframed as artwork itself. Like much minimal and conceptual art, *Gallery Voice Montage* negates conventional visual regimes—withholding the image-objects under discussion and presenting only empty canvases—in order to point to the environmental conditions and infrastructures that support art and make it possible. But in contrast with various forms of postminimal and postconceptual institutional critique, Sekula emphasizes less art’s material and institutional supports than the efforts of the audience, their spoken interchange, wandering from attention to distraction and back, that negotiates the value of the work. Yet the blank canvases also highlight a contradiction within similar efforts by minimal and conceptual art: by forgoing traditional and conventionally well-established means of representation, the avant-garde use of everyday or industrial materials or mundane means of distribution risks confounding the expectations and visual fluency of viewers, alienating the popular audience with whom such practices otherwise wished to engage. The final voice sampled in *Gallery Voice Montage* seems to comment on this dilemma explicitly, when a man states “What does he think he’s doing putting two blank canvases in an art gallery?” This final comment—although it does not seem to be the artist’s voice, it was likely added to mix of found recordings by Sekula himself—reflects explicitly on this tension between the democratic ethos of conceptual tactics and their alleged difficulty in the face of popular reception.

In *Gallery Voice Montage*, the audiotape supplements the flat surface of the canvas normally oriented to the gallery wall and the architecture of the museum, creating another medium and space apart from that of the (modernist) art institution. Similarly, the documentary look at the Close exhibition is an early essay in what such a dialogical and implicitly more democratic scene of reception sampled in *Gallery Voice Montage* might look like in visual terms. Yet the photos of the Close exhibition are significant in another sense: they also record Sekula’s preliminary response to what was billed as the rise of realism, the return of representational

styles after what was seen as the dominance of abstraction in painting and sculpture, and implicitly seen as more accessible to the general public.

By the early 1970s, prior to the advent of postmodernism, the word “realism” was on everyone’s lips as a possible aesthetic alternative to the endgame of high-modernist abstraction.<sup>2</sup> Among the most strident antagonists toward what was seen as the formalist orthodoxies of 1960s abstract art was David Antin, an early supporter and then more disenchanted critic of pop art.<sup>3</sup> Before Antin began to advance an account of literary postmodernism, he argued for the complexity of representational art in the face of reductive versions of realism.<sup>4</sup> Antin had curated a mix of both figurative painting and photorealism at the UCSD gallery in 1969, featuring work by Robert Bechtle, Richard Estes, Alex Katz, Malcolm Morley, and Sylvia Sleigh alongside more pop-derived works by Roy Lichtenstein, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Tom Wesselmann.<sup>5</sup> As gallery director, he also hosted a traveling Katz retrospective and curated an exhibition of Nancy Spero’s *Codex Artaud*.<sup>6</sup> And while viewers today are likely to find Katz’s flat, superficial post-pop glamor fundamentally different from Spero’s scabrous and scatological depictions of war and patriarchy, at the time both could be plausibly grouped together as figurative, “realist” alternatives to abstraction.

2. Important early exhibitions include *Realism Now* (Vassar College, 1968), *Aspects of a New Realism* (Milwaukee Art Center, 1969), and especially *22 Realists* (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970); various realisms also featured in *Prospekt 71* (Düsseldorf, 1971) and *Documenta 5* (Kassel, Germany, 1972). Linda Nochlin, who curated the Vassar show, would also publish *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1971). See also the special issue on photorealism, *Art in America*, November–December 1972, especially William C. Seitz, “The Real and the Artificial: Painting of the New Environment” (58–72); Linda Nochlin, “The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law,” *Art in America* 61, no. 5 (September–October 1973): 54–61; Linda Nochlin, “The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law II,” *Art in America* 61, no. 6 (November–December 1973): 97–103; Linda Nochlin “Some Women Realists,” *Arts Magazine* (1974), reprinted in Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 86–108; and Gregory Battcock, ed., *Super Realism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1975). For a retrospective survey of the trend, see Michael Lobel, “Realism, circa 1970,” in Siri Engberg, *Lifelike*, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2012), 158–165.
3. See David Antin, ““It Reaches the Desert in Which Nothing Can Be Perceived but Feeling”” (1971), in *Radical Coherency: Selected Essays on Art and Literature, 1966 to 2005* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 46–60.
4. David Antin, “Alex Katz and the Tactics of Representation” (1970), in *Radical Coherency*, 22–30. Antin was responding in part to Nochlin’s early work on realism, which would be published as *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1971). In the UCSD gallery, Antin also hosted a traveling Katz retrospective and curated exhibitions of Nancy Spero’s *Codex Artaud* and of post-pop representation with works by Robert Bechtle, Sylvia Sleigh, Richard Estes, and Katz alongside earlier pop art. David Antin, introduction to *Radical Coherency*, 6.
5. *The Impure Image: Current Trends in Representational Art*, 21 April–22 May 1969, University Art Gallery, UCSD. See David Antin, introduction to *Radical Coherency*, 6.
6. *Alex Katz*, February 27–April 14, 1971, University Art Gallery, UCSD; and *Nancy Spero: The Artaud Paintings*, April 21–May 16, 1971, University Art Gallery, UCSD.

Overall, many of the painterly realisms that developed at this time involved a return to the studio, whether they were based on live models or photographs. Often unconcerned with the social legacy of nineteenth-century realism or the politics of twentieth-century socialist realism, photorealist painting in particular conflated the painted naturalism of mimetic resemblance with the photographic index. And in contrast to this return of optical illusionism in painting, artists such as Sekula, Rosler, and Lonidier recast the immediate precedents of conceptual art and performance documentation in order to engage with photography's indexicality while transforming conventional notions of realism. This transformation can be seen even in Sekula's initial photographic response to the Close exhibition.

Close's photo-based portraits overlap with both the rise of figurative painting (by Katz, Sleigh, Fairfield Porter, Philip Pearlstein, David Hockney or, very differently, Spero and Leon Golub) and of photorealism (by Bechtle, Estes, Morley, or others such as Vija Celmins and Ralph Goings) while belonging to neither camp. (Parallel to the return of figurative painting, in the realm of sculpture artists such as Charles Ray and John de Andrea employed lifelike casts of the human figures that had been banished from direct representation by the language of minimalism.) While Close's work was often grouped with such artists under the mantle of realism, their widely variable work shows how incoherent that term was at the time, vaguely associated with earlier traditions of naturalism and mimesis and loosely split between two approaches related mostly by their refusal of the pictorial language of postwar abstraction: a return to painting the human figure, more or less expressively or flatly; and re-creating in paint the maximal illusionistic detail of a single moment in time captured by a photograph, which often depicted views of vernacular commercial architecture, shop windows with touches of 1950s Americana, or street scenes empty of people.

Working from a single photograph to create a painted portrait of his sitter, Close was one of the few artists who combined a flat, photographic aesthetic with the systematic depiction of human figures. Close's early canvases are black-and-white, larger-than-life-size, smooth, uninflected surfaces with preternaturally fine detail that closely frame the sitter's head from the neck up, directly facing the camera and therefore the viewer. For these reasons they are often described as resembling passport or driver's license photos and mug shots. When asked about the connection in a later interview, Close replied that "I thought absolutely about the mug shot as a way around commissioned portraiture" and the "standard hierarchy of the portrait" that exists between patron and artist. Because mug shots so clearly partake in an operation of power, it seems strange to describe them as nonhierarchical. Yet Close means this in an almost entirely aesthetic sense. For him, mug shots function like the "allover" character of abstract-expressionist painting, which he transposes, through the indifferent registration of detail in the photo, onto the genre of the portrait:

I wanted to overlay on top of the portrait that commitment to the whole, to the rectangle, and make every piece as important as every other piece. Then I thought, well, the police have a reason they make a mug shot. It gives you the most information about the subject that you can have. They want to find



them and arrest them. And they get them straight on, and they get a profile. All of my early portraits are dead-straight on.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the fact that Close is cognizant of the “reason” for the mug shot—its uses for identification, location, and arrest—he does not seem very concerned by those uses because he aims to adopt merely their style, one that maximizes information, while divorcing that style from its social use. Most critics accept this stylistic appropriation without further comment. Yet according to Kirk Varnedoe, “we are saying something more than incidental when we note that the early heads look like I.D. photos.” More than an empirical realism or meditation on the mediums of photography or painting, Close’s pictures are also “the colossal re-presentation of the modern conventions of social documentation. They enlarge the collision between singularity and standardization, or between individuality and bureaucratic categorization, that every passport, driver’s license, or criminal record—facial representation aspiring to the condition of fingerprints—encapsulates as a social given.” Despite this insight, Varnedoe then follows Close in claiming that the “documentary look” of the pictures nonetheless ultimately refers less to the freighted context of “social documentation” than to the modernist pictorial devices of the grid, flatness, and the allover composition.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, while Robert Storr admits that the photos from which the paintings are made “resemble a driver’s license or passport photos,” he is eager to rescue them from such a mundane sphere by asserting that they are instead “a primary product of [Close’s] sensibility” as an artist.<sup>9</sup> For Storr, Close’s “realism” is ultimately split between, on one hand, fidelity to observed phenomena and, on the other, a truth to materials and to reflection on the means of painting that “perfectly fits the description of the modernist painter advanced by Clement Greenberg. . . . Undoubtedly Greenberg would have balked at admitting a picture-maker like Close into the high formalist enclave; nonetheless, that is where he belongs.”<sup>10</sup> Storr’s claim is a rather stunning, if not perverse, redefinition of realism as high-modernist formalism. It brushes aside not only the technics of social documentation but also Close’s avowed rebellion against the dictates of abstract painting in the 1960s, specifically Greenberg’s alleged prohibition of portraits.<sup>11</sup> And while Storr may be

7. Chuck Close, in Madeleine Grynsztejn, “Navigating the Self: Chuck Close Discusses Portraiture and the Topography of the Face,” *Walker Magazine*, Walker Art Center, July 1, 2005, <http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2005/navigating-the-self>.
8. Kirk Varnedoe, “Chuck Close Then and Now,” in *Chuck Close* by Robert Storr with Kirk Varnedoe and Deborah Wye, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 64.
9. Robert Storr, “Chuck Close: Angles of Refraction,” in *Chuck Close*, 21.
10. Storr, 43.
11. “If you think about the late 1960s, painting was dead, sculpture ruled. Painting seemed like a senseless activity. If you were dumb enough to make a painting, it had better be abstract. It was even dumber to make a representational image. Then the dumbest, most moribund, out-of-date, and shopworn of all possible things you could do was make a portrait. I remember Clement Greenberg said to [Willem] de Kooning that the only thing you can’t do in art anymore is make a portrait. I thought, well, if Greenberg thinks he can’t do it, then I am going to have a lot of operating room all to myself.” Close, in Madeleine Grynsztejn, “Navigating the Self.”

thinking of Close's later gridded, multicolored, and clearly brushed-on paintings, in the portraits of the late 1960s and early 1970s Close employs the airbrush—innovatively adopting an unconventional technical means for easel painting—in order to hide any trace of facture on their smooth surfaces. As Close summarized his aims in 1970, “If the surface information is consistent enough then the surface of the painting will disappear.”<sup>12</sup> The pictures delight in illusionism, although their truth to “observed phenomena” involves representing not a just a person but a *photograph* of person (signaled by the extreme sharpness of some details caught in a narrow plane of focus that cuts across the eyes but leaves blurry noses and backs of heads). The paintings' large scale disorients viewers by preventing them from perceiving at the same time the overall whole of a face and the tiny individual details that make it up. This vacillation simultaneously mimes the alienating pictorial logic of standardized identity photography and challenges its effectiveness when the surplus of visual information, seen from a nearer viewpoint, fails to cohere as or resolve into an identifiable face. Because this threatened depersonalization or defacialization produced by the allover standardization and superhuman scale of the pictures could suggest both total alienation by that system and liberation in the possible breakdown or overload of that system of identification, they can only tentatively be called portraits.

Close did indeed adopt and adapt certain modernist devices. In addition to the large scale of American abstract painting, Close also redeployed the allover composition by positioning the allover sharpness achieved by the photograph's plane of focus parallel to the painted surface of the canvas. Art photographers would start to adopt this combination of allover sharpness and large scale as the dominant style of museum photography beginning only in the late 1970s and not fully flowering until the 1990s, in the neopictorialism popularized by Jeff Wall and the so-called Düsseldorf school. The latter, students of Bernd Becher and Hilla Becher, embraced the Bechers' style of allover sharpness and view-camera movements that minimize perspectival distortion and keep horizontal and vertical lines parallel to the picture plane. But they simultaneously replaced the Bechers' serial, photoconceptual framework with the large-scale, single-picture aesthetic of painting. (Of course, earlier traditions of American fine-art photography had also used the view camera to maximize across-the-frame sharpness, but the natural landscapes of Edward Weston or Ansel Adams were largely without gridded architectural elements that explicitly echoed the edges and surface of the picture plane. In contrast, Walker Evans stands out as one of the few consummate modernists in this regard, especially in his combination of frontal portraits and architectural surrounds, although without grandiose scale.) Yet this adoption of certain modernist devices hardly means that Close's pictures achieve the Greenbergian, high-formalist aim of securing artistic quality, independence, and autonomy through the immanent self-reflexive criticism of the material specificities

12. Close continued, “Inconsistency draws attention to the surface itself and again interferes with the content of the work.” Cindy Nemser, “An Interview with Chuck Close,” *Artforum* 8, no. 5 (January 1970): 54.

of their medium—that which is “unique and irreducible in each particular art.”<sup>13</sup> But what, exactly, is their medium?

According to the account of Close’s pictures sketched by these critics—which can be contrasted with the photo-paintings of Baldessari or Warhol—the mechanical medium of photography does not “subvert” painting but rather “entrench[es] it in its area of competence.”<sup>14</sup> Echoing the clichéd idealism that Baldessari reproduced (and mocked) in *The Artist Is Not the Slavish Announcer . . .*, Storr insists that Close, in his implicit mastery, does not just “mimic” or “summarize” information; rather, he produces “not a facsimile of the ‘real’ thing, but another ‘real’ thing, complete unto itself.”<sup>15</sup> With Close as the model of the diligent worker, this mastery happens in the early works through sheer technical skill and man-hours put in with the airbrush, a tool of the commercial illustrator or touch-up artist raised to a higher purpose: mastery through work, the tool of industrial image-capitalism redeemed from alienation by individual craft. For Storr, the artist’s mastery over the medium also means the mastery of one medium over others. According to Storr, Close, like a good Greenbergian, has no truck with subversion, but rather shores up “the traditions of image-creation” Close has devoted himself to re-examining, “*of which painting always has been and still is the central component.*”<sup>16</sup>

While the off-stage labor that goes into the feat of recreating such photographic detail in paint is formidable, Storr downplays the extent to which similarly unseen photographic processes had penetrated, and altered, the very practice of painting itself. Similarly, many photorealist painters seemed happy for viewers to mistake the painting for an exact view of life itself, helping to occlude the mediating role of the photograph by making its borders coincide with, and disappear behind, the edge of the canvas. Only a few, such as Morley, explicitly marked the mediated character of their pictures by refusing to align the edge of the photograph with that of the canvas, emphasizing the divergence between the two as pop art sometimes had. Although one could argue that the ambiguity produced when the viewer is unable to distinguish painting and photograph disrupts habitual forms of viewing, it seems just as likely that the illusionistic painting naturalizes photographic seeing as objective and real. And that the maximal visual detail accumulated in the photograph, ossified as a kind of second nature, is then mined by and credited to the

13. Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1960), in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 86.

14. Storr, 43.

15. Storr, 48. Dismissing the idea that computers could produce a photomosaic like Close’s later gridded paintings, despite the superficial similarity of the paintings to computer-generated images circulating in the early 1970s, Storr claims, “Aesthetically, no machine can compete with the nuanced decision-making of the skilled artist, nor technologically can it produce a comparably high optical definition—at least not in 1973.” This claim requires a nearly complete repression of the mediating role of Close’s camera as a machine and the high optical definition afforded by the photographic source. On Baldessari’s *The Artist Is Not the Slavish Announcer . . .*, see chapter 1 of this dissertation.

16. Storr, 42; emphasis added.

artist-painter. For many, including Storr, photorealism seems to be the mastery of photography, or of objective visual experience, by painting; or, in a more nuanced version of the argument, the autonomous artist's appropriation and transformation of the visual language of social documentation formerly wielded by bureaucracy and the state. Yet Close's canvases remain ambivalent, manifesting a slavish copying of photographic indexicality that attests to the penetration of photographic documentation into nearly all artistic media and representations of the human figure. As one skeptical voice in *Gallery Voice Montage* comments on an unseen work: "Anybody can copy a photograph." Not impressed with the skill involved, the viewer emphasizes the copying procedure instead.

Close's black-and-white canvases were made by breaking the source photograph into a grid and building up on the canvas very thin layers of paint with tiny strokes of an airbrush so that each quadrant precisely mimicked the photo. And starting with *Kent*, Close developed an innovative process to paint in color that was even more dependent on photographic techniques. Wanting similarly to build up many layers of color but unable to fully and precisely foresee the optical mixing on the canvas that would result, Close solved the problem by taking the color photo that would be his source and rephotographing it, creating from it three transparencies: cyan, magenta, and yellow color separations such as would be used in a subtractive printing process. Close then worked at laying-on each of these primary colors one at a time by copying the photographic transparencies, stacking them as he went in order to visually guide and track his imitative progress. Although obscured in the final product labeled a "painting," this medium of photo-mechanical reproduction (itself a hybrid of photography and printing processes) is as equally indispensable to the final canvases as is Close's handwork and painterly skill.

The resulting product is not complete in itself as a painting but bound to other technical—and therefore social—processes. The extrinsic nature of this technique, combined with the representational content of the paintings, gives another sense to the description of Close's pictures of his friends and colleagues, who are often other artists (including Richard Serra and Nancy Graves), as "countercultural mug shots of artworkers as wannabe outlaws."<sup>17</sup> Shortly later, in 1973, Linda Nochlin claimed, with reference to Greenberg's "Modernist Painting," that if for modernism "abstraction is the law," then "realism is the criminal."<sup>18</sup> And when Bois later argues that Baldessari's evidentiary works, by positioning the artist in a double role not only as investigator but also as the criminal (as in *Police Drawing*), were in some sense a "crime against Art," one could say more precisely that they were rather a crime against certain strictures of late modernism.<sup>19</sup> However, in the case of both Baldessari and Close, this criminality remains metaphorical, defined in relation to Greenberg's version of modernist abstraction, even if only negatively, through subversion and refusal. Storr is partly right that, despite their representational images, Close's pictures—more than, say, Baldessari's—remain oriented primarily

17. Varnedoe, 63.

18. Nochlin, "The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law," 56. See also Nochlin, "The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law II."

19. Bois, "Is It Impossible to Underline in a Telegram?" 5.

to the flat surface of the material support and, implicitly, to the wall of the gallery container, even if their slavish copying of the look of photographic social documentation is more ambivalent and heteronomous than Storr allows. Both Baldessari and Close strike an ambivalent stance toward social documentation by simultaneously adopting both the technical gaze of the police apparatus and positioning the artist as criminal.

As I argued in chapter 1, Sekula and his colleagues were becoming attuned to the social uses of police photography, from which photography as a whole could perhaps not be separated. The reappearance of the San Diego Police Department in Sekula's photography of activism made it impossible to treat the police, or photographic documentation, as a neutral artistic medium—criminality was not just a pose to be adopted in the realm of art. Like Close and Baldessari, Sekula also made mug shots of those around him: in the spring of 1972, Sekula shot a roll of systematic frontal and profile views—two for each sitter—of friends, fellow students, and acquaintances (fig. 2.4).<sup>20</sup> (Apparently the house where Sekula was living received a parade of visitors seeking to buy drugs from a dealer who lived there, a countercultural lifestyle that was in fact criminalized.<sup>21</sup>) In them, Sekula also adopts the mug shot as a descriptive system, but his negatives feature the snapshot aesthetic, serial format, and consistently small scale employed by many photoconceptual works, as Eleanor Antin pointed out with regard to Ed Ruscha's photo books.<sup>22</sup> In series, their multiple views index a broader photographic and social system that cannot be framed in a single, painted image made for the museum wall.

So too while some accounts of Close's "heads" end at the flat, intact, apparently autonomous surface of the painted picture, Sekula responds to them differently. In contrast with the large scale of Close's canvases—larger-than-life views that dominate the viewer—Sekula's photographs of Close's exhibition broaden the frame and provide a different account of portraiture. Rerouting the photorealist painting back through the camera, they depict the process of reception: the silhouettes of the spectators visually break up the smooth, flat plane of the painting, introducing depth into a picture now shot through by gazes exchanged between painted sitter and spectators as well as among spectators. Hardly complete in itself, both the painting's surface and the individual pictured on it emerge as nodes in a broader network of social relations. Portraiture as a genre is shown to be directed toward and dependent on beholders in ways that certain versions of modernism had famously sought to disavow or sublimate.<sup>23</sup>

20. Allan Sekula, contact sheet no. 35, in binder labeled "Proofsheets v. 1, 0001–0050, Nov 1971–Nov 1972," Allan Sekula Archive.

21. Benjamin J. Young, interview with Allan Sekula, January 8, 2012, Los Angeles.

22. Eleanor Antin, "Reading Ruscha," *Art in America* 61, no. 6 (November–December 1973): 64–71.

23. For an affirmative reading of this denial of the viewer, see the work of Michael Fried, especially "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–172, originally published in *Artforum* (Summer 1967); and Michael Fried: *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the*



Sekula's photographic rendering of Close's portraits resists both the modernist reading that the paintings are complete and real in themselves, as well as the pop, simulationist, or proto-postmodernist reading of photorealism as merely facsimiles of facsimiles (paintings of photographs).<sup>24</sup> When Sekula translates Close's portraits back into the medium of photography, or when he adopts the look of the mug shot to make systematic portraits of acquaintances, Sekula raises questions about the artist's and the individual's relation to these broader uses of photographic documentation—to the circulation of these images through social institutions such as the museum or the police and the active reception of these images by viewers not necessarily aligned with the interests of those institutions. How might artists respond to the potential alienation of individual sitters by this indexical and archival logic—the objective fixing of their identity, through police photography among other operations, which depersonalizes them, depriving them of their own autonomous control over their person and self-image and the way their subjectivity is regarded by others? How to respond to the face treated as fingerprint or footprint, to the use of the photographic index used as a tool for arrest, to the conflict between singularity and standardization it stages?

Close had summed up the problem of portraiture in 1970: "I think it is useless to try and revive figurative art by pumping it full of outworn humanist notions."<sup>25</sup> It was not enough simply to assume that individuals shared an essential, universal, human identity resistant to technical singularization or alienation and discoverable or expressible through art. Although Close's comment is perhaps also an implicit (and unfair) rebuke by the disinterested aesthete of the depiction of human suffering in the morally and politically engaged realism of other painters such as Golub or Spero, Close at least registers the challenge to humanist models of spectatorship and subjectivity posed by the serial logics of pop, minimalism, and conceptual art, which partly embody standardized systems of industrial production and mass society. Yet for Sekula, it was simultaneously impossible to inoculate art against alienating standardization by incorporating into the gallery existing photographic or documentary forms, attempting to subordinate them to the mastery of the creative artist or the autonomous value of the pictorial surface. The urgent need to contest the destructive logic of what was seen as an imperialist war, the military-industrial-academic complex that sustained it, and the consumerist conformism that allowed it to continue, coupled with Sekula's Marxist analysis of social alienation, required the political and economic transformation of social conditions, including not only the means of production, but also those of reproduction, in the sense of both social reproduction of life under capitalism and visual representation. In other words, art alone could not solve political contradictions that had to be transformed practically

*Age of Diderot* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1980). Contrast also the singular, ontologized "beholder" in Fried's work with the plurality of viewers recorded in Sekula's photographs and audiotapes.

24. Close's color paintings in particular amount to a facsimile (painting) of a facsimile (photographic transparencies) of a facsimile (color photograph) that are produced only through a kind of photomechanical analysis and resynthesis.
25. Close in Nemser, 55.

and materially. More narrowly in the *Close pictures*, to rephrase Walter Benjamin, Sekula confronts the aestheticization of social documentation with the social documentation of aestheticization.

Thus the problem of portraiture as Sekula encountered it in the early 1970s was twofold. First, how to picture individuals in a way that registers their dependence on technosocial systems, especially those evident in photographic documentation, without either simply reinscribing their subordination to existing forms of power or asserting an illusory aesthetic freedom, an imaginary autonomy contradicted by social events at every turn? Aesthetically, this was also a question of how to engage with both the social uses of photography and the serial logic of pop, minimalism, and conceptual art without recourse to an outmoded humanism. In addition to exploring possible answers to this question by making photographs, Sekula would also soon investigate in his critical writing how the aesthetics of humanism operated within the realm of documentary photography, especially that found in the arty photojournalism of the picture magazines or an exhibition like Edward Steichen's *Family of Man*.<sup>26</sup>

Second, given the uses of photography for identification and arrest, how to investigate photography's social and political stakes while contesting the idea that photography could fix reality or truth, especially that of an individual or of social relations, in a single frame—what Sekula would soon call “the myth of photographic truth”?<sup>27</sup> In short, photographs held both promise and threat, as documents that could index ongoing social conflict but also risked reifying or mythifying the individuals and events they recorded.

Both photoconceptualism and photorealism had already provided tentative answers to some of these problems, often by subordinating the photograph either to larger concepts and systems (in the former) or to the craft of painting (in the latter). Photorealism's fastidious optical illusionism, created by making the join between painting and photography appear seamless, relied, on one hand, on the myth of photographic realism and the conflation of mimesis with indexicality. On the other hand, as the modernist reading of *Close's* work shows, the suturing of painting and photography in photorealism could also signal the implicit triumph of traditional, autonomous values of art and its highest medium, painting, over the threat of alienation and heteronomy posed by photography—when, for example, the dazzling interplay of reflections and mirrored surfaces in Richard Estes's paintings conspire to defeat photographic indexicality, or the virtuoso feat of *Close's* illusionistic

26. See Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” *Artforum* 13, no. 5 (January 1975): 36–45; Allan Sekula, “The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War,” *Artforum* 14, no. 4 (December 1975): 26–35; and Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 15–25. All of these essays are reproduced in Allan Sekula, *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984).
27. Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” 37.

painted surfaces eclipses whatever sum of details that he reproduces.<sup>28</sup> At first, these two aspects of photorealism—the reliance on photographic resemblance and reference, on one hand, and the assertion of the autonomy of painting, on the other—seem incompatible. Yet they can paradoxically coalesce when photorealism, which Hal Foster calls by its lesser-known moniker *super-realism* to emphasize its overcoming of reality, functions as “a subterfuge *against* the real, an art pledged not only to pacify the real but to seal it behind surfaces, to embalm it in appearances.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast, the suture between painting and photography was treated far more ambivalently in Baldessari’s work, when painting was ambiguously torn between artistic mastery over and slavish copying of the photographic machine. More broadly, although other forms of photoconceptualism relied on photography’s indexicality, they also employed text, seriality, reproducibility, and extra-visual systems to qualify the truth of photographic reference without abandoning it altogether. Nevertheless, the adoption of photographic documentation in different ways by both photoconceptualism and photorealism paved the way for appropriation art and postmodern photography of the 1980s, which function as a kind of post-pop realism of mass-media images.<sup>30</sup>

While the resurgent realisms of the early 1970s stage a return to representational images, they simultaneously highlight the manifest virtuality and artifactuality of those images, anticipating photographic postmodernism’s focus on highly artificial and coded mass-media images. In contrast with both, Sekula and his colleagues hew more closely to the politics of documentation. As much as they are aware of the mimetic or iconic, as well as the symbolically coded and conventional, aspects of visual communication, they do not abandon photography’s indexical potential. Against the faux-naïf and literally superficial mimesis of photorealism as style, they begin to construct another kind of realism. This would be a realism not only of appearances, but a critical one that attempts to account for difficult-to-represent social relations, such as the force exercised by the state at home and abroad, as well as the dialogical, lived relationships between artist and audience, portraitist and sitter, as well as between police and suspect, worker and boss,

28. Sekula would soon describe a similar tension within the history of photography between the “realist folk-myth” of photographic truth (operating in Lewis Hine’s documentary practice) and the idealist, “symbolist folk-myth . . . of the semantic autonomy of the photographic image” (found in Alfred Stieglitz’s theory and practice). Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” 45. Sekula’s essay was derived from his 1973–74 MFA thesis.
29. Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 141. Although Foster draws on a psychoanalytic and specifically Lacanian notion of the real that Sekula does not, Foster’s formal description of photorealism as an art of illusionistic surfaces that resist representational depth accords with mine.
30. Foster describes appropriation art and postmodern photography as the inverse of photorealism: while photorealism exploits photography for “painterly values such as the unique image,” postmodern photography and appropriation use photographic reproducibility to question painterly uniqueness. Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 145. Both are thus implicitly oriented toward the conventions of art, and the art of painting, in ways that elide photography’s documentary function.

mother and father and son, and so on. Their realism would be grounded less in the materiality of the medium or the reality of the referent than in the social relations between individuals.

This engagement with realism, however, still meant a return to representational images that had been proscribed by the 1960s avant-gardes. Proponents of minimalism had advocated for three-dimensional works in “real space” that dispensed with “illusionism.”<sup>31</sup> Proponents of systems aesthetics had sought to develop “real time” operating systems for information processing as opposed to images with “iconographic value.”<sup>32</sup> Instead, Sekula and his colleagues took seriously the virtual, artifactual, and historical character of photographic images that had been dismissed by preceding movements while still seeking to locate those images in real space and real time. Thus in their regular meetings as a group to debate art, photography, and politics, and in the critical writing that they produced, the San Diego group began to recover earlier traditions of photographic history that had been largely ignored by the postwar artistic avant-gardes, especially politically aware documentary cultural work. But when Sekula was just beginning his photographic practice he also began to deal with the problems raised by contemporary figuration and realism by developing a kind of performative and reflexive form of self-portraiture that explicitly called attention to the theatrical situation of the photographic portrait.

Instead of moving from facsimile to facsimile, from painting to photography as photorealism had, Sekula’s early works trace the ways those mediums are a function of social relations, the way they coordinate posing and looking, seeing and hearing, talking and listening, between individuals in ways that minimal sculpture had only hinted at. If both social documentation and artmaking sought to singularize the individual, in either the mug shot or the portrait, by arresting or aestheticizing the subject, how could one picture the social relations between individuals?

## The Studio

Sekula’s vertical triptych *Self-Portrait as Sculptor/Painter/Photographer* (1972) features three images of the artist posing with the tools of each craft (fig. 2.5). At the top, wearing work gloves, Sekula stands in front of a large drawing of one of his sculptures pinned to the wall while holding an unidentifiable plaster cast. At center, his gloved hands hold a pair of pliers for stretching canvas; the eyepieces of the round goggles he wears over his face have been encrusted with thick swirls

31. “Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors.” Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” in *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975), 184. See also the explicit opposition between historical forms of realism and minimalism’s “art of the real” in E.C. Goosen, *The Art of the Real: USA 1948–1968*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968).
32. Jack Burnham, “Real Time Systems,” *Artforum*, September 1969, 52. See also the juxtaposition between the traditions of Judd’s “real space” and Burnham’s “real time” in Foster, *Return of the Real*; and Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

of paint. At bottom, a rectangular mirror, whose vertical edges echo but don't align with the edges of the photograph, hangs on the wall, reflecting the camera on a tripod pointed at it, with the artist standing behind the camera; on the wall behind him hangs a drawing and sculpture. In contrast with the inner vision of the blinded painter and the mute, mysterious object held between the sculptor and the viewer, Sekula suggests only photography provides the means to self-reflexively call attention to the media and framing devices that link maker and sitter, artist and viewer. In other words, photography decenters painting, pushing back toward other mediums, just as his photos of Close's work had. Photography allows a kind of self-reflexivity that leads not to the essential quality of the medium but toward the social relations between mediums and between maker, object, and viewer.

Sekula had begun this form of self-portraiture for the class project *A Short Autobiography* (1971–1972), which remained in the artist's collection and during his lifetime was apparently never published or exhibited beyond the context of UCSD (figs. 2.6–2.7). Comprising ten text-on-image panels, the work includes black-and-white photographs, including self-portraits that are used in *Self-Portrait* . . . as well as a picture his childhood home used in *Aerospace Folktales* a year later.<sup>33</sup> In *A Short Autobiography*, Sekula traces his ascent from the working-class neighborhood of his childhood to his training as an artist at the university, as well as his family's somewhat precarious socioeconomic position between working and middle class. It begins with a pair of portraits of his parents in front of the horizontal wooden panels of their garage door, both dressed for work as the text points out. They are labeled "housewife (employed) and aerospace engineer (unemployed)," hinting at an incipient feminist account of domestic labor and the family's potential slide downward out of the petty bourgeoisie. (As critics have pointed out about this image and a similar one taken the same day that appears in *Aerospace Folktales*, the sitters' frontal address to the camera and the textured, wooden background parallel to the picture plane echo Walker Evans's iconic photos of Alabama sharecroppers, suggesting a recasting of earlier documentary tradition.<sup>34</sup>) Each panel includes a pair of black-and-white photographs, often printed slightly off kilter, with handwritten text accompanying them. The third panel includes an upper-middle class home in the expensive South Shores neighborhood of San Pedro with two cars in the driveway and a palm tree cutting through the middle of the

33. Despite the overlapping images, Sekula specified that *A Short Autobiography* was a separate work from, and not simply a study for, the later *Aerospace Folktales*. He also recalled that he had made it as part of an autobiography assignment in a photography class taught by Fred Lonidier. Allan Sekula, interview with the author, August 11, 2011. However, Lonidier doesn't recall such a class, and thinks it likely the class was taught by Steinmetz instead. Fred Lonidier, email to author, July 10, 2014. Sekula likely misattributed the class to Lonidier, who didn't start teaching until the following year. Compare the autobiographical focus of Steinmetz's works such as *One Saturday in El Segundo* (1974) and *Somebody's Making a Mistake* (1976).
34. See Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "A Short Autobiography d'Allan Sekula," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 130 (Winter 2014–2015): 62–79; and, on the image that appears in *Aerospace Folktales*, Stephanie Schwarz, "This Ain't the Swiss Family Robinson," *Photoworks* 20 (October 2013): 151.



image and partially ruining the view, much like Baldessari's *Wrong* and *Slavish Announcer*.<sup>35</sup> It is juxtaposed with a view of a working-class apartment complex, which viewers will learn was Sekula's family's home only when the image reappears in *Aerospace Folktales*.<sup>36</sup> Further contrasting the two economic tiers, the caption reads: "The neighbor kids got married, arrested, or sent to Vietnam. My high school classmates went to universities." Sekula comments on his move from working-class surroundings to a middle-class professional track in the following panels. The panel captioned "upward mobility—second step" shows him clowning on the UCSD campus, including in front of the Visual Arts department sign. The next shows the photos of Sekula as sculptor and painter that appear in *Self-Portrait*, with the text making explicit their significance: "The best painters and sculptors are blind, these days, suffering from an absolute freedom to be trivial." Other dialectical images follow. A shot of the façade of the Purex Corporation, a chemical company making household bleach and detergents where he worked, is juxtaposed with the book cover of V.I. Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* and captioned "i breathed poisons and watched my hair start to fall out, earning enough to eat and go to school for another year. Then i quit. I'm luckier than the other workers." *Artforum* faces down Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*.<sup>37</sup> In the final panel, labeled "Godard and Mao in San Diego," the text explains they are watching Jean-Luc Godard films, reading Mao, and making a film about the upcoming Republican National Convention. On the left, a pair of hands holds a copy of a book by Jean Collet on Godard; on the right, another shot shows Sekula with camera to his eye shooting into the mirror. Yet the self-reflexivity that concludes *A Short Autobiography* goes beyond the formally reflexive single image that concludes *Self-Portrait*, instead leading to a call for an artistic practice more along the lines of politically engaged documentary cinema.

Once again, photography, now with the addition of text, provides the means for

35. I base the identification of the South Shores neighborhood on a working list of text and image elements for the piece, labeled "Autobiography March [19]72," that can be found on the back of Allan Sekula, contact sheet no. 19 [1971–1972], in "Proofsheets v. 1," Sekula Archive. Although the ten text-image panels that seem to be the final form of the piece are signed and dated "1971," this list (which could postdate the work) and the cover of *Artforum* pictured, dated January 1972, suggest the work, likely begun in late 1971, was not completed until early 1972. See also Ziebinska-Lewandowska.
36. *Aerospace Folktales* also includes a different variant, made the same day, of the garage-door portrait of Sekula's parents, as well as a view of portraits in the family album taken during the making of *A Short Autobiography* but unused at the time. Sekula also seems to have remade a year later for *Aerospace Folktales* certain shots inside the home originally taken in 1971–1972: for example, a single shot of the family bookshelf in the early contact sheets is redone as a pair of images juxtaposing books of literature and a handbook on nuclear war in *Aerospace Folktales*, which I discuss in terms of *pendant images* in chapter 4. See Allan Sekula, contact sheets nos. 19 and 20 [1971–1972], in "Proofsheets v. 1," Sekula Archive.
37. Sekula had read both *Imperialism* and *Wretched of the Earth*, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre's *Anti-semitism and Jew*, Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and Geoffrey Barraclough's *Introduction to Contemporary History*, as a first-year student in Marcuse's undergraduate survey; Young, interview, August 19, 2011.

Sekula to reflect on his own social position, partly resisting the professionalization that becoming an artist or intellectual involves. (As suggested by other title cards shot for the series but unused in the final work, artists seem to control their own production. Yet this socioeconomic status, which makes them technically bourgeois but with little or no capital to their names, may simultaneously cut them off from other political struggles.<sup>38</sup>) The narrative arc sketched by the photographs suggests that rather than any particular willful act on Sekula's part, it is the movement *between* classes—between downtown San Pedro, which housed the laboring classes working in the Los Angeles harbor, and the university that offered a white-collar, professionalized career, and back—that produces class consciousness. And unlike the film language of establishing shots and close-ups employed in *Meat Mass*, *Short Autobiography* debuts a kind of photographic montage between contrasting images, as well as between image and text, that could be called dialectical, although not strictly in the sense of Soviet theories of film montage. Just as each image in the pair continues sitting across from each other, rather than one dissolving beneath the other as in film, the social contradictions that Sekula presents remain largely unresolved, even if the conclusion suggests a clearer political awareness of those contradictions and points toward another aesthetico-activist approach.

In *Meditations on a Triptych* (1973/1978), Sekula would return to reflexive portraiture, this time submitting a trio of amateur family portraits to textual analysis (fig. 2.8). The first of the three color photos is uncannily similar to Sekula's garage-door portrait of his parents, showing his mother and father again standing in the same spot—except that it was taken years earlier in 1966 or 1967 when Sekula was still a teenager, clearly in the genre of amateur family photography rather than art-making. The accompanying text begins by pointing out that the shadow of the photographer's head that has fallen across the father's foot, an unnoticed detail that tarnishes the otherwise careful presentation the couple makes to the camera, a "negative trace [that] points back to the photographer, who stands, as usual, outside the frame." The close description of the lighting, setting, and the age, dress, gestures, and poses of the sitters defamiliarizes the scene, holds it up "to an almost archeological light," making it strange and telling. Despite the neutral tone that does not reveal the narrator's personal connection to the images, the text subtly shifts toward an intentional reading-in of information and anecdotes available only to someone with behind-the-scenes knowledge of the family. The text's narrator indicates it is the posing father, rather than the unnamed camera operator, who arranged and truly authored the image. But in an unflinching, if not sometimes cruel, rejoinder, the narrator proceeds in this manner to scrutinize the contingent details not fully in control of the sitters or photographer, details that reveal their subjective and social situation. The shabby garage door hints at their modest living

38. One unused title card reads: "1. Drop out and get drafted 2. Stay in school and study what everyone else is studying 3. Graduate and work for Megadeath Corp, Ltd. 4. Be an artist: make your own studio, smoke dope and blind yourself to the above." More succinctly, a second reads: "1. Art is a product 2. Artists control their own production 3. Blindmen make the best art these days." Allan Sekula, contact sheets nos. 19 and 20 [1971–1972], in "Proofsheets v. 1," Sekula Archive.

arrangements, their dress indicates not only their occupations (air force reserve officer; homemaker) but their aspirations and desires (prestige, patriotism, and hierarchical authority; decorous but womanly beauty). In the process, the text begins to uncover the way in which all portraiture, and even all social interaction, is performative. By outlining how the father takes on the role of family artist, dressing, arranging, and posing himself, his wife, and his children, all in relation to the shadow of the photographer, *Meditations* takes on a reflexive structure similar to Sekula's earlier autobiographical exercises.

The narrative proceeds to tease out the ideology bound up with the everyday performance of social identity. The dark blue of the officer's air force uniform is not accidental: "the color of the stratosphere" was selected "in Washington, in 1946 [by] a team of bureaucrats. . . . This was an important public relations decision . . . . The color of the 'frontiers of space.' The color of 'national defense.' The color of a global view of things." Neither is the choice of the woman's bright red dress and matching lipstick accidental, conjuring as it does both an earlier, scandalous "flamboyant eroticism" and a more recent, mundane "poetry of desire" commodified in department stores. All aspects of the image, both public and private, have a contested history; the image itself is "a collage, a product of conventions" that stretch from "petty bourgeois modernity" back to "an older esthetic, both Eastern European and Catholic." Thus the narrator recounts historical precedents of courtly love with knight and maiden, religious Christian imagery, paintings of the Madonna, peasant courtship and marriage, and more specifically "a fastidious Polish taste for primary colors" with which the man has decorated his wife. But these are all then quickly dispensed—"so much for art history." These aesthetic precedents inform but do not encompass the multiple social meanings of this image-monument, which commemorates "matrimony . . . monogamy . . . long-lasting marriage . . . austere affection . . . a new wardrobe . . . an Easter dress . . . a moment of leisure . . . rank and possession." At the same time, the saturated colors in all three photos also form "a sign of abundance" and an "acquisitive optical hedonism." The photographs index a moment of lived experience, a history of pictorial conventions, and a set of desires and social forces.

Such aspirations and ideals are also found in the second photo, now of the father in a business suit with the mother in the same red dress, and are similarly undermined by their context in the same way the stray shadow and shabby garage door had undercut the imagined grandeur of the first photo. This time the couple pose at the base of a New-Deal-era monument to labor, and the narrator calls attention the frieze of an industrial worker in the background who seems, through forced perspective, to be leaning over and drilling into the head of the father. The narrator does not stop at the unintentionally comic juxtaposition:

Suppose I told you that there was something prophetic in the accidentally menacing figure of industrial arts. As he poses the man believes he has climbed above his working-class immigrant family background. Two years later, he joins a growing reserve army of unemployed aerospace engineers. Nearly three years after that he returns to work, to a lower-paying, lower-status job. He is ritually humiliated by his superiors. He is told he will not

[be] promoted. For the first time in his life, his work is subjected to a time-and-motion study. The upper half of the engineering profession assists in the proletarianization of the lower half.

By reading the future back into the past of the photograph, the narrator questions the “liberal educational ideology, the ideology of upward mobility” promoted by “this absurd memorial to the New Deal.” Thus Sekula returns to cast a jaundiced eye at the same educational ideology that he had questioned in *A Short Autobiography* and would explicitly dismantle later in *School Is a Factory* (1980), made shortly after he revisits the photographs in *Meditations*.

The seriousness and intensity of the attention directed to these family photos establishes a radical parallel between the significance of art-making and the social performances of everyday life, between father as family-artist and son as photographer-artist. Yet there remains a split between image and text. The father’s performance within the image seems to be a mix of agency and projected desire that founders on the contingent, telltale details that fall outside his control; in contrast, the son’s performance in the text seems to lead to an analytic self-consciousness that regains control over those telling details by giving them social meaning. The photograph is the symptom, the text the diagnosis. In other words, photography is the realm of aesthetic ideology, text is the medium of anti-aesthetic critique. Concerned with accounting for so many ideologically pregnant details, only on a second or third reading might readers begin to wonder which of the narrator’s own attitudes and assumptions escape criticism. How accurate is the narrative of the father’s identification with the military state, of the mother’s obedience and solace in religion, of the father’s dominance over the mother’s appearance, of the mother’s capture by the commodification of feminine desire, and so on? Might the narrator’s account also be motivated by his own unaccounted-for assumptions and investments, both familial (oedipal revenge) and political (his deep distrust of the military state, religion, bourgeois family values, and so on)? Here the methodological limits of both autobiography and ideology critique converge: how could one hope to ever give a full account of all the unconscious ways in which one is formed as a subject?

For example, given the parallels between the narrative of upward mobility in both *A Short Autobiography* and *Meditations on a Triptych*, is there not an identification with the father—in the father’s role as an artist and photographer orchestrating the scene, perhaps unintentionally repeated by the narrator in arranging the meaning of the images, but also in the fear or anticipation of proletarianization despite educational access to the middle class? And what about the third and final photograph, a picture of the mother, again in the red dress, with her two small daughters in bright purple and yellow dresses, all holding the hands? Does it not contain potential forms of feminine sociality not fully captured by the “affectionate and possessive” father-photographer outside the frame, or the chain of associations between the lilies in the background, the matching bonnets, the Easter holiday, the Virgin Mary, and motherhood? Might not the narrator-son also be formed by and indebted to that sociality in ways he doesn’t fully account for? Although the image of the three figures holding hands suggests, as the narrator

explains, “the social role of the reproducer is itself reproduced,” the meaning, trajectory, and force of such social reproduction—as opposed to the industrial production of the soon-to-be unemployed engineer—may not be fully fixed or known, especially in advance of the young girls’ unwritten futures.

The text does include moments in which the narrator, in his conversational tone, acknowledges his story has reached the limits of plausibility or knowability and that the overdetermined nature of the image cannot be fully resolved. And in one case he does refer to another looker and reader who has influenced his understanding, indirectly acknowledging romantic-intellectual attachments that inform his outlook: “Martha has a way of calling attention to the discrepant elements of an idealized representation.” On the whole, though, the text is dedicated precisely to such anti-idealizing work that distances Sekula from his taken-for-natural family attachments.

Through such distancing, Sekula combines a reflexive account of portraiture with a kind of sociological survey: Sekula’s observational approach to social class shares a methodological approach with certain strains of sociology and anthropology. He would later cite as influential the photographic records of Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead’s *Balinese Character*, in which photographic comparisons and longer sequences showing bodily movement, gesture, and interpersonal behavior, as well as the built environment and cultural artifacts, all supplement textual description and analysis.<sup>39</sup>

At the time, it was also the sociology of Erving Goffman—more than J.L. Austin’s theory of performative speech acts familiar to later theorists of performance and performativity—that shaped Sekula’s understanding of the performative nature of social life.<sup>40</sup> Although Austin’s work on performatives in ordinary language was foundational for the field of pragmatics (the study of the use of language, as opposed to syntactics or semantics), Goffman was central to research into pragmatics in linguistics, anthropology, and sociology in the late 1960s. Sekula’s mentor David Antin studied pragmatics while pursuing a graduate degree in linguistics earlier in New York, and social-science texts on pragmatics were also read by conceptual and performance artists there, including Acconci; both figures were indirect influences

39. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* ([New York]: New York Academy of Sciences, 1942).

40. See especially Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956). Sekula cites the influence of Goffman alongside a broader sociological tradition of Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, in Debra Risberg, “Imaginary Economies: An Interview with Allan Sekula,” in Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal: University Galleries, Illinois State University, 1999), 240; and Mary Panzer, “Interview of Allan Sekula,” Smithsonian Archives of American Art, 2011, p. 41.



on Sekula's performative photography.<sup>41</sup> Explaining the link between art-making and pragmatics at the time, Jacob Stewart-Halevy has observed, "Proponents of pragmatics and the 0–9 circle [including artists such as David Antin and Acconci] alike were trying to figure out and present how people conducted themselves and communicated with one another over the course of their everyday routines."<sup>42</sup> More broadly, the documentation of everyday social performances produced by field research in microsociology, ethnography, and sociolinguistics offers a model for departing from pre-scripted performance, on one hand, and analytic, rule-governed conceptualism on the other hand.<sup>43</sup> However, whereas sociologists such as Goffman sought to discover the cultural order and civilized norms continually recreated through social performance, Sekula pursued the moments in everyday life when that order began to break down—when ideology foundered on experience.

This sociological investigation of language use, which overlapped and fed into developments in performance art, also provided an important supplement to the structuralist semiotics then taking hold in the American academy. Sekula's reading of photographs owes much by the groundbreaking semiotic analysis of images practiced by Roland Barthes, especially when combined with a Marxian theory of ideology as Barthes had done in early texts such as *Mythologies*.<sup>44</sup> Sekula had made a rough translation of Barthes's "Rhetoric of the Image" and circulated it among colleagues before he realized it had recently appeared in English translation in Britain.<sup>45</sup> In addition to Antin, professor of literature Anthony Wilden, with whom

41. On Antin, Acconci, and pragmatics, see Jacob Stewart-Halevy, "The Inductive Turn in Conceptual Art: Pragmatics in the 0–9 Circle," *Grey Room* 68 (Summer 2017): 60–93. As Stewart-Halevy shows, Adrian Piper, who also contributed to *The Fox*, and other members of Art and Language were also engaged with these issues. On Acconci and Goffman, see also Tom McDonough, "The Crimes of the Flâneur," *October* 102 (Fall 2002): 101–122.
42. "Proponents of pragmatics and the 0–9 circle alike were trying to figure out and present how people conducted themselves and communicated with one another over the course of their everyday routines." Stewart-Halevy, 61.
43. Stewart-Halevy contrasts the deductive operations of analytic conceptualism with an inductive, "interactional performativity" influenced by pragmatics. "For these artist, the embedded methods of data collection and presentation served as alternatives to the kinds of interviews, reportage, statistical analysis, and bureaucratic styles found within the dominant strands of conceptual art at the time." Stewart-Halevy, 63.
44. The English translation of Barthes's *Mythologies* appeared in 1972: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972). The final, methodological essay in the volume attempts to synthesize, in the keyword "myth," the Saussurean sign and a theory of ideology drawn from Marx and Engels's *German Ideology*.
45. Young, interview, August 19, 2011. In the interview, Sekula recalled he had translated "The Photographic Message" without knowing it had already appeared in *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*; however, "The Photographic Message" was not translated until 1977. It is therefore likely Sekula meant "The Rhetoric of the Image," which had appeared there. See Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," trans. Brian Trench, *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 1 (Spring 1971): 37–50; and Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Image—Music—Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 15–31.

Sekula had studied and who had helped with *Body Bags*, also taught and researched structuralism and semiotics, alongside systems theory, anthropology, psychology and psychoanalysis, and ecology.<sup>46</sup> Sekula and Lonidier were also in dialogue with Louis Marin, an art historian and former student of Barthes at UCSD at the time.<sup>47</sup> As Sekula recalled, he and others interested in Louis Althusser's antihumanist, structuralist account of Marxism, especially his theory of ideology, formed a circle around Marin, in contrast with the graduate students mostly in literature who formed the Marxist Literary Group in 1969 around Fredric Jameson, also at UCSD, who was beginning his career as a prolific literary and cultural critic with books on structuralism and Marxist aesthetics.<sup>48</sup>

## The Theater

More practically for those making images, experimental and documentary cinema offered another model for a formally reflexive realist practice. As Sekula would put it in 1978, in his manifesto and explication of the work of the San Diego group, "the most developed critiques of the illusory facticity of photographic media have been cinematic, stemming from outside the tradition of still photography."<sup>49</sup> Of course, mainstream Hollywood cinema relies on illusionism and naturalism too, but avant-garde cinema of the 1960s was in the process of radically reworking what were seen as the realist conventions of narrative film. As the citation of Godard in *A Short Autobiography* makes clear, the politically engaged work of Godard

46. Wilden covers these subjects in Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange* (London: Tavistock, 1972). He was also an early translator of Jacques Lacan; see Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968).
47. Marin's text on Disneyland inspired Lonidier's work *The Double Articulation of Disneyland* (1974), made during a field trip to the amusement park in which Sekula, Rosler, and Brian Connell participated and took photographs. Marin's essay appeared in Louis Marin, *Utopiques: Jeu d'espaces* (Paris: Minuit, 1973), chap. 12. A self-described "rough" translation by Don Wayne is included in Lonidier's work; the text was only formally published in English translation later, in Louis Marin, "Disneyland: A Degenerate Utopia," *Glyph 1* (1977): 50–66.
48. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); and Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). The Marxist Literary Group was founded in 1969 and organized a number of influential conferences and publications through the Modern Language Association, especially throughout the 1970s.
49. Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism," 126. I date this passage to 1978 because it does not appear in the first, shorter version of this text, written in 1976 as the catalogue essay in an exhibition brochure for two solo exhibitions, of Lonidier's *Health and Safe Game* (1976) and Steinmetz's *Somebody's Making a Mistake* (1976), at the Long Beach Museum of Art; and reprinted the same year as Allan Sekula, "Reinventing Documentary," in *Photography and Language*, ed. Lew Thomas (San Francisco: Camerawork Press, 1976), 13–14.

provided a model for breaking not the suture between painting and photography achieved in photorealism, but that between the photograph and the profilmic event in photography and cinema—as well as the identification between the viewer and the camera, which would soon be picked apart in film theory of the era. Both Godard’s cinematic experiments and the semiotic and psychoanalytic theories of film suture that were being developed primarily in the English journal *Screen* also shared a common touchstone in Marxian aesthetics.<sup>50</sup> As depicted in an iconic scene on “socialist art” in Godard’s *La chinoise* (1967), a student militant slowly erases, one by one, the names of famed playwrights and dramatists from a long list on a blackboard, leaving only Brecht.<sup>51</sup> As Sekula would put it in “Dismantling Modernism”: “The critical anti-naturalism of Brecht, continued in the politically and formally reflexive cinematic modernism of Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, and the team of Jean-Marie Straub and Danielle Huillet, stands as a guide to ideologically self-conscious handling of image and text.”<sup>52</sup> And while Godard’s montage of image and sound pursued an antinaturalistic disruption of narrative cinema, he did so partly by relying heavily on apparently more naturalistic documentary forms: direct sound, handheld cameras, natural light, and filmmaker-led interviews drawn from *cinema vérité*, among other techniques.<sup>53</sup> By combining the supposedly antithetical approaches of montage and naturalistic *mise-en-scène*, Godard in particular helped clear a space for new approaches to narrative and documentary—and more broadly, helped to reconfigure realism and modernism.<sup>54</sup> Yet in contrast to the more formalist, medium-specific approach to self-reflexive post-Brechtian practice that developed along the London–New York axis of so-called structuralist film, Sekula and his colleagues’ response to developments in cinema hew more closely to the

50. See the special issue on Bertolt Brecht, *Screen* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1974). Walter Benjamin’s essays on Brecht had recently appeared as *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: NLB, 1973), and texts by Brecht as well as other texts from the Frankfurt School aesthetic debates were regularly appearing in *New Left Review* throughout the early 1970s. Sekula had taken an undergraduate course on Brecht and read *Life of Galileo* (1938) in Marcuse’s undergraduate humanities survey; Young, interview, August 19, 2011.
51. The book on Godard by Jean Collet included in Sekula’s *A Short Autobiography* is primarily an explication and defense of Godard’s method told through *Les carabiniers* (1963) and *Contempt* (1963). Focusing on Godard’s juxtaposition of word and image, Collet asserts Godard employs a form of estrangement indebted to Brecht but more self-critically oriented toward the conventions of cinema and theater themselves. Written and first published in France in 1963, the English edition adds a short introduction and new interviews and critical texts that update the coverage to *La chinoise*. Collet presents the latter as a prophetic anticipation and before-the-fact analysis of the events of May 1968. See Jean Collet, *Jean-Luc Godard: An Investigation into His Films and Philosophy*, trans. Ciba Vaughn (New York: Crown, 1970), esp. 45–48.
52. Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism,” 127.
53. Colin McCabe, “Technology,” in Colin McCabe with Mick Eaton and Laura Mulvey, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 111–112.
54. On montage versus *mise-en-scène*, see Andre Bazin, “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema,” in *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 24; and on Godard’s refusal of this opposition, McCabe, “Technology,” 112.

didactic and representational legacy of Brecht's epic theater.<sup>55</sup>

Brecht thus provides another crucial avenue through which Sekula would approach the performance of everyday life. More broadly, avant-garde theater and dance also provided other models of performance: Sekula recalls that he and other art students helped bring to the campus art gallery Mabou Mines—the avant-garde theater company founded in 1970 by JoAnne Akalaitis, Lee Breuer, Ruth Maleczech, and Philip Glass—who performed Samuel Beckett's *Play* and *The Red Horse Animation* (written and directed by Breuer with music by Glass) on campus in 1971. And he was in contact with developments in postmodern dance and task-based performance through Simone Forti, whom he also invited to campus after meeting her in San Francisco.<sup>56</sup> And in retrospect, Sekula recalled that the Living Theater did multiple productions of Brecht, which also influenced their 1963 production of *The Brig*—a play written by former U.S. marine Kenneth H. Brown depicting his experiences of brutal discipline and ritual humiliation in a military prison—that combined Brechtian theater with the chaotic, bodily violence of Artaud's theater of cruelty.<sup>57</sup> *Life* magazine described *The Brig*, with its “unsparing realism” and “precise, formless documentation” of a day in the prison, as “not a play at all, but a literal enactment of what happens between four guards and eleven nameless prisoners” that, while shocking in its violence, threatened to destroy theater itself.<sup>58</sup> The production was made into a film directed by Adolfas Mekas and Jonas Mekas in 1964, one that Sekula likely saw by the early 70s and could have linked to the soldiers and sailors, including deserters and those refusing to depart for Vietnam,

55. Steve Edwards argues that the reception of Brecht by Sekula and his colleagues at UCSD was more popular, realist, and committed to both narrative and pedagogy than the Althusserian and formalist European avant-garde. See his discussion of “political modernism” in Steve Edwards, *Martha Rosler: The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (London: Afterall Books, 2012), 84–100. On political modernism more generally, see D.N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Film Theory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994). For a reading of Rosler's work, alongside that of Sekula, Lonidier, and Steinmetz, through the lens of Brechtian “distanciation” and Marcusean refusal, see Philip Glahn, “Estrangement and Politicization: Bertolt Brecht and American Art, 1967–79” (PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2007), 48–129. Because of his focus on estrangement, Glahn's argument hangs mainly on the fragmentation of Rosler's early photomontages, whose form derives from the political avant-garde of the 1930s but is less characteristic of later work by her or her colleagues. Although Glahn points out that Marcuse dismissed Rosler's artwork such as *Garage Sale*, he nonetheless applies Marcuse's aesthetics to her work without pursuing this contradiction between Marcuse's valorization of modernist estrangement and the San Diego group's more observational approach to everyday life.
56. Sekula and Buchloh, “Conversation,” 29.
57. Young, interview, August 19, 2011.
58. John R. McDermott, “Don't Get Stuck in the Brig,” *Life* 55, no. 7 (16 August 1963): 39.



he encountered in San Diego.<sup>59</sup> An attentive young artist could recognize in these modernist, avant-garde depictions of violence all the horror of a documentary realism.<sup>60</sup>

Theater, dance and performance, cinema, and an interest in the dialogical aspects of portraiture and the performance of everyday life thus all fed into Sekula's development of what he was calling by 1974 a "disassembled movie."<sup>61</sup> In addition to the cinematic conventions adopted in *Meat Mass*, Sekula also explored some specifically Godardian motifs at this time. *Masculine/Feminine Life in the Suburbs* (1972) consists of two black-and-white photographs with a protagonist at the center of each. In the photo labeled "masculine life in the suburbs," a young man with long hair, beard, sunglasses, dark pants, and stocking feet sits in a low chair on a concrete patio or courtyard, a telephone off to his side, its long cord allowing it to have been pulled out from the darkened doorway to the house behind him. In the "feminine life" frame, a young woman in white shorts and sleeveless shirt lies down on the same concrete patio, squinting up toward the sunlight with the telephone up to her ear, the newspaper and an unopened, or unmailed, letter off to her side. In the feminine frame, the house is no longer visible but the shadows of leaves from a tree in the yard dapples the background more prominently than before. While both share the same sun-drenched leisure space, their apparently everyday routines seem to encode a series of oppositions: vertical/horizontal, dark/light, printed text/telephony, visual/oral, public/private, architecture/nature, and so on. Because each individual is almost trapped in his and her corresponding frame, these oppositions largely remain static, if not clichéd gender stereotypes. The inner psychological life

59. In addition to the young deserters that Sekula had sheltered in his dorm and who described to him their beatings in the military (see chapter 1), Sekula was also aware of the unrest and rumored mutinies occurring on vessels based in San Diego Harbor and attended demonstrations in support of those court-martialed or otherwise disciplined. Young, interview, August 19, 2011. A rebellion by black sailors on the aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* in February 1972 was covered in the national press at the time, and historians argue about whether it was the first mutiny in U.S. naval history. The same year, black and white sailors on the aircraft carrier *Constellation*, also sailing out of San Diego, protested both racial discrimination and the war by going ashore and refusing to reboard the Vietnam-bound craft. In both cases, sailors, sometimes after seeking sanctuary in houses of worship, were arrested and sent to the brig. See "Nonviolent Activism: GI's Refuse Vietnam Deployment," *Crazy Times* 2, no. 6 ([March?] 1972): 8; "USS Kitty Hawk Fact Sheet," *Door*, January 10–24, 1973, p. 8; "Kitty Hawk Trials Continue . . .," *Door*, March 8–22, 1973, p. 5; John Darrrell Sherwood, *Black Sailor, White Navy: Racial Unrest in the Fleet during the Vietnam War Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); and Gregory A. Freeman, *Troubled Water: Race, Mutiny and Bravery on the USS Kitty Hawk* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
60. "I suppose the desperation of these unfolding circumstances [of antiwar protest and authoritarian repression in heavily militarized San Diego] contributed to my initial misapprehension of [Kafka's *The Trial*] as a realist novel in 1968." Sekula and Buchloh, 31.
61. Sekula uses the term "disassembled movie" in a 1974 artist's statement about *Aerospace Folktales*, in Allan Sekula Archive. The term appears in print in his 1980 "Introductory Note" to *Aerospace Folktales*, in *Photography against the Grain*, 106.



of the figures remains largely unavailable to viewers of the photographs, frustrating viewers' grasp on the potentially meaningful connections to the world outside the frame of the photographs, which also mark the limit of the suburban patio. The bright swath of concrete suspends them in a kind of nonspace, an Erewhon or nowheresville connected to other people and other worlds only through media apparatuses.<sup>62</sup> The difference between the two panels amounts to a kind of stalled dialectic. Neither utopian nor dystopian, suburban California seems to contain much the same emptiness, but not so much the romance and desire, that haunted both the division between the sexes and the consumer and youth culture of Paris in Godard's film *Masculin/féminin* (1966), from which Sekula's work likely draws its title.

A year earlier, Sekula had made *Two, Three, Many . . . Terrorism* (1972), a sequence of black-and-white photographs that shows a lone young man with a conical straw hat and toy rifle absurdly crawling around the driveways and swimming pools of suburban San Diego on his hands and knees (fig. 2.9). Taking literally Che Guevara's call to create "two, three, many Vietnams," Sekula both memorialized the figure of the guerrilla with which the New Left had been in solidarity and mocked the adoption of armed vanguardism in the United States. In another echo of Godard, the props recall a similar scene from *La chinoise* in which Juliet Berto plays an allegorical Vietnam attacked by toy models of U.S. military planes and cries for help, although in Sekula's version the agency has been shifted from oppressor to oppressed. While both *Two, Three, Many . . .* and Godard's film stumble over an awkward appropriation of clichéd images of the East, the absurdity of the situation implicitly suggests a kind of blockage or misfire in the imagined identification with the American militant and the agent of third world liberation struggles. Similar dynamics of distance and misidentification troubled the idealization of Maoism from the perspective of those in West mostly ignorant of the realities of the Chinese cultural revolution. Much like the young students in a Maoist cell in *La chinoise*, *Two, Three, Many . . .* also depicts a figure drifting through western consumer society, searching for a base of struggle, a form of praxis to which he can attach his slogans. And just as *La chinoise* was often mistakenly understood either as an unproblematic endorsement of the doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist slogans recited by its actors, or as a straightforward satire of the students' youthful naïveté and inability to turn their theory into a meaningful political praxis other than a voluntarist, abortive attempt at terrorism, the tone being struck in both works is more ambivalent. In a later interview, Sekula would comment about his work *This Ain't China: A Photonovel* (1974) that "the 'Maoism' was intended to

62. Not exactly "desiring machines" in the sense posited by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, these figures nonetheless join media-machines and organic bodies in ways that frustrate the distinction between vitalism and mechanism which Deleuze and Guattari detected in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 284–285. Originally published in French in 1972, the first English translation appeared in 1977.

be less deadpan and more overtly farcical.”<sup>63</sup> A similar farcical approach is already at work in *Two, Three, Many . . .*, even if largely lost on later audiences. The work seems partly to have been made in an address other radicals: Sekula submitted *Two, Three, Many . . .* for publication in *North Star*, the militant student newspaper at UCSD that remained an outlet for the independent left after the Maoist takeover of the SDS chapter on campus.<sup>64</sup>

While the simultaneous embrace of and distancing from such militant rhetoric in both Godard and Sekula may be difficult to understand today, their ambivalence teased out the possibilities and limitations of political approaches of the time. Of course, many of the intellectual currents feeding the New Left from anarchism and libertarian socialism to Maoism and third-worldism were vital because they provided a space for anticapitalist, anticolonial, and anti-imperialist struggle to maneuver around the dual regimes of Soviet bloc and capitalist west. Similarly, the spread of the antiwar movement in universities brought the attempt to theorize students rather than industrial workers as revolutionary agents, despite their apparent distance from the means of production. Alongside these developments, Maoist rhetoric, which replaced the class struggle between bourgeois and proletarian with a political struggle between bourgeois and revolutionary, while perhaps only a tactical shift at first, lead to political judgments based not on class or party but on the conduct of one’s personal life, which opened onto “a whole new political space” marked by the slogan “the personal is the political.”<sup>65</sup> This shift opened onto the politics of civil rights and antiracism, feminism, ecology, and, more in France than the US, human rights. Yet while Maoism may have helped create a new language of politics, such rhetoric was becoming increasingly ossified by the early 70s. Unlike Godard’s anticipation of May ’68 in *La chinoise*, by 1972 the militant rhetoric of the Weathermen, who had split from a disintegrating SDS, took the form of a vanguardist movement that declared war against the United States government with little popular support. By the time of the 1974 kidnapping of Patty Hearst, the only partially coherent communiqués issued by the Symbionese Liberation Army began to sound like an unintentional self-parody of leftist

63. Sekula and Buchloh, “Conversation,” 24. On the references to both Brecht and Maoism in *This Ain’t China*, see Monika Szewczyk, “Negation Notes (While Working on an Exhibition with Allan Sekula Featuring *This Ain’t China: A Photonovel*),” *E-flux Journal* 13 (February 2010), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/13/61329/negation-notes-while-working-on-an-exhibition-with-allan-sekula-featuring-this-ain-t-china-a-photonovel/>.
64. An envelope containing the photos that Sekula sent to the *North Star* was returned to him, but I have been unable to locate the issue—likely summer or early fall 1973—in which his submission may have been published. Envelope addressed to *North Star*, June 1973, Sekula Archive. In 1972, *Crazy Times*, predecessor to the *North Star*, cheered the formation of the UCSD Radical Coalition as a nonsectarian group that could provide leadership after the “fuck-up” at the Del Mar protest, where a lack of organization led to arrests, and the takeover of the SDS chapter by the Maoist Progressive Labor Party, and the Student Mobilization Committee by a Trotskyist front group. “UCSD Radical Coalition,” *Crazy Times* 2, no. 10 [May 1972]: 2.
65. Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s,” *Social Text* 9–10 (Spring–Summer 1984): 202.

revolutionary rhetoric.<sup>66</sup> Farcical Maoism thus provided a way to promote the idea of cultural revolution while recognizing how distant those in the West were from the Cultural Revolution, a way to try to maintain the politicization of everyday life such rhetoric enabled while simultaneously acknowledging its severe limitations. Thus Sekula's later account of workers attempting to unionize in the pizza restaurant in which he worked, *This Ain't China*, cited the Maoism and the Cultural Revolution while simultaneously emphasizing California's distance from China.

But rather than just reflecting the historical exhaustion of 1960s radicalism, *Two, Three, Many . . .* can be seen more structurally: there were other connections between suburbia and the theater of guerrilla warfare. As Jameson would later point out, the practice of guerrilla warfare pioneered by Guevara in Cuba (and theorized by Régis Debray) provided an alternative both to the Leninist model of a revolutionary party of the urban proletariat and to the peasant masses of the Chinese revolution: "the *foco*, or guerilla operation, is conceptualized as being neither 'in' nor 'of' either country or city . . . but rather in that third or non-place which is the wilderness of the Sierra Maestra . . . a whole new element in which the guerilla band moves in perpetual displacement."<sup>67</sup> Suburbia therefore functions as the structural inverse of the *foco*: precisely neither in nor of the country or city, suburbia was also a kind of third or non-place, not of revolutionary and perpetual displacement, but of the social reproduction of capitalism. Like it or not, it was the terrain in which Sekula and his colleagues had to operate.

As Rosler had in *Bringing the War Home*, Sekula sought to link the jungles of southeast Asia to suburban California. However, rather than focusing on the consumerism and boosterism that allowed the war to continue, Sekula begins to sketch the outlines of this new space of political struggle. Yet as Sekula's satire suggests, the flow of soldiers and arms could not simply be reversed and returned home to do battle: the guerrilla fighter could not simply be imported to suburbia, however much some on the left may have wished for it. As the lone, individual figure makes clear, he is tragically cut off from the revolutionary displacements occurring in the Third World or popular movements at home. What form could political action take in such a place?

On one hand, just as he had sent *Two, Three, Many . . .* to the underground newspaper, Sekula also submitted a frame from *This Ain't China*—a black-and-white photograph of cooks at work in the kitchen preparing food—to be published alongside an interview with a union organizer from local 402 of the Culinary Workers Union.<sup>68</sup> Thus, Sekula attempts to use his photographs in an antiphotojournalistic, activist, documentary role. Yet, as the organizer describes, the challenges to organizing mostly part-time, short-term, low-paid workers scattered geographically across many different workplaces are formidable, even apart from the long decline in union membership and crippling of union power

66. Killen, 6–7.

67. Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," 202.

68. "Restaurant Working Conditions: Interview with Bob Baum," *North Star* 4, no. 16 (April 16–30, 1974): 2–3.

begun in the late 1940s and reaching greater speed by the 1970s. Thus, on the other hand, Sekula also makes an artwork that reflexively comments, through text and image, on the role of the documentary image in class struggle—including the occasional need for fictional or constructed images to picture otherwise invisible economic conditions, the psychology of the boss and workers, and the fantasy theater of commodity exchange, as well as the setbacks the working-class struggle suffers in the restaurant he depicts.<sup>69</sup> Composed of twenty-nine black-and-white and ten color photographs, with accompanying text booklets, *This Ain't China* not only juxtaposes gritty, journalistic views of workers laboring in the workplace with garish, disgustingly greasy, orange and red color photographs of the pizza and pasta they prepare, using revulsion to defetishize the commodity and turn the gaze toward labor. Through both the text hung on the wall and images of the workers performing for the camera, *This Ain't China* also recounts how the workers protest not only their work conditions but also the union leadership, who, focused on the large chain restaurants, show little interest in aiding the handful of workers trying to unionize in their small workplace. After allegedly being fired, cooks and waitresses pantomime their work actions and rebellion in an empty white room that recalls nothing less than a gallery space. Barred from access to the means of production, with conventional avenues of political struggle such as the union closed to them, making art about losing their jobs is their last recourse. And it is a form of recourse, and address to the viewer, that requires other resources not available to all or even most working-class people. As Sekula entreats the viewer in the final line of text in the piece, “beware: a worker’s defeat has been converted into an artwork.” The artwork, in other words, should not be mistaken for a political victory.

Both *Two, Three, Many . . .* and *This Ain't China* thus depict a kind of anti-aesthetic assault on the bourgeois pleasures of suburbia—the lawns, the swimming pools, the casual-dining restaurants. Yet rather than simply attack these pleasures in the name of a theoretical radicalism, these and other works Sekula makes around this time also seek to carefully depict the ways in which home life and the workplace were structured and differentiated by class, and connected to the war economy in particular. As I show in the following chapter, Sekula will employ his performative and reflexive approach to portraiture, while drawing from cinema’s montage of image, audio, and text, as well as breaking with the conventions of photorealism, to document the everyday life of those around him in his two key works of the 1970s: *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) and *Aerospace Folktales* (1973).

69. In addition to being exhibited in the UCSD art gallery in 1974, as well as circulating in book form, *This Ain't China* was included in the 1976 exhibition *Autobiographical Fantasies*, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, and reviewed by Nancy Marmar in *Artforum*, April 1976, 76–77. Excerpts were published in *LAICA Journal*, no. 10 (April 1976).

## CHAPTER 3

### Arresting Figures: *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) and *Aerospace Folktales* (1973)

#### Unworking

*Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) is one of Sekula's first works to explore the aesthetic and political potential that may emerge at the margins of economic production. Captioned "End of Day Shift, General Dynamics Convair Aerospace Factory, San Diego, California, 17 February 1972," *Untitled Slide Sequence* was shot on an elevated pedestrian walkway linking the factory with the employee parking lot. The twenty-five black-and-white slides, projected thirteen seconds apart in a continuous loop, capture workers as they exit the factory gate and climb the stairs to leave work (figs. 3.1–3.3). The uniform space-time of each rectangular photographic frame is homogeneous and regular, just like the empty, regimented time of wage labor.<sup>1</sup> For these reasons, Sekula later associates the regular click of the slides passing through the projector to the time of the factory clock.<sup>2</sup> Yet the variable intervals at which the photographer's hand has clicked the shutter anticipate the automatic, mechanical advance of the slides—or the assembly line—only imperfectly. This mismatch gives some breathing room to those who inhabit the frames: while mostly white, the workforce seems to include Latinos and African Americans; the majority of the men are in work clothes, but others, presumably management, wear suits; the few

1. On the temporal economy of *Untitled Slide Sequence* and its relation to the Lumière brothers' earliest film *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895), as well as more recent works treating this motif such as Harun Farocki's *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995), see Sven Lütticken, "Transforming Time," *Grey Room* 41 (Fall 2010): 41–43. For a related discussion of Sekula's later work *Prayer for the Americans* (1999/2004), see Sven Lütticken, "Liberating Time," in *Art of Projection*, ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2009).
2. Debra Risberg, "Imaginary Economies: An Interview with Allan Sekula," in Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal: University Galleries, Illinois State University, 1999), 241. Sekula is likely recalling Walter Benjamin's claim that in film, "perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of repetition in the film." Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1940), in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 132. Compare also Benjamin's earlier formulation about the discontinuity of still images contrasted with their superimposition in a continuous sequence in film: "with regard to continuity, it cannot be overlooked that the assembly line, which plays a fundamental role in the process of production, is in a sense represented by the filmstrip in the process of consumption. Both came into being at roughly the same time. The social significance of the one cannot be fully understood without that of the other." Walter Benjamin, "The Formula in Which the Dialectical Structure of Film Finds Expression" (1935), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, 1935–1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 94.



women wear dresses and office clothes and are likely clerical staff. Glimpsed at the threshold of the factory, just at the end of the workday, they occupy a liminal space that may also herald a kind of desynchronization from the regimen of work.

The camera position is mostly set, although the view wanders slightly from left to right on the stairs, as if the cameraperson had to move slightly to let the bodies of his subjects brush past. Like a long take in cinema, the sequence records whoever walks into, through, and out of the frame, implying a kind of egalitarian looking that meets each subject in the same way. The figures, seen variously in full and three-quarters length at the bottom of the stairs and at half-length or with only head and shoulders at the top, are not “sitters”—they continue in motion beyond the edges of the frame, their movement emphasized by the pan of the camera away from the stairs at the end of the sequence. The setup suggests one model for picturing a group of workers in a coordinated, nonhierarchical composition that is implicitly at odds with the social and economic hierarchies that govern the workplace and maintain the white, male, managerial and executive class near the top. (The complexity of this hierarchy at the bureaucratic level of corporate organization is expressed visually by the branching tree of the organizational chart or organogram; for an example from Convaire, see fig. 3.4.) Yet unlike the series of elements held in interchangeable, equivalent, synchronic stasis found in earlier minimalist and conceptual art—consider the serial sculpture of Donald Judd or Sol LeWitt, or the photographic series of Bernd and Hilla Becher—and despite the continuous loop of slides, the physical movement and passage of time proceeds in one direction, creating a proto-narrative: an encounter with the photographer/viewer and, more broadly, the release from work.<sup>3</sup> Whether waged or salaried, all of those pictured likely share the same status as employees—in contrast with the absent owners who ultimately control the means of production and remain, at least from this vantage point just outside the factory, invisible to the camera.

In this sense, Sekula’s sequence confronts the difficulty facing engaged photography, a difficulty encapsulated by Bertolt Brecht’s dictum about the representation of economic life, famously reported by Walter Benjamin:

less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing [beinahe nichts] about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional. The reification of human relations—the factory, say—means that they are no longer explicit.<sup>4</sup>

3. Sekula later thematizes the contrast between series and sequence in Risberg, “Imaginary Economies,” 248.
4. Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography” (1931), in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 1931–1934, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 526. Benjamin quotes from Bertolt Brecht, “The Threepenny Lawsuit” (1931), in *On Film and Radio*, ed. and trans. Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), 164–165. Sekula was likely unaware of the quotation at the time he shot *Untitled Slide Sequence* because neither essay had yet been translated into English; a translation of the “Short History” by Stanley Mitchell appeared shortly thereafter, in *Screen 13*, no. 1 (March 1972). Nevertheless, Benjamin’s essay was doubtlessly influential for Sekula’s later work. A formulation similar to Brecht’s,

Sekula's later text-image montage and his critical writing will largely uphold the critique of realism and positivism suggested by Brecht's comment, including the aesthetic conclusion that in response to reification, "something must in fact be built up, something artificial, posed."<sup>5</sup> Yet Sekula's documentary work begins with, and never loses touch with, a certain kind of photographic empiricism. This documentary approach wagers that what photographs can tell us about the factory amounts to something greater than "almost nothing." Even if these photographic records alone are insufficient to grasp the complexity of social relations surrounding the objects they depict, they offer the perhaps indispensable starting point to begin an inquiry into those relations—material traces that encode social relations, however reified. And more than just a record of reification, the practical and aesthetic approach to the factory broached in *Untitled Slide Sequence* depicts a kind of collective social experience that is not entirely functionalized or objectified.

In this way, *Untitled Slide Sequence* differs from the other two main pictorial accounts of work at aerospace factories and Convair in particular. The first approach to the factory comprises those photographs commissioned by corporations themselves. Many such photos form what Sekula would later call, in an analysis of the archive of a small-town commercial photographer in Nova Scotia often hired by the local coal-mining concern, "instrumental realism."<sup>6</sup> Although not entirely devoid of conventions, such photographs are made primarily to be used to accomplish a task. In the case of Convair, this means photographs (and films) that record the outcomes of launch tests, visually track the proper assembly of parts, or verify the integrity of materials. One remarkable chronophotograph from the 1960s tracks the span and reach of a seated, spacesuit-clad pilot's arms: a long exposure records the illuminated path of his gloved hands across a black void (fig. 3.5).<sup>7</sup> Overlaid

that "it was no longer possible to photograph inside the boss's kitchen," appears in *This Ain't China: A Photonovel* (1974). A few years later, Sekula claims that "[Lewis] Baltz's photographs of enigmatic factories fail to tell us anything about them, to recall Brecht's remark about a hypothetical photograph of the Krupp works," in "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)" (1976/1978), in Allan Sekula, *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 64. And Sekula directly cites Benjamin, and Brecht's statement, in Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs" (1981), in *Photography against the Grain*, 87–88. *Aerospace Folktales*, finished in 1973—by which time Sekula could have read the Mitchell translation of Benjamin—may even be the first of Sekula's direct responses to Brecht's provocation.

5. Brecht quoted in Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," 526; cf. Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism," 62–64.
6. Allan Sekula, "Photography between Labor and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948–1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton*, ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983), 201. Sekula first introduced the term in "The Traffic in Photographs," 79.
7. *Convair/General Dynamics Plant and Personnel, Dry Immersion Bed*, ca. 1960–1969, in San Diego Air and Space Museum (hereinafter SDASM) Archives, catalogue no. 10\_0008118. Related color versions include *EVA studies—'Life Sci binder*, ca. 1963, in SDASM Archives, nos. 14\_001405, 14\_001406, and 14\_001407. Over fifty thousand

with a white rectangular grid, the image employs the same photographic technique developed for measuring the movement of worker's hands in assembly-line work pioneered by the Taylorist worker-efficiency studies of Frank Gilbreth and Lillian Gilbreth roughly fifty years earlier.<sup>8</sup> Although not a tool for disciplining of the workforce, these motion studies were similarly part of the research and design process for optimizing the fit between man and machine. At the other end of the product lifecycle, a photograph from the 1970s depicts the moment tens of small projectiles scattered by a Tomahawk missile impact the earth and the fuselage of a grounded airplane, presumably the test target (fig. 3.6).<sup>9</sup> Individual bomblets from the cluster bomb are frozen in midair, highlighted amidst the chaos of exploding dirt by perfect red circles superimposed onto the image, presumably so they can be counted and their trajectory plotted. Some bodies are made visible, measured, and tracked so that they can be accommodated by high-tech machines built to augment their power; other, unseen bodies are rent apart, fragmented and dismembered by those same machines.<sup>10</sup> In neither case is the instrumental photograph a neutral

images from Convair and parent company General Dynamics in the SDASM Archives are available online at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sdasmarchives/>.

8. On the Gilbreths, see Elspeth H. Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture 1884–1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), ch. 2; and Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 339–349.
9. *Convair/General Dynamics Tomahawk*, ca. 1970–1979, in SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0006495.
10. During the Vietnam War, cluster munitions were regularly dropped as bombs rather than launched as missiles. In the “Secret War” in Laos alone, “from 1964 to 1973, the U.S. dropped over 2 million tons of ordnance . . . in 580,000 bombing missions, the equivalent of one planeload every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years. At least 270 million cluster bomblets were dropped as part of the bombing campaign; approximately 80 million [30%] failed to detonate. . . . At least one third of Laos is contaminated with UXO [unexploded ordinance] based on surveys. . . . For years, the U.S. averaged an annual contribution of \$2.0–2.5 million for UXO clearance, a sum that stands in stark contrast to the \$13.3 million a day (in 2013 dollars), or \$44 billion in total that the U.S. spent bombing Laos over a 9 year period.” Not only have “less than 1% of the bomblets that failed to detonate . . . been cleared,” but “more than 98% of known cluster bomb victims are civilians and 40% are children.” The U.S. has failed to sign the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions banning their use, and the U.S. military maintains that cluster munitions are a necessary part of national defense. “Cluster Bomb Fact Sheet,” Legacies of War, <http://legaciesofwar.org/resources/cluster-bomb-fact-sheet/>; and see Channapha Khamvongsa and Elaine Russell, “Legacies of War: Cluster Bombs in Laos,” *Critical Asian Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 281–306. A further 27 million cluster submunitions were dropped on Cambodia and 97 million on Vietnam; Handicap International, *Circle of Impact: The Fatal Footprint of Cluster Munitions on People and Communities* (Brussels: Handicap International, 2007), 23, 39. During the war, Sekula had seen the interviews with, as well as drawings by, Lao survivors compiled in *Voices from the Plain of Jars: Life under an Air War*, ed. Fred Branfman (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), which brought the Secret War to light in the face of U.S. government denials that it was taking place. See Allan Sekula, introductory description for *A Short Film for Laos*, dir. Allan Sekula, digital video (2007), a travelogue in which

depiction of an event: in these images, the camera's selective power to make visible is identified with the corporate power that protects and augments "our" bodies while targeting and destroying "their" bodies.

Yet many of the photographs made by and for Convair are not limited to instrumental roles strictly internal to the work process. Indeed, the majority of the tens of thousands photographs of assembling, testing, and launching missiles and aircraft seem not to have been part of the work process itself: simply filed away after being taken, they record and archive the actions of the corporation. A kind of bureaucratic monument made up of thousands of individual images never meant to be viewed or consulted afterward, they are made only to be accumulated and thereby silently testify to the technical achievements and the complexity of the process required to accomplish them. A visual reification of work, their existence is simply proof that something was made or done.

In contrast with this internal archive of relatively banal shots of machines, parts, infrastructure, and factory or test environments, are the photographs made for an audience outside the corporation: its sponsors, investors, clients, or, in the case of Convair and other military contractors, the general public, who may also have the power to influence the policy direction and budget priorities of the government. This making-public of the work of Convair and its parent company General Dynamics was an important part of the corporate and governmental push for funding the Space Race and the development of aeronautics during the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> The huge increases in government money for military aerospace applications in the 1960s paradoxically relied on images of jet engines, rocketry, and aerospace that were simultaneously negative and positive: on one hand, creating fear of destruction that could be wrought by Soviet missiles and, on the other, creating optimistic images of American rockets and space exploration, including the founding of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the lunar landing program, that captured the imagination of millions. As a Lockheed engineer's son, enamored by the image of a Polaris ballistic missile—launched from submarines and designed to carry nuclear warheads—emerging from underwater, described it: "The Polaris was beautiful . . . to a boy who thumbtacked its picture on his wall, a pure and universal shape if there every was one, white and smooth, perfectly frozen above the convulsed ocean surface through which it had just burst. Lockheed always

Sekula visits the Plain of Jars in northern Laos and Branfman reads testimony from the book. See also Sekula's pair of photographic diptychs made in Laos, *B-52 Crater* and *Whisper* (both 2005–2006), which juxtapose a mammoth bomb crater with two Lao villagers intimately whispering to each other.

11. "During the 1960s the aerospace industry was by far the largest industrial user of government as well as the leading user of private R&D funding. . . . In addition to aeronautical advances and the development of the space program, the industry pioneered the new science of systems analysis." Donald M. Pattillo, *Pushing the Envelope: The American Aircraft Industry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 250.



photographed its missiles headed up, never killing end down.”<sup>12</sup> Photographic stasis could capture and preserve such moments of ecstatic triumph over gravity while minimizing the costs behind the production of aerospace technology as well as its destructive instrumentality.

Such publicity images made by Convair include quasi-utopian models of the future, ranging from photographs of people at work in a life-size mock-up of a spacecraft for purposes of research and development, to images of imaginary spacecraft drifting in vast starscapes.<sup>13</sup> Alongside paintings of future space stations orbiting large planets are photographs of miniature, three-dimensional models of space stations floating in front of illustrated backdrops of stars and planets—the same technique used for matte painting in Hollywood cinema, but already present in some of the earliest nineteenth-century scientific illustrations of outer space.<sup>14</sup> In

12. David Beers, *Blue Sky Dream: A Memoir of America's Fall from Grace* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 39. Beers's father worked in Lockheed's Missiles and Space Division in the Santa Clara Valley of the San Francisco Bay Area, while Sekula's father worked in Lockheed's Burbank facility, just north of Los Angeles. Of course, as I have just shown, aerospace corporations did photograph their missiles "killing end down," but these were not released as public promotional materials.
13. *Space Station Mock Up—Life Sci Binder*, ca. 1960–1969, in SDASM Archives, no. 14\_001212, and a black-and-white version, *Convair/General Dynamics Plant and Personnel, IMSSS [sic]*, ca. 1960–1969, in SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0008127; and *Convair/General Dynamics Atlas*, ca. 1958, in SDASM Archives, no. 10-001943. On Convair's spacecraft simulator IMSS (Integrated Manned Systems Simulator), see Robert A. Ackley and Stanley Rogers, "A Manned Systems Simulator for Design and Research," *IEEE Transactions on Aerospace and Electronic Systems* AES-2, no. 4 (July 1966): 820–831. Convair even sold a plastic scale-model kit of a proposed space station built into the interior of an Atlas missile as *Atlas Space Station* (Hawk Plastic Models, 1960), rereleased as *Manned Orbiting Laboratory* (Hawk Plastic Models, 1968); see "Convair Atlas Space Station/MOL (1958)," Fantastic Plastic, <http://fantastic-plastic.com/CONVAIR%20ATLAS%20MOL%20PAGE.htm>.
14. See the series of such images in the Atlas Negative Collection, SDASM Archives, including nos. 14\_001330\_3, 14\_001331\_3, and 14\_001333\_3; and compare James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon: Considered as a Planet, a World, and a Satellite* (London: John Murray, 1874), plates 1, 21, 23. The paintings in the Convair archive are mostly signed by "J. Sentovic," presumably John M. Sentovic, an illustrator at Convair Astronautics through the mid-1960s who mostly rendered the concepts of rocket scientist and visionary Krafft Ehricke; see Jack Williams, "John Sentovic, 74; Graphic Designer and Scratch Board Artist," obituary, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, September 28, 1999. Ehricke, an advocate of space colonization and the industrialization of the moon, was part of the team of Nazi rocket scientists headed by Wernher von Braun brought to the U.S. after World War II by the army during Operation Paperclip, against President Harry Truman's orders denying entry to Germans who had joined the Nazi party. On Ehricke, see Linda Hunt, *Secret Agenda: The United States Government, Nazi Scientists, and Project Paperclip, 1945 to 1990* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 251–52; on Operation Paperclip generally, see also Eric Lichtblau, *The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014); Annie Jacobsen, *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program to Bring Nazi Scientists to America* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2014); and Tom Bower, *The Paperclip Conspiracy: The Hunt for the Nazi Scientists* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1987).



these images, three-dimensional scale models, photography, and painting converge as means for picturing a projected but as-yet-unrealized future: photography's convincing depiction of light and spatial depth aids the viewer in projecting such a future as real and inhabitable space, thereby crystallizing an allegedly imminent future in the present.<sup>15</sup>

More pragmatically, this publicity often illustrates processes or products for the public or commemorates the debut of a product, sometimes also honoring the workers who built it. In contrast with images used in research, design, assembly, and testing processes that are *operatively* instrumental, such publicity could be seen, only slightly paradoxically, as *symbolically* instrumental. These publicity images fall into a handful of genres, sometimes directed at an audience outside the corporation, sometimes at an internal audience, or both. Relatively rare but striking are wide photographic panoramas: some shot outdoors on the runway, capturing crowds of workers or visitors clustered around parked aircraft; others shot indoors, showing an immensely vast span of factory space, with whole departments of engineers with desks, huge racks of parts, and, in just one corner, ten or twelve eight-story-tall Atlas missiles being assembled simultaneously (fig. 3.7).<sup>16</sup> While these panoramas attempt to depict the scale of work being performed at Convair, and are a popular trope in other pictorial histories of aerospace corporations, they also render the human figures that inhabit them tiny and indistinguishable.<sup>17</sup>

Integrating recognizable individuals into the vast workings of Convair required other pictorial approaches. In pictures that apparently hung in the company board room and possibly the factory, a mixture of photomontage and graphic illustration was used to combine geometric shapes suggesting abstract concepts (a rectangular grid, triangles that resemble idealized wings, undulating lines that suggest electromagnetic waves) and images of the assembly line and Convair products—missiles, airplanes, individual machine parts—with the silhouettes of figures: a pilot climbing into a jet, the worker's hands manipulating a tool, and so on.<sup>18</sup> Lying apart from

15. In contrast with Convair's use of photography, NASA's art program preferred painting over photography because the former, more craft-based medium "humanized the space program, by privileging the artist over the mechanical camera as a tool of public history making . . . demonstrating that [the space program] was not the product of a society driven by machines, but rather of technology put in the service of the human imagination." Anne Collins Goodyear, "The Relationship of Art to Science and Technology in the United States, 1957–1971: Five Case Studies" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2002), 59, 61.
16. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Plant and Personnel, F-102/F-106 Personnel*, ca. 1955–1969, in SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0005783; and Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Kearny Mesa Plant and Personnel*, ca. 1955–1969, in SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0006256.
17. Compare the similar panoramas in Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, *Days of Trial and Triumph: A Pictorial History of Lockheed* (Burbank, CA: Lockheed, 1969).
18. These illustrations, nos. 10-001016 to 10-001024 in SDASM Archives, are labeled variously as "Board Room Photos" and "Factory Images." Also in the SDASM Archives, the separate Robert Kemp Collection, assembled by the artistic director at Convair, includes safety and workplace-discipline posters that were hung in the factory, suggesting the montages labeled "Factory Images" could have been hung there as well.

such relatively rare approaches that draw on modernist montage and graphic design, are “straight” photographs of individuals at the factory. Perhaps the most visually striking are a series showing one or two workers at a time, clad head to toe in all-white oversuits, with white hats, booties, and gloves, at the center of the frame, surrounded by a series of shiny, bright, concentric metallic rings that project toward the viewer.<sup>19</sup> Viewers soon realize the workers are standing inside the round, steel body of an Atlas missile, each section of the long missile forming another, larger ring around the worker’s bodies. They alternately bend over and reach above their heads to dust or polish their all-metal surroundings, sometimes pausing to examine their work. In one frame, a single, small worker at the far end of the giant tube pauses from his task to look upward, and the conical tip of the missile behind him forms a bright ring around his head—a halo (fig. 3.8).<sup>20</sup> Visually exalted, practically sacred, the unnamed worker has finished his manual task and regards his achievement, realizing full self-presence in the most otherworldly, artificial, and unnatural of environments. The inside of the missile will eventually be filled with unbreathable, cryogenic liquid oxygen, used to launch it into the otherwise uninhabitable upper atmosphere or even out of Earth’s orbit: in addition to its use as a nuclear-warhead-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Atlas was the rocket that powered the Project Mercury space program. Thus the worker in his clean suit prefigures the technological marvel of the astronaut in his spacesuit, who, when the missile is topped with a “command module,” will be able to survive and operate even in such unlivable celestial environments—the worker vicariously anticipates humanity’s heavenly ascent and power over space. He is heroically integrated into the workings of the inorganic machine: when the arch of the worker’s bent-over back rhymes with the perfect circle of the missile’s body, the image recalls Lewis Hine’s *Powerhouse Mechanic* (1921), which employed the same convention of mirroring between the arch of the worker’s body and the massive machine on which he labored, in order to ennoble the worker’s exertion of power over forces greater than he while simultaneously integrating his soft, organic body with their hard, metallic form (fig. 3.9). As Elspeth Brown has argued, Hine’s portraits affirming the power and dignity of individual workers ultimately served the “corporate paternalism” of his time. Having given up exposing exploitative working conditions, Hine’s work portraits helped to secure labor peace and promote a conservative, post-World-War-I corporate liberalism within the framework of the growth of corporate publicity and public relations as professional disciplines, appearing in the employee magazines of companies such as Western Electric.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Convair used the image of the angelic worker inside an Atlas missile alongside illustrations of futuristic space stations, aerial views of the factory, missile launches, images of engineers at desks and blackboards, and components being assembled on the

19. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Atlas, Atlas Missile*, ca. 1955–1969, nos. 10\_0007386, 10\_0007391, 10\_0007392, 10\_0007434, 10\_0007446, and 10\_0007456, in SDASM Archives.

20. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Atlas, Atlas Missile*, ca. 1955–1969, no. 10\_0007434, in SDASM Archives.

21. Brown, ch. 3.

line, for public relations installations, specifically on text-and-image panels for an exhibition titled *Men and Missiles* in 1960.<sup>22</sup> Except with the Convair image, because the photographer has frozen the worker at a moment of contemplative reflection, rather than flexing his muscles or physically exerting himself as in Hine's photograph, the image gives the false impression that manual labor has been replaced by intellectual labor.

Aside from isolating and heroicizing an individual, anonymous worker, the other major genre used by corporate photography to depict people at the factory is the group portrait. These come in several types. Common is the shot of dignitaries visiting the factory: army generals and other military brass, politicians, pilots, and astronauts are given the company tour through the factory, seeing how parts are assembled. One photograph from Convair shows a man in a suit reaching out to lay his hand on the outer skin of a Tomahawk missile, his face illuminated by a yellow glow and graced by a look of wonder and admiration.<sup>23</sup> Another shows astronauts from the Mercury program, likely accompanied by Wernher von Braun, listening to an executive explain the machinery in the foreground (fig. 3.10).<sup>24</sup> When the higher-ups don't make the trip to the factory floor, another shot will do: generals and executives laughing or talking together while admiringly handling or regarding small, scale models of air- or spacecraft in their offices, apparently quite pleased with their power to turn these toylike objects into reality through mammoth budgets and an invisible army of workers.<sup>25</sup> Finally, there is the implicit opposite of the honorific portrait of bigwigs: the formal portrait of a work group. Although only one small subgroup from the workforce fits into the frame at once, a cluster of employees arranged in rows, sometimes arrayed in front of or around their product, provides a temporary leveling of the corporate hierarchy, an acknowledgement of the role that each worker played in a particular process. While the industrial group-portrait provides a temporary visual equality between workers, it also attests to the order and organization managed by the larger corporation that directs and

22. See the installation views labeled "Space Laboratory Booth, October 11, 1960," in "Misc: General Dynamics/Astronautics Photos," SiloWorld, <http://www.siloworld.net/GD-A%20%20San%20Diego%20Aerospace/MISC/misc.htm>.
23. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Tomahawk*, ca. 1970–1979, no. 10\_0006274, in SDASM Archives.
24. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Facilities–Lindbergh Field Plt. 19*, 1959, no. 14\_000232, in SDASM Archives. Von Braun was a key engineer in the German V-2 rocket program recruited by the U.S. Army during Operation Paperclip. While a Nazi party and Schutzstaffel (SS) member, he witnessed the slave labor in the V-2 factory, which was deadlier than the rocket itself. When the mostly hagiographic film *I Aim at the Stars* was released in 1960, which depicted him as an apolitical scientist who collaborated with the Nazis only in order to realize his childhood dream of spaceflight, it also spawned the satirical comment that "I aim at the stars . . . but sometimes I hit London." The same year, Von Braun was transferred from the Army's rocket program to become director of the Marshall Space Flight Center at the newly created NASA. See Lichtblau; Jacobsen; Hunt; and Bower.
25. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Plant and Personnel, F-102/F-106 Personnel*, ca. 1955–1969, no. 10\_0005864, in SDASM Archives.

disciplines their work, just as it commissioned and arranged their photograph.

Out of the hundreds of images I consulted from the tens of thousands in Convair's archive, I found only one that retained a trace of the informal social relations among workers within the factory—their own attitudes and viewpoints on their workplace apart from the official views promoted by their employer. Surely an unofficial use made of the company's equipment, the black-and-white photograph depicts the dingy corner of an office, a few empty desks, and directly below the large clock on the wall keeping close watch on the regimented time of work, a large, crudely lettered cardboard sign that reads, "This photograph made especially for Frank Shard (the old coal digger)" (fig. 3.11).<sup>26</sup> The room is as empty as the four clean ashtrays sitting unused on the corner of the desk. The significance of the photograph, the room, and Shard's nickname are all lost, known only to those who labored there, those who gave some meaning to that empty place through the social interaction that grew from their communal work but exceeded the immediate, instrumental tasks of their jobs—meaning and activity that the stasis of the photographic index could point to but not directly represent.

In addition to corporate photography by Convair, there is one other major photographic approach to its factory that precedes Sekula's: liberal documentary photography in the service of the state.<sup>27</sup> On assignment from the Farm Security Administration (FSA), Russell Lee photographed the environs of San Diego in December 1940 and May–June 1941, tracking, as other FSA photographers had in California, the migrant workers who had settled there, many living in temporary or precarious housing: boarding houses, rented rooms, trailers, makeshift shacks, even converted streetcars and tents, some of them provided by the FSA and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). However, rather than the itinerant farmworkers pictured in other parts of the state, many of those in San Diego had come to participate in the booming aircraft industry or work for the navy and marines, as well as in the construction industry needed to meet the needs of the growing population. Lee also pictures the major employer in the boomtown, aside from the military: Consolidated Aircraft (later Convair). Photos of the exterior of the Lindbergh Field plant stretch across frame, with another large section under construction in another frame—they indicate little more than the massive size of the plant.<sup>28</sup> Two desultory snapshots show the distant backs of workers in the

26. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Atlas*, ca. 1960–1969, no. 10\_0009872, in SDASM Archives.

27. On social documentary photography commissioned by the Farm Security Administration as employing a "rhetoric of recruitment" with the social policies of the New Deal welfare state, which was part of "a cultural and political mobilization to resecure social authority, belief in the reformability of the capitalist system through state regulation, and identification with a cohesive national culture," see John Tagg, "The Plane of Decent Seeing: Documentary and the Rhetoric of Recruitment," in *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 83–84.

28. Russell Lee, *Consolidated Aircraft. San Diego, California, 1940*, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038232; Russell Lee, *Consolidated Aircraft Plant under Construction. San Diego, California, 1940*, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call



middle ground, streaming through the crosswalk across Highway 1 into the factory—basically the same spot where Sekula stood to make *Untitled Slide Sequence*, only prior to the construction of the pedestrian overpass—but they communicate little more than the fact of going to work (fig. 3.12).<sup>29</sup> A few group portraits show workers on their lunch break, sitting on the curb across from the factory, lined up next to each other, cars in the parking lot behind them.<sup>30</sup> Squinting in the bright sun, the young white men nonchalantly regard the photographer, to little effect—lunch will end and they will file back in and return to work.

The distant, mundane, summary character of Lee’s views of Convair workers contrasts with images of another California boomtown made by Dorothea Lange shortly later, after the United States entered the war. Visually more akin to *Untitled Slide Sequence*, Lange’s *End of Shift 3:30* (1943) captures the faces and bodies of workers in Richmond (just north of Berkeley) walking down a set of stairs, leaving the Kaiser shipyard at the end of their shift (fig. 3.13).<sup>31</sup> Lange’s view of workers

number LC-USF34-038231; Russell Lee, *Consolidated Aircraft Factory. San Diego, California*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038166; Russell Lee, *San Diego, California. Cars Parked outside Consolidated Aircraft Corporation*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038164; and Russell Lee, *Workers’ Automobiles Parked near the Airplane Factories. San Diego, California. Providing Parking Space for Automobiles and Getting the Cars in and out at Shift Changing Time Have Been Big Problems*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038168-D.

29. Russell Lee, *Workmen Entering Consolidated Aircrafts Early in the Morning. San Diego, California*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038202; and Russell Lee, *Employees Going to Work at the Consolidated Aircrafts, San Diego, California. Consolidated Is Steadily Expanding. Plans Are Now under Way for the Construction of Eight More Plants near the Plants Already in Operation*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038226.
30. Russell Lee, *Workers Eating Lunch on Curb across the Street from the Consolidated Airplane Factory. San Diego, California*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038189; Russell Lee, *Workmen during Lunch Period, across the Street from the Consolidated Airplane Factory. San Diego, California*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038190; and Russell Lee, *Workmen during Lunch Period, across the Street from the Consolidated Airplane Factory. San Diego, California*, 1940, in Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038191.
31. Title, date, and caption from collection information in Oakland Museum of California, A67.137.97162. The photograph was included, without the caption, in Lange’s 1966 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art and in the subsequent exhibition catalogue as *Shipyard Construction Workers, Richmond, California*, and dated 1942; see *Dorothea Lange*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 56. After having been let go from the FSA, Lange worked for the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and photographed Richmond during the process of the Army’s detention, relocation, and internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans in 1942. When her later employer of the early 1940s, the Office of War Information (OWI), was not open to a story on Richmond, she and Ansel Adams pitched one to *Fortune* magazine, which ran as “Richmond Took a Beating: From Civic Chaos Came Ships for War and Some Hope for the Future,” *Fortune*, February 1945, 262, 268–69. Although not included in the published article, if the later date from the Oakland Museum is correct, the photograph could have been shot for this assignment; if earlier, it could have been shot while



streaming out of the shipyard contrasts with the rigid, separate worlds Lee had depicted in San Diego: men at the factory, women making coffee or washing clothes in makeshift accommodations at home, a Mexican underclass whose housing was in even worse condition than that of the newly arrived white workers. Instead, women and African Americans, side by side with white men, eyes forward, stride directly toward the camera, all in similar work clothes and hard hats, surrounding the photographer's camera on all sides.<sup>32</sup> As Lange wrote in her caption, almost breathlessly: "Notice, how these people are entirely unrelated to each other. This is the story of these times and the shipyards." Lange's wonder at the huge numbers of different, "unrelated" people walking shoulder-by-shoulder out of the factory captures both a sense of promise, optimism, and hope officially promoted of the war effort as well as the tenuousness of the connections between these people as they are released from work.<sup>33</sup> Aside from the woman's hand around the arm of the man next to her—friend, husband, lover?—the people do not regard each other, remaining withdrawn, perhaps exhausted, most only glancing up at the photographer or down at their feet. Indeed, the booming economy produced not only national unity out of diversity but also the apparent alignment of worker's interests with those of corporate capital and the state, which could also pit citizens against each other. Lange herself had documented with distress the appropriation of property from and forced internment of American citizens of Japanese ancestry, and had her photographs buried by the government for her trouble, marking the end of social documentary photography as a state-supported enterprise. African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other minorities would continue to face discrimination in jobs, housing, and social services during the war, sometimes leading to riots

Lange was employed by the WRA or OWI. On Lange in these years, see Milton Meltzer, *Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1978), 238–249; and Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life beyond Limits* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 303–342.

32. Other FSA and OWI photographers also shot crowds of workers leaving factories in the 1940s, but unlike Lange, they largely remain above or apart from the crowd; compare John Vachon's series of workers leaving the Pennsylvania shipyards in Beaumont, Texas (1943), in Library of Congress; and Howard Hollem's views of workers at the Consolidated Aircraft (later Convair) factory in Fort Worth, Texas, from 1939, in Library of Congress. Hollem also shows views of individual workers (many of whom are women) at work on the assembly line, as well as shots illustrating the vast scale of the factory, that anticipate Convair's corporate photographs of the 1950s and 60s.
33. John Tagg argues that in the case of Lange and a number of other women photographers employed by the OWI, "attention was being turned—at least, around the edges of workaday projects—to the effect the war was having on the social economy of sexual difference, whose erosion was now seen not as destructive, degrading, and *defeminizing*, as was so often the case in picturing the crisis of the 1930s, but as positive and productive—as *expanding the possibilities of difference*." John Tagg, "Running and Dodging, 1943: The Breakup of the Documentary Moment," in *The Disciplinary Frame*, 189–90; emphasis in original. The difference pictured in Lange's *End of Shift 3:30* is clearly also racial as well. On Lange's sensitivity to bodily difference, see also Sally Stein, "Peculiar Grace: Dorothea Lange and the Testimony of the Body," in *Dorothea Lange: A Visual Life*, ed. Elizabeth Partridge (Washington, D.C., 1994), 57–89.

both by and against them.<sup>34</sup> And amidst the great migration of thousands to northern and western cities, Lange seems to have worried what the anomie and rootlessness of the laboring masses newly arrived to the “barrenness . . . meanness . . . [and] homelessness” of “the new and raw frontier” might bring.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps this explains another photograph of hers, also titled *End of Shift*, that is remarkably similar the final photograph in *Untitled Slide Sequence* (fig. 3.14). It closes her Richmond sequence by emphasizing the fleeting anonymity of the shipyard workers: an assortment of legs caught midstride, sometimes blurred, moving across the pavement, scissoring it into bright chunks of light, torsos cut off at the head by the top of the frame, all doubled by the long shadows they cast on the ground, shadows even bigger than the bodies of the workers themselves.<sup>36</sup>

Sekula’s *Untitled Slide Sequence* seems to lack even the provisional common cause hinted at in Lange’s World-War-II photographs of Kaiser’s shipyard workers. What does it mean that the fleeting collective they form outside the factory gate appears to be one borne of contingency and circumstance rather than elective cooperation? And what is the trespassing artist’s relation to these people who mostly just pass by? Those who do look back often offer only basic acknowledgment of the fact of the camera, evincing either mild curiosity, stern guardedness, or the slightest amusement. Based on their work clothes, the group appears mostly blue collar, with a sprinkling of white-collar and pink-collar workers—or, more precisely, workers and management, judging from some of the suits. San Diego was a military town whose Navy and Marine Corps bases were a major part of the economy and civic life. Many of those pictured likely considered themselves part of President Richard Nixon’s “silent majority”—discontented with the progress of the war and the ailing economy but contemptuous of the counterculture and student radicalism—and would vote for Nixon in his landslide reelection later that fall. Even if they opposed the Vietnam War as Sekula did, the economic self-interest of the more than ten thousand employees of Convair would have obliged them to oppose cuts to the military budget that threatened the growth of the company.<sup>37</sup>

At the time the piece was shot in early 1972, work at the Lindbergh Field plant (now San Diego International Airport) was split between producing subassemblies for domestic airliners, military cargo planes, and the General Dynamics F-111 fighter-bomber, made famous as a hypertrophic icon of U.S. technological

34. See Tagg, “Running and Dodging, 1943,” 194–207.

35. Dorothea Lange, diary entries quoted in Gordon, 335.

36. Titled *End of Shift, Richmond, California* and dated 1942, it is the final image of the Richmond sequence in the 1966 MoMA exhibition catalogue; see *Dorothea Lange*, exh. cat., 61. Although Lange died a few months before the show opened, she had worked closely with curator John Szarkowski in selecting its contents. Sekula mentions that he did not see Lange’s pictures until later, in the mid-1970s, when he saw her proof sheets in the Oakland Museum; Risberg, “Imaginary Economies,” 242.

37. On Convair, see Bill Yenne, *Into the Sunset: The Convair Story* (Lyme, CT: General Dynamics Convair Division/Greenwich Publishing Group, 1995); the number of employees in 1972 is given on p. 101. On Sekula’s opposition to the war, including participation in protest actions on the UCSD campus, see “Conversation between Allan Sekula and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh,” 29–31; and chapter 1 of this dissertation.

superiority and military might in James Rosenquist's gigantesque painting *F-111* (1964–1965; figs. 3.15–3.17).<sup>38</sup> Created at the height of the space race—during which Cold War aggression was sublimated into optimistic enthusiasm for advanced aerospace technology—Rosenquist's painting deftly interweaves the glistening metal of the fuselage into other icons of consumerist America, from gleaming, missile-like hairdryers to automobile tires to light bulbs to vanilla cake and spaghetti, all united by the formal language of flatly painted billboard advertising. Rosenquist's superimposition of a colorful umbrella onto a mushroom cloud near the nose of the plane sums up the blithe indifference in which consumerist spectacle cloaked the threat of worldwide nuclear destruction. By the spring of 1972, the airplane's symbolic value had already shifted. Although built for Cold War conflict with the USSR rather than counterinsurgency, the F-111 was pressed into service in the Vietnam War. After 1969, "the air war was intensified . . . over the next two years America dropped more bombs on Indochina than it had in all of World War II."<sup>39</sup> It would only continue: the F-111 would soon help conduct the heaviest bombing of the war with further attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong in North Vietnam in the summer and fall of 1972.<sup>40</sup>

And beyond the F-111's specific connections to the war in Southeast Asia, Convair and parent company General Dynamics were part of a domestic aerospace industry that was also key to the economy and cultural imagination of the U.S. in the 1960s and 70s, when the Sun Belt and the West Coast developed as rival industrial powers to the Northeast, helping to propel the postwar economic boom in San Diego. Yet while air travel had formerly seemed a glamorous new technological frontier, disenchantment was growing, not only because the war showed the sinister side of the aerospace industry, but also the industry itself was beginning to shrink with the decline of Space-Race-fueled government spending.<sup>41</sup> A series of consolidations, layoffs, and bankruptcies followed, anticipating the broader economic recession of the second half of the decade; the deregulation of the airline industry at the end of the decade further laid the groundwork for neoliberalism as a new economic paradigm.

Convair's place in the military-industrial complex helps to explain why Sekula's uninflected approach is far from a heroicization of the working class. One could even imagine it as an attempt to confront or even accuse, to put a face to, the anonymous "one-dimensional man" of advanced industrial society, separated from others by a highly specialized division of labor but integrated in an efficient system

38. For details on the 2.5-million-square-foot Lindbergh Field facility, see Yenne, 71–78, 90, 97.

39. Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 22.

40. "F-111A in Southeast Asia," National Museum of the U.S. Air Force website, September 20, 2012, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=18098>; and "North Vietnam: Linebacker and Linebacker II," National Museum of the U.S. Air Force website, September 21, 2012, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=15298>.

41. On the cultural history of air travel and the aerospace industry in the U.S. at this time, see Killen, 15–22.

of production and consumerist satisfaction—and who could soon send the artist to war. Circumscribed by a limited, technocratic instrumental rationality, the one-dimensional man's pursuit of efficient ends (whether the production of goods in the so-called defense industry or inflation of statistics about the ever-increasing numbers of enemies killed) would prohibit him from qualitatively questioning those ends (the conduct of the war).<sup>42</sup>

Yet Sekula does not assume a position of simple opposition to or denunciation of the workers of Convair. So embedded was southern California in the war economy that Sekula would have had difficulty separating it from his life, the life of his family, and the university. If he had shot *Untitled Slide Sequence* roughly a decade earlier, he could have counted his teacher John Baldessari among those employed by Convair: although Baldessari apparently did not work at the Lindbergh Field facility pictured in *Untitled Slide Sequence*, around 1960 he briefly worked as a technical illustrator, evidently for a subcontractor, drawing the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missiles made in San Diego by Convair.<sup>43</sup> Given the interpenetration of the aerospace industry into the everyday life of San Diego, the briefness of the contact seems to preclude such a judgment over the people pictured, at least on the part of the viewer. Describing the kind of collectivity pictured here requires not only attending to the faces or looks of the passersby but also, in the particular combination of stasis and movement, the intervals of black that structure the slide sequence, placing it somewhere between film and still photography. These intervals, and the site of the photographs, show the group is no longer bound by the company clock and exists only in passing as it moves through an interstitial space between work and home. One name for this interstitial space is everyday life.

Henri Lefebvre, in his study of everyday life, emphasizes the fundamental difficulty at the heart of his investigation: “there is a certain obscurity in the very concept of *everyday life*. Where is it to be found? . . . Where does the living contact between concrete individual man and other human beings operate? In fragmented labor? In family life? In leisure?”<sup>44</sup> For while productive activity and everyday life had been more tightly bound in earlier eras, in modernity the separation of public

42. See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 13–14, 25–26. Marcuse uses the interdependence of defense corporations and the military as a key example of the one-dimensional society in which efficient production satiates consumer desire but denies individuals control over “the decisions over life and death, over personal and national security” (36–37).

43. Christopher Knight, “Oral History Interview with John Baldessari, 1992 April 4–5,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-john-baldessari-11806>. When asked about the details of the job, Baldessari responded, “It was a private company that made technical manuals. I quit because it was too boring.” John Baldessari studio, email message to author, August 8, 2012. On Convair and the Atlas missile, which was retired as a nuclear-warhead-armed ICBM in 1965 but continued to carry satellite and other payloads into the twenty-first century, see Yenne, *Into the Sunset*, 71–74.

44. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, *Introduction*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991), 31; emphasis in original.

and private spheres creates a differentiation between specialized activities, which are then held together only in their separateness: “we work to earn our leisure and leisure has only one meaning: to get away from work. A vicious circle.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the first definition of everyday life must be “a *negative* one” that proceeds by stripping away these activities. And if “we remove the highly specialized occupations from man and the human, what is left? An apparently very scanty residue.” Yet this residue is where Lefebvre then seeks a positive content for everyday life, since “this so-called residue contains a ‘human raw material’ which holds hidden wealth.”<sup>46</sup> Lefebvre further describes this “positive content” as a “common ground,” a “bond,” and a “meeting place” for life activities, claiming that it constitutes a totality of human social relations, so that “superior [i.e., technical and specialized] activities leave a ‘technical vacuum’ between one another which is filled up with everyday life.”<sup>47</sup> But despite Lefebvre’s attempts to extract from everyday life a vision of social totality, the residue of the human detected here may remain scant, the meeting place only a crossing in transit from public to private space, the bond but glancing contact. The common ground may need to be thought, paradoxically, as vacuum, as an empty space, or as an unfilled interval between work, leisure, and home.

This seems to be the provisional conclusion of *Untitled Slide Sequence*, which pictures just such an interval between work, leisure, and home: the empty space of the everyday precisely describes the siting and framing of the piece.<sup>48</sup> Attending to this space between the factory and the street, where the private and public cross, clears the way for a possible reevaluation of the social ordering of these distinct spheres, a politicization of the consensus about economic self-interest and public good. Positioned just outside the factory gate, the photographer’s camera records those who pass by without speaking, in close bodily proximity but without other social contact. This glancing quality is confirmed by the sideways pan away from the figures mounting the steps and down to the sidewalk, as the photographer furtively lowers his camera when the security guard begins to approach (fig. 3.3). With only a stray pair of dark feet and long, thin shadow of legs at the top, the final frame is nearly filled with the surface of the concrete walkway. That is, the frame is paradoxically filled with a nearly empty ground, thin and washed out by the brightness of the exposure, almost a negative space, although one still marked with the traces and shadows of passersby, little more than a scant residue.

While Sekula’s photo-works often return to the problem of how to picture labor or the relations of production, he refuses to accept the “positivity” and “presence” of

45. Lefebvre, 41.

46. Lefebvre, 86; emphasis in original.

47. Lefebvre, 87, 97.

48. This is not to say that Sekula’s approach to the everyday is only, or even mostly, framed by Lefebvre. Although a certain line of existential Marxism from Jean-Paul Sartre through the Situationist International was a reference point for him, earlier and more formative were the phenomenological Marxism of his teacher Marcuse and especially an American tradition of the sociology of work, stretching back from Stan Weir to Harry Braverman to C. Wright Mills.



the human figure or laboring body.<sup>49</sup> As much as his project involves bringing into visibility those places and people so often cast out of the public space of appearance, that visibility is informed by the difficulty of picturing the social relations between those people and places, the difficulty of pointing to the limits of what can be seen. Instead of seeking simply to valorize work in order to counter the effacement of labor inherent in commodity fetishism, many of his works probe the aesthetic and political possibility of moments suspended just at the edges of labor and exchange. Sekula's photo-works consistently address the precariousness of work, of being out of work, as much as labor. And his early, trenchant criticism of "the find-a-bum school of concerned photography" does not prevent him from going on to picture the unemployed, the homeless, or those otherwise at the margins of the formal economy.<sup>50</sup> His later work *Fish Story* (1989–1995) shows the line at an unemployment office in Gdansk; waterfront vendors squatting unused shipping containers in Mexico; and, as the last human figures to appear in the work, a portrait of an African-American couple posing on a sunny day in a truck yard in Los Angeles. According to the caption, they are "Mike and Mary, an unemployed couple who survive by scavenging and who, from time to time, seek shelter in empty containers." This question of worklessness and its special relation to the realms of art and the everyday already appears in Sekula's works of the 1970s: from *Untitled Slide Sequence to Aerospace Folktales* (1973), which deals with unemployment and family life, to *This Ain't China* (1974), which tracks workers laboring in a pizza shop who, after attempting to unionize, are fired. In a final set of portraits, the cooks and waitresses, Sekula included, have become out-of-work actors who pantomime the working conditions to which they no longer have access.

### The Group Portrait

When Sekula was first developing his artistic practice in the early 1970s, the Cold War liberal consensus of the sort represented by Edward Steichen's photographic humanism—confident in its projection of American hegemony—was being torn apart by the Vietnam War, inflation and the beginnings of a recession, the oil crisis, and the reorganization of international finance and subsequent dismantling of the welfare state that would become known as neoliberalism. And photographers from the period immediately following Steichen's 1955 exhibition *Family of Man*, from Robert Frank to those included in the 1967 MoMA exhibition *New Documents* (Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Gary Winogrand), had already begun to look askance at the honorific treatment of bourgeois subjects in the postwar social order, preferring marginal figures or the fragmented surfaces of the city.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless,

49. Risberg, "Imaginary Economies," 243.

50. This criticism appears, in the context of a discussion of Rosler's *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974–1975), in Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Modernism," 126. See also the account of "victim photography" in Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts."

51. Sekula and his colleagues, however, largely perceived the *New Documents* exhibition as an apolitical appropriation of the documentary mode for expressive and subjectivist ends, which was how the show was presented by its curator, John Szarkowski. See

by the mid-1960s to early 1970s, artists using serial photography, especially in conceptual art, offered one of the clearest and most succinct responses to, and rejections of, photographic humanism. One of the key moves here is voiding the human figure from the photographic frame, from the industrial architecture catalogued by Bernd Becher and Hilla Becher to Dan Graham's prefab houses to Robert Smithson's anomic suburban relics to Rosler's urban streets.<sup>52</sup> In the context of Southern California, in the early 1970s Lewis Baltz was beginning to make desolate photographs of suburban commercial and residential buildings and landscapes. This work would be part of the influential *New Topographics* exhibition of 1975 that collected photographers working in a similar vein.<sup>53</sup> Beginning in 1973, Judy Fiskin similarly photographed the vernacular structures of suburbia, with the important addition of military architecture, in a Los Angeles devoid of people. Closer to Sekula's own work at the University of California, San Diego, were the less rigorously systematic and more idiosyncratic photoconceptual works of John Baldessari and Eleanor Antin. Both Baldessari and Antin are less absolute in their prohibition of the figure and more focused on decentering the authorial subject. Despite the mostly empty, nondescript snapshots of downtown National City reproduced in Baldessari's photo-emulsion paintings, he captures himself in a few of the pictures. And while Antin replaces the human figure with object surrogates in the postcard series *100 Boots* (1971–1973), as a performer she soon includes her own body inside the frame. Photographic documentation of performance art, then, returns to the body in new ways, and it partly provides a model for Sekula's earliest photographic work, especially *Meat Mass* (1972). However, although Sekula will

Sekula, "Conversation with Benjamin Buchloh," 33; Martha Rosler, "Lee Friedlander's Guarded Strategies" (1975), in *Decoys and Disruptions*, 113–132; and Museum of Modern Art, "New Documents," press release 21, 28 February 1967, [http://www.moma.org/docs/press\\_archives/3860/releases/MOMA\\_1967\\_Jan-June\\_0034\\_21.pdf](http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/3860/releases/MOMA_1967_Jan-June_0034_21.pdf).

52. There are some exceptions. Although architectural systems dominate Graham's *Homes for America* (1965), figures do appear in some of the frames. Another, more major exception is Douglas Huebler's programmatic engagement with portraiture. But his use of systems parodically empties the genre of its capacity to communicate the sitter's character or subjective experience. On serial photography in conceptual art as a precedent for Sekula, with reference to Huebler, see Buchloh, "Between Discourse and Document," 192–193; and Buchloh, "Allan Sekula, or What Is Photography?" *Grey Room* 55 (Spring 2014): 116–129. On Huebler and portraiture, see Gordon Hughes, "Exit Ghost: Douglas Huebler's Face Values," in *Photography after Conceptual Art*, ed. Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 70–85.
53. Prior to the New Topographics exhibition and book (which also included Bernd Becher and Hilla Becher), Baltz had published *The New Industrial Parks near Irvine, California* in 1974. His work was also included (with that of Terry Wild and Anthony Hernandez) in the 1971 Pasadena Art Museum exhibition *The Crowded Vacancy*, which was reviewed in *Artforum*. Although Sekula may not have seen the show, he might have read the review. Sekula would later refer to New Topographics as "the neutron bomb school of photography." Allan Sekula, *Translations and Completions*, exh. brochure (Santa Monica, CA: Christopher Grimes Gallery, 2011). See also the discussion of Baltz in Allan Sekula, "School Is a Factory" (1980/1982), in *Dismal Science*, 146–147.

occasionally include and picture himself as an actor in his later photographic works, attention to the artist's own body in performance documentation does not form the primary basis for his pictures.

In contrast with the ongoing aversion to figures in conceptual photography at the time, Sekula refuses to expunge the human figure from the frame and continues to picture people. Compare, for example, two views of the same parking lot (or possibly adjacent lots) taken just a few years apart. The first view appears in Ed Ruscha's *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967; fig. 3.18). For this small book, the artist hired a professional aerial photographer to document empty parking lots from a helicopter.<sup>54</sup> The black-and-white photographs are not wholly divorced from their context, the spatial grid of the city. Each photograph is helpfully captioned with the street address of the parking lot, and although some remain unidentified, others also include the name or description of the buildings served by the lots. Pairing the relatively featureless grids of painted white lines with the names and numbers of their specific locations seems to be part of the joke, also hinted at by the deadpan, merely enumerative description that is the book's title. All of these elements point to the interchangeable, oppressive uniformity of automotive sprawl. The photographs reveal little about the place, significance, or use of individual lots and the buildings they serve.<sup>55</sup> Besides the variety of the regular, flat, gridded patterns, and the alternation between black asphalt or grey concrete ground, one of the few other elements of pictorial interest emerges from the diversity of singularly shaped black oil stains that mark individual parking spots on the grey lots. Although these drips and pools of negative space serve to individuate each parking space in relation to the uniform grid, this visual tension nonetheless indicates an overall state of entropy and decay: as the gaskets and seals of the car engines wear and break down, the oil seeps from the engine, burning, smoking, or staining the ground in roughly the same place in each parking spot.<sup>56</sup> *Flatness, grid, drip, and stain* are

54. Edward Ruscha, *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (n.p.: n.p., 1967). The photographer credited on the copyright page is Art Alanis.
55. The indifference with which each image is treated, as just one in a series, is highlighted by the first photograph in the book, which shows a city square surrounded by tall buildings, captioned "Pershing Hill Underground Lot, 5th & Hill." The visual appearance of the lot does not seem to matter in this case, since it is indexed only by the caption and the entrance and exit ramps that cut through the park. To slyly suggesting that even the green parks in LA are secretly parking lots, "nine color photographs in single frames, two to slyly suggesting that even the green parks in LA are secretly parking lots, "nine color photographs in single frames, two tIn addition to slyly suggesting that in LA even the green parks are secretly parking lots, by beginning with an invisible lot, Ruscha wryly questions, from the get-go, the usefulness or significance of images produced by the allegedly neutral, descriptive, or indexical capacity of photography.
56. This breakdown contradicts the myth of individual freedom, escape, and pleasure supposedly signaled by the automobile, not to mention the helicopter. Compare the association of *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* with Reyner Banham's rhapsodies to LA freeways in Alexandra Schwartz, *Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 132–135. Schwartz points out that both Ruscha and Denise Scott Brown notice the stains, but Schwartz does not investigate them further (133, 153). Kevin Hatch

all keywords in late modernist painting, and the discovery of these formal problems in the world captured by the photograph is partly what makes these apparently anti-aesthetic documents visually compelling. But these photographic documents also point to something else, to the history and geography of this city. If a viewer passes quickly over their minor, regular visual differences, the lots remain alike in their emptiness and anomie. And the viewer could consider that to be the book's verdict on Los Angeles, one rendered through the uninflected, equalizing gaze of the camera, understood as registering either democratic horizontality or the leveling forces of capitalist exchange. But in retrospect one address in particular stands out among the shopping mall and commercial buildings, insurance corporation, offices for state bureaucracy, church, sports stadium, and movie studios and drive-in theater: "Lockheed Air Terminal, 2627 N. Hollywood Way, Burbank" (now Bob Hope Airport). The address actually gets two photographs, which appear after the single opening photograph of an underground lot downtown and form the first two-page spread in the book: one partly oblique view shows the expanse of a very large lot, and one shows an apparently smaller lot, or a section of the large lot, shot from more directly above, resolutely flat because parallel to the picture plane.<sup>57</sup>

The parking spaces at Lockheed—which was not just an airport but an aerospace factory—were photographed again, five years later, from a different angle, by Sekula (fig. 3.19). The vacant lot stretches out into the background, now seen from where

sees the stains in the context of modernist photography that grasps at contingency in detritus and graffiti, now transformed by a postmodernist contingency that is the result of systems rather than individual artistic seeing. Kevin Hatch, "'Something Else': Ed Ruscha's Photographic Books," *October* 111 (Winter 2005): 115–117. Arguing that Ruscha's work portrays the city as fundamentally entropic, as "a mounting tide of nondifferentiation," Yve-Alain Bois describes *Parking Lots* as "a mighty sewer, a machine for the production of oil spots." Yve-Alain Bois, "Zone," in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless* (New York: Zone, 1997), 228. Ruscha later made an artist's portfolio of monoprints called *Stains* (1969), a whole series of just that.

57. In a later critical essay on aerial photography and its military uses, Sekula points out an opposition between the "high vertical view" that is taken at high altitude, is planar, perpendicular to the ground, and lacks depth; and the "low oblique view" closer and at an angle to the ground, which depicts objects in depth, most usefully with sidelight and shadows, and is amenable to the aesthetic conventions of landscape. While Ruscha uses both modes, none of the low views are especially oblique, and the flat, paved surface of the lots lends itself to depthless planarity even from different angles; at most, the quasi-oblique views of gridded lots, streets, and rectangular buildings depict the built environment—its material texture and small details minimized by physical distance—like a geometrically regular, isometric architectural drawing, recalling Ruscha's architectural paintings as well as his earlier photography books. Although Sekula is hesitant to treat aerial photography *only* aesthetically—because this distracts from its primary instrumental function of surveillance and destruction—he points out that in the "high vertical view," the human landscape can be transformed into a nonreferential, graphic geometry amenable to abstraction in modernist painting (Malevich) and to an "aerialized" modernist street photography shot from above (Moholy-Nagy, Rodchenko, Kertész). The implication, of course, is that the military and artistic (specifically, modernist) uses of aerial photography cannot be entirely separated. See Allan Sekula, "The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War," *Artforum* 14, no. 4 (December 1975): 30.



the photographer stands, on ground level, in the lot itself. The graphic lines of the grid underfoot are not as visible, and the lot is characterized not by graphic flatness but by sculptural depth marked out with evenly spaced white, concrete wheel bumpers dispersed across the visual field. Behind the lot is a mammoth industrial building backed by mountains. The view across the lot's expanse is blocked in the foreground by a large, white Ford station wagon stretching almost end-to-end across the frame, with two figures standing near the open driver's-side door. One is dressed for leisure, in shorts and a printed short-sleeve shirt, with a white cap, knee-high socks, and slip-on shoes; the other in black shoes and dress pants, white shirt with sleeves rolled above the elbows, black tie, front pocket stuffed with pen and glasses case—the uniform of the 1960s engineer. Here the lot's emptiness takes on another meaning: the lack of cars and people does not confer a timeless stasis but indicates a hiatus, a break from work on the weekend or a holiday. This provides our first clue that something is amiss, an explanation for which must be sought beyond this individual frame: although one man is clearly dressed to enjoy a day off—or judging from his age, retirement—why is the other still dressed for work? Answering the question requires following the sequence of black-and-white photographs, title cards, and audio that make up Sekula's *Aerospace Folktales* (1973).<sup>58</sup> The parking lot, whose visual depth supports an intersubjective space of encounter between the photographer and the people who frequent and use it, becomes the staging ground for an inquiry into both a family history and a broader socioeconomic situation. Rather than leave the lot empty as Ruscha had, Sekula returns to the scene and reinserts human figures into its abstract, industrial-scale grid, right at the moment, according to the schedule of the factory, that they are not supposed to be there.<sup>59</sup>

Making sense of the parking lot scene in *Aerospace Folktales* requires moving forward and backward through the piece. Moving backward from the parking lot scene, one returns to the text panel and paired photographs that begin the work. While the parking lot is the first “straight” photograph in *Aerospace Folktales*, it is preceded by a title card that quotes a statement by the company's chairman promoting the vacuous commitment to excellence espoused by all corporate boosters. (A major area employer and defense contractor with nine aircraft models serving in Vietnam, Lockheed was on the rocks for failed commercial airliner ventures; political controversy for cost overruns, overbilling, and underperformance in its military contracts; a contentious government bailout to prevent its

58. *Aerospace Folktales* was first exhibited in the UCSD gallery in 1973 and then at the Brand Library Art Center, near Lockheed, in 1974. It also circulated as a photocopied book and as a slide talk through the 1970s and 1980s. As Sekula notes, the number of images was reduced from 142 to 51 and two audio tracks were removed, leaving two, when it was prepared for exhibition again in 1984; see Sekula, “Introductory Note” to *Aerospace Folktales*, in *Photography against the Grain*, 105. I discuss the post-1984 version, as published in *Photography against the Grain*.

59. Although Sekula recalls that at the time he was familiar with Ruscha's photo-books, especially *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965) and *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970), he gives no indication that he was aware of or intentionally responding to the appearance of Lockheed in *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*. See “Conversation between Allan Sekula and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh,” 22.



bankruptcy; and, in 1975, a wide-scale corruption and bribery scandal that led to the passing of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.)<sup>60</sup> The statement is followed by a pair of reproductions—the enlarged halftone dots mark them as newspaper photographs, further set off by the sharp center and blurred edges of the frame. At left, military officers and businessmen or politicians in suits pose and talk in front of a military helicopter (fig. 3.20). At right, as if continuing the scene, a group of men, many without jackets but wearing white shirts and ties, or just shirtsleeves, smile and give a thumbs-up to the camera (fig. 3.21).<sup>61</sup>

Moving forward, the viewer follows the engineer home, entering his family's cramped, dark apartment (again, in tension with LA's mythic expanse of sun-filled, open roads). There, figures are seen in close proximity, sometimes with the camera peering over their shoulder, amid the play, work, and ritual of family life—the sons do schoolwork, a daughter plays, the homemaker wife cooks dinner (figs. 3.22–3.23). By listening to (or reading transcripts of) the audio interviews with the mother, father, and the artist, who is revealed as a son in the family, the viewer learns the engineer is recently unemployed, laid off from Lockheed during the economic downturn. Still searching for work, the engineer keeps himself busy writing letters, but the compulsive straightening of lamps and the dressing for work hint at psychological distress. In the interviews and artist's audio commentary, Sekula seeks to precipitate a breakdown in the engineer's "identification with management" at the moment this white-collar worker is, at least temporarily, pushed out of the middle class. Yet the father largely deflects the son's inquiry and speaks in broad generalities about the economic system and corporate bureaucracy, touching only implicitly on his own place within it. Although the son ironically acknowledges his own petit-bourgeois class situation and likens himself to an "art engineer," wondering about his future place in this system, the mother's storytelling speaks most frankly and directly about the working-class history of employment, insecurity, and social solidarity that formed earlier generations of the family, and the anxiety and social exclusion that accompany the engineer's current unemployment.<sup>62</sup>

60. See Walter J. Boyne, *Beyond the Horizons: The Lockheed Story* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 331–368; and William D. Hartung, *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 69–132. On the aircraft serving in Vietnam, see Lockheed Corporate Communications, *Dateline Lockheed* (Burbank, CA: Lockheed, 1982), 52.

61. The pictures are likely company photographs of the unveiling for the military and press of the first prototype of the AH-56A Cheyenne attack helicopter on May 3, 1967, developed to meet the new counterinsurgency tasks faced by the U.S. Army in Vietnam. The helicopter's production contract was cancelled in 1969 because it failed to meet performance goals, but the military controversially continued to provide funds for its development through 1972, in an apparent giveaway to Lockheed subsequently debated in Congress. Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, *Days of Trial and Triumph*, 90; Boyne, 342–345; and Hartung, 101–103.

62. The artist's commentary reveals that "after two and a half years of unemployment [the engineer] managed to land the same job he held sixteen years ago doing process chemistry for the air force."

Through sequential montage, which first appears in its most developed form in Sekula's work in *Aerospace Folktales*, the focus shifts from the father's activities to those of the mother, by way of editing multiple frames of action down to a sequence that lies between stop-motion photography and a "disassembled movie."<sup>63</sup> After beginning with four nearly identical shots of the same open doorway, first empty, and then with the sister, father, and mother each walking through it individually, and the sequence of views of the engineer's activities, another sequence follows the homemaker as she prepares dinner. Despite the father's unemployment, viewers see that the mother has to keep working. In this way, *Aerospace Folktales* coincides with a new attention paid to domestic economy in feminism and feminist conceptual art of the period.<sup>64</sup> By documenting the homemaker's maintenance work, the piece reveals the unwaged, gendered division of labor that supports the patriarchal world of work at the time. (Lockheed is symptomatic of a postwar domestic order created by returning to the home, or to more traditionally feminized and lower-paid work, most of the women who had taken factory jobs there during World War II.) In a crucial conceptual reversal, not the father's productive work but the mother's reproductive labor underpins and sustains the life of the family.<sup>65</sup> However, the mother is shown neither simply at work (and possibly alienated) nor as the sentimentalized source of nurturing plenitude (which would overcome that alienation). Rather, the interior views of the apartment close with the first instance in Sekula's oeuvre of what I call a doubled, or pendant, portrait (figs. 3.24–3.25). In the first frame, the homemaker stands in profile at the kitchen counter in a housedress and kerchief, arranging flowers in a vase. Whether this activity is seen as aesthetic (decorating out of pleasure) or as a form of work (decorating out of duty), it is accompanied by a raised finger and open mouth, as she seems to be making a point in midsentence, speech that viewers cannot hear without turning

63. Sekula, "Introductory Note."

64. Key works in this tendency include Rosler's *Bringing the War Home* (1967–1972), *Monumental Garage Sale* (1973), *A Budding Gourmet* (1973), *A Gourmet Experience* (1974), and *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975); Mierle Laderman Ukeles's "Maintenance Art Manifesto" (1969) and her album of documentary photographs of *Maintenance Art Tasks* (1973); and Mary Kelly's *Nightcleaners* (1970–1975, with Berwick Street Film Collective), *Post-Partum Document* (1973–1979), and *Women and Work* (1975, with Margaret Harrison and Kay Hunt).

65. "Rather than seeing the bread-winning factory worker as the productive base on which a reproductive superstructure is erected, imagine the dispossessed proletarian household as a wageless base of subsistence labour—the 'women's work' of cooking, cleaning and caring—which supports a superstructure of migrant wage seekers who are ambassadors, or perhaps hostages, to the wage economy." Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review* 66 (November–December 2010): 79–97. This point had been made around the time of *Aerospace Folktales* by feminist theorists including Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol, UK: Falling Wall Press, 1972); and Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210. They were also addressing the increased entry of women into a post-Fordist labor market just as, we now know, real wages began a long decline.

to the audio track. In the second frame, the flowers and vase are gone and she has disappeared. Only the cleared counter remains, lined with shiny, stainless-steel kitchen appliances, the door to the cabinet above hanging open to reveal stacked plates, empty coffee cups, and cans of beans, all juxtaposed with the paper map of Los Angeles taped to the adjacent cabinet door. Perhaps she has escaped out into the city, but any such narrative of liberation is disturbed by the unsettled quality of the scene—the cabinet door is ajar, and everything is not quite in its place. The frame is marked by her absence. The doubled portrait serves to register her activity and, in her disappearance, to highlight the domestic architecture that supports and constrains the shared life of the family.

In a parallel fashion, Sekula uses his textual commentary to emphasize not only his mother's unpaid labor in sustaining the family, but also the difference between his mother's and father's worldviews:

now my mother views the world very differently at least when she talks to a tape recorder she doesn't make speeches she delivers anecdotes she incises fragments of past history to provide context for some present moment i wonder why she's able to think more historically than my father i wonder if her existence at one remove from the management-produced image of the white collar technician her support role her unpaid labor that provides management with well fed well cared for labor forty hours a week her rearing of future white collar technicians has somehow left her history intact has somehow left her unstupified by competition and individualism but then again she's a pious catholic

Together with the audiotaped interview with his mother that plays in the gallery space recounting the working-class history of older members of her family, these audio and textual additions supplement the silence of the photographic sequence, providing the mother's speech that is missing from the image of her speaking. Yet by keeping the audio, text, and photographic tracks apart, Sekula introduces a kind of spacing between these elements that resists sentimentalizing the mother figure (called the "engineer's wife" in the published version of the work) as a figure of presence, instead hinting at the threat of absence or precarity that haunts the family.

\*

While Sekula criticizes the archive as a tool of social control and as a medium of abstract equivalence in his history writing, by turning to his photographs we can find another account of the body—a body not entirely freed from the alienation of labor under capitalist exchange or from the violence of governmental power, yet not entirely subjugated to it either. By moving away from the view of the individual who sees unemployment as an exceptional, unfortunate break with the normal order of things, *Aerospace Folktales* suggests that this unemployment is central to that order, to keeping wages down and a reserve army of labor at the ready. As Michael Denning argues,

Unemployment precedes employment, and the informal economy precedes the formal, both historically and conceptually. We must insist that

“proletarian” is not a synonym for “wage labourer” but for dispossession, expropriation and radical dependence on the market. You don’t need a job to be a proletarian: wageless life, not wage labour, is the starting point in understanding the free market.<sup>66</sup>

And if family life and leisure are only time off from and preparation for the return to wage labor, a cycle glimpsed in *Untitled Slide Sequence*, then they, too, belong to that order.

In contrast with these kinds of capitalist unemployment, understood only as preparation or purgatory for a fully capitalist life, works such as *Untitled Slide Sequence* and *Aerospace Folktales* cultivate an aesthetic potential of worklessness, an unworking of the socioeconomic order that could be called *désœuvrement*.<sup>67</sup> *Désœuvrement*, then, like forced unemployment, may be a hardship or provoke a crisis or even threaten one’s survival, but it is also an opportunity, a respite, a break—both a resource and a chance. And this strange form of liberating arrest may find its home or shelter in the stasis of photography and in the intervals between photographs and actions established in Sekula’s practice.

The final two photographs in *Aerospace Folktales* move from the lived depth of the apartment to a diptych of documents arranged on the flatbed picture plane (fig. 3.26). On the left, a page of the engineer’s CV—the archival codification of his working life for potential employers. On the right, a page from the family photo album, with portraits of the children and two group photographs, one with the father and kids (presumably taken by the mother) and one with the mother and kids (presumably taken by the father). The family photos recall the group of Lockheed engineers that opened the work, and the lives of the engineer and his family are suspended between these two versions of the group portrait.

In his foundational study of the genre as it developed in the Dutch Republic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Alois Riegl holds that only the freely willed, elective association of (exclusively male) bourgeois citizens for a civic purpose—like the volunteer city guard or a business corporation—counted as a group portrait. Family portraits, in contrast, were excluded from this realm of public representation because they are the result of given, unwilled, natural relations exterior to the new,

66. Denning, 81.

67. On *désœuvrement*, see Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Inoperative Community,” in *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), esp. 31–33. Although Nancy borrows the term from Maurice Blanchot, the latter draws very different aesthetic consequences from the concept than Sekula would. Despite the great gulf between these figures, here I can point only to the origins of the term, via Georges Bataille and Alexandre Kojève, in G.W.F. Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, which is a persistent concern in Sekula’s work. The aesthetic potential in worklessness can also be related to the attentive, observational waiting discussed in Allan Sekula, “Waiting for Los Angeles,” in Anthony Hernandez, *Waiting for Los Angeles* (Tucson, AZ: Nazraeli Press, 2002), 5–6; with regard to Sekula’s work *Waiting for Tear Gas* (1999–2000), chapter 5 of this dissertation; and in Philip Armstrong, “Seattle and the Space of Exposure,” in *Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 190–191.

democratic civil life—a careful balance of bourgeois individuality and collective participation—that he detects in the genre.<sup>68</sup> In *Aerospace Folktales*, however, the focus on the engineer’s forced unemployment puts into question the ostensible freedom of the bourgeois subject and the democratic character of the business corporation. The turn to the family also shows the ways in which this allegedly autonomous individual is dependent on and formed by given, natural forces, which are simultaneously historical, in the allegedly private realm of the home. No longer merely natural or external to the public realm or politics, the family structure appears as already shot through with a set of historical conditions and social norms, which are highlighted not only by the work of the mother but by a series of close-ups of documents found within the apartment, from the rules for tenants posted by management, to the bulletin board with doctors’ notes and appointment cards, to the mail-order sets of great literature, to the engineer’s handbook on the effects of nuclear weapons, with its graphic illustration of injured bodies. Between the two photographs of the corporate group and the family that open and close the piece, *Aerospace Folktales* seeks out another photographic form for depicting social life, a version of the group portrait that breaks with the conventions of both corporate and sentimental realism.

Part of the challenge of returning to the figure after humanist photography is questioning the abstract humanity nested in the individualism of the single portrait. In an earlier critique of nineteenth-century humanism, Marx wrote, “the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble [*das Ensemble*] of the social relations.”<sup>69</sup> Continuing this thread of thought, Étienne Balibar argues that by rejecting both the individualist view and an organicist whole Marx displaces the question of the human essence: “Not what ideally is ‘in’ each individual (as a form or a substance), or what would serve, from outside, to classify the individual, but what exists *between individuals* by dint of their multiple interactions.”<sup>70</sup> Balibar calls this constitutive ensemble of relations to others the *transindividual*.<sup>71</sup> This ensemble of relations is put in other terms in *The German Ideology*: namely, as *Verkehr*, a term that is usually translated as “intercourse” (*commerce* in French) but is perhaps more felicitously understood

68. In addition to lacking a civic purpose, “family resemblance leads to a natural unity in a work of art that precludes the need for any special tricks of pictorial conception or composition.” The “friendship portrait” of Italy and Flanders is also excluded because it expresses merely “personal”—that is, private and thus not public and corporate—inclinations. Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans. Evelyn M. Kain (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999), 62. I discuss the group portrait in Sekula’s later work in chapter 5.
69. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 145, thesis 6.
70. Étienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1995), 32; emphasis in original.
71. Balibar, 31–32. Balibar borrows the term from Gilbert Simondon and acknowledges that it also occurs in the work of Alexandre Kojève and Jacques Lacan.



as “traffic,” all of which denote both productive and communicative activity.<sup>72</sup> *Traffic* is also an animating force in much of Sekula’s early photographic works—from *Boxcar* and *Meat Mass* to *Untitled Slide Sequence*—and will play a key role in his theorization of “the traffic in photographs.”<sup>73</sup> Although Sekula is often said to be concerned with picturing labor, which is certainly the case, his project can be more broadly understood as rethinking the human and even humanism as a transindividual ensemble of relations, especially as manifested in traffic or exchange as a material and practical activity—traffic that, as the later maritime works explore, is organized around a global division of labor.

The legacy of portraiture as a genre in Sekula’s work poses the problem of how to see the body in terms other than possessive individualism and how to picture collectivity, something like the transindividual character of social life. One could also imagine that such a task might require the destruction or abandonment of portraiture altogether, something Walter Benjamin detected in both August Sander’s “physiognomic gallery” of social and “facial types” and in Soviet film.<sup>74</sup> But beyond the interest in physiognomy and the environmental portrait that Sekula draws from Sander, Sekula breaks with both the functional typologies of interwar modernism and with the serial systems later offered by conceptual art. If the term *portrait* can still usefully describe aspects of Sekula’s practice, it does so partly because the ambition to describe a collective beyond that which fits into a single photographic frame leads Sekula to rework the conventions of group portraiture by linking individual figures to one another, even across great distances, through sequential montage.

72. Marx and Engels, 42–43. In contemporary German, the term is also used in the sense of “transport,” including the material infrastructure of public transport systems.

73. See Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” in *Photography against the Grain*.

74. Benjamin, “Little History of Photography,” in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 520.

## CHAPTER 4

### Globe: *Fish Story* (1988–1995)

As the policed boundaries of the Cold War give way to a new era that comes to be known as globalization, Sekula's work after 1989 shifts in emphasis from land to sea. Two longer essay works of the 1980s investigated landscape: *Sketch for a Geography Lesson* (1983) analyzed the borders of communist East and capitalist West that ran through Germany partly through wargames of global nuclear war played out on TV, while *Geography Lesson: Canadian Notes* (1987) juxtaposed bank architecture in Ottawa with the mining town of Sudbury. In a remarkable conjuncture, Sekula begins his large-scale investigation of maritime space and international cargo shipping just as the collapse of communism opens the way to further expansion of the world market. Comprised of seven photo-text chapters plus two slideshows and accompanying text, *Fish Story* (1988–1995) records the quotidian and overlooked labor of moving commodities to market in the slow process of containerized shipping. In the process, it juxtaposes the internationally diverse crews who helm the ships with the tactics of the multinational corporations who exploit paper sovereignty and flags of convenience to avoid national regulations of the industry. Together these two sides of the industry index the transformations wrought by capital and information flows as they increasingly permeate the borders of the nation-state. They present the double bind that as global capital becomes ever more mobile, linking far-flung locations, it simultaneously reinforces borders restricting the rights and movement of labor, preventing the world community it establishes materially. Through photographs of the ocean voyage and the ports at which the ships call, *Fish Story* indexes some of these material connections created by trade, which remain in tension with the metaphors of liquidity called up by romantic visions of the sea and reproduced in the rhetoric surrounding allegedly disembodied movement of money and information flows in globalization. In many of these works, the smooth, homogeneous space through which information packets, money, and shipping containers move is interrupted by details and detritus, sweat and dirt, corrosion and the slow time of waiting. Here the reconfiguration of landscape developed in works of the previous decade returns, and vistas of the open ocean clash with close-ups of the ships' machinery. If Dan Graham's insight in *Homes for America* was to see reflected in the serial boxes of minimalism the spatial order of postwar, suburban tract housing, *Fish Story* updates this insight by grasping the shipping container as the key to the post-1989 global spatial order. The anomic, atopic space of postwar conceptual photography is here reworked through the contrast of the uniform geometry of the shipping container and its architectural surround with the heterotopic space of the ocean-going ship. The question remains whether the ocean still functions as a space of sublime, unregulated possibility, a vector of freedom even if only in the aesthetic imaginary, within the postwar, global

juridico-spatial order that Carl Schmitt analyzed as the *nomos* of the Earth.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, Sekula's geography lessons of the 1980s and 1990s also manifest not only a shift from black-and-white to color photography, but also the refinement of his documentary approach. Although Sekula had called in "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary" (1976/1978) for the reinvention of documentary as a "critical," "didactic" representational practice, his documentary approach to photography also suggests not just that the artist has something to teach but something to learn.<sup>2</sup> While not reducible to a style or a school, this documentary ethic has a number of aesthetic consequences that we can detect in Sekula's photographic work and which go beyond the declared ideal of "ideologically self-conscious handling of image and text."<sup>3</sup> These aesthetic consequences include, most broadly, the refusal of an internal formal unity of the photograph and the artistic mastery it implies. Along with a negation of an individual or signature style, this leads to a continual shifting between multiple formats, perspectives, and views, "between image and image, image and text, text and text."<sup>4</sup> This ethic manifests itself as a distrust of the self-sufficient, compositionally unified pictorial tableau. Nor does it reach for the large-scale monumentality of the museum wall or the allover sharpness, clarity, and maximal detail—originally characteristic of large-format, modernist landscape photography but also seen in studio and advertising work—that seeks objectivity in technical perfection. The working method is closer to the formal and technical means of photojournalism and street photography, which make do with smaller portable cameras, available light and inclement weather, and the sometimes shallow depth of field and selective focus they dictate. What emerges is a kind of situational looking, through a series of views, that registers the position of the cameraperson and the technical limits of the apparatus—in the motion blur or selective focus that result from less than ideal conditions, for example. Through the placement and linkage of multiple images (and sometimes texts) in sequence, human figures and their significance appear in Sekula's work.

Unlike conceptual photography, Sekula is not concerned with serial systems or wholly arbitrary and unmotivated chance effects that seek to remove the artist's hand as far as possible. This refusal of artistic mastery does not mean an all-out refusal, at the level of the picture, of questions of form, framing, or composition. A practice that recognizes the "inadequacy" of the photographic image, to use a term employed by Sekula's colleague Martha Rosler, does not lead to a purely negative condition but rather to a chain of images: to editing, sequencing, montage between images, in which meaning emerges not only from within the frame of a single image

1. See Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950), trans. G.L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003).
2. Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary: Notes on the Politics of Representation" (1976/1978), in Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal: University Galleries, Illinois State University, 1999), 138.
3. Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism," 127.
4. Allan Sekula, in Debra Risberg, "Imaginary Economies: An Interview with Allan Sekula," in *Dismal Science*, 248.

but from the gaps between them. These aesthetic imperatives led Sekula to develop two formats above others that arrange photographs in sequence: the slide show, as a medium situated between cinema and the individual photograph; and the hybrid forms of the book and the multipart photo-and-text installation. In place of a single image, his photographs are often printed as large as the mix of 35 mm and medium-format allows without visible degradation of quality, but still small enough that groups of two or three can be seen together from one standpoint, just as a few images can be grouped on a two-page spread—as found in both the exhibition and book versions of *Fish Story* (1988–1995), for example.

Although doubtlessly aware of earlier modernist experiments with montage, Sekula was nonetheless more immediately indebted to the Brechtian “political modernism” of performance and filmic montage in, for example, the work of Jean-Luc Godard.<sup>5</sup> When developing his photographic practice in the early 1970s, Sekula did not resuscitate the construction of fragmented image-pieces found in dada or constructivist photomontage (unlike Rosler had earlier or Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge would later). Instead, together with his colleagues Fred Lonidier, Rosler, and Phil (later Phel) Steinmetz at the University of California, San Diego, in the early 1970s, Sekula was more engaged in a recovery of American social documentary photography that recalled its embeddedness in political and pedagogical discourse but disapproved of its liberal—and implicitly humanist—politics of social amelioration and reform. And while equally critical of what was considered as Walker Evans’s retreat into an aestheticization of documentary style shorn of any social project, Evans’s exhibition and book *American Photographs* provides an influential model for the editing and sequencing of images, which Sekula has called, with simultaneous reference to Bertolt Brecht, “sequential montage.”<sup>6</sup> By tracking Sekula’s development of this montage, I show how it breaks with typological and archival models of photographic meaning. An important reason Sekula’s sequential montage treats the individual photographic view as a unit, maintaining a certain integrity to the frame, is to place the photographer and viewer at specific sites in the world, in relation to other bodies in those physical places.

5. See chapter 2 of this dissertation.
6. Although hesitant to codify his approach as a formal system, Sekula speaks approvingly of “sequential montage,” exemplified by Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel* (War Primer, written 1940–45, published 1955), in Allan Sekula, “On *Fish Story*: The Coffin Learns to Dance,” *Camera Austria International* 59/60 (1997): 50. Compare also the “paradox” of a “realistic montage” in Buchloh, “Between Discourse and Document,” 199; and the notion of “horizontal montage” in Steve Edwards, “Commons and Crowds: Figuring Photography from Above and Below,” *Third Text* 23, no. 4 (July 2009): 447–464. Eric de Bruyn points out that *Fish Story* operates not only in a “dialectical fashion” by juxtaposing the panorama and the fragment but also by “leaps and bounds” across time and space, according to a “principle of openness” that resonates with the principle of the free sea (*mare liberum*) in maritime discourse. Eric C.H. de Bruyn, “Uneven Seas: Notes on a Political Mythology of Maritime Space, Part 1,” *31: Das Magazin des Instituts für Theorie* 16/17 (December 2011): 84–100. This openness and contingency in the sequencing cannot be encapsulated in Sergei Eisenstein’s model of dialectical montage in film, however much Eisenstein’s model also serves as a precedent.

Throughout *Fish Story*, Sekula's sequencing of images frequently alternates between the wide-angle landscape or panorama to establish place and context; a medium angle or "normal" lens length, not to mimic the human eye's field of view, as photographers sometimes claim, but to establish bodily proximity, since it requires the photographer to approach the sitter and by extension puts the viewer roughly in the same intersubjective space; and, less often, a close-up to highlight material traces and details of the site. This is, for instance, the way *Fish Story* begins. This long-term photograph and text work investigates seafaring, ports, and containerized shipping, making visible the largely unseen world of contemporary maritime industry and labor that make contemporary life possible.<sup>7</sup> The initial three photographs show, first, a view of New York harbor through a window on the Staten Island Ferry, with a cargo ship on the waters beyond and a twenty-five-cent pay-per-view set of binoculars on a stand inside (fig. 4.1). (The Statue of Liberty, a diminutive, indistinct green blur clouded by the selective close focus on the binoculars, the hazy day, and the glare of the window, is barely visible at the far right corner of the frame.) Second, a boy is pictured bathed in warm late-afternoon light, holding onto the binoculars as if to look out to the left, but with his head turned back toward the camera, looking off-frame to the right (fig. 4.2). Third, the viewer is provided a close-up of a grungy, worn clipboard hanging flatly in the center of the picture plane, with gridded columns and rows of measurements affixed to it with a beat-up frame of duct tape—not a balance sheet of stock prices or goods but the dimensions and measurements of sockets, apparently for the assembly of ship parts—all backlit by a sickly chartreuse glow (fig. 4.3).<sup>8</sup> Between the second and third image, a text panel of four short paragraphs discusses "the primacy of material forces [that] is part of a common culture of harbor residents." In the course of viewing the three images, viewers are drawn into the setting on the harbor, reflexively shown the technical means of viewing, and invited to look; confronted with another gaze cutting back, or across the frame, caught not just in a specular, doubled identification with the boy in front of the vision machine but in a triangle of looks between the photographer, the boy in the frame, and an (allegedly) offscreen, absent-but-present mother; and transported to what viewers may first think is another, working part of the ship in the engine room or the crew's quarters. But when the details and context of the clipboard are investigated further, by walking

7. *Fish Story* was conceived and realized as both a book and an exhibition, with 105 color photographs and twenty-six text panels. The book is organized into seven chapters of photographs interspersed with the short texts, which are supplemented by a longer essay. The exhibition does not include the essay but adds two slide projections of eighty transparencies each. The sites documented include the New York harbor; the city and port of Los Angeles, including San Pedro; San Diego; Newcastle upon Tyne; Rotterdam; Gdansk and Warsaw, Poland; Barcelona and Vigo, Spain; Ulsan and Seoul, South Korea; Veracruz, Mexico; Hong Kong; and the Atlantic Ocean on "voyage 167 of the container ship M/V *Sea-Land Quality* from Elizabeth, New Jersey, to Rotterdam."
8. Turning to the list of captions, the viewer finds, for the first two photos, "Boy Looking at His Mother, Staten Island Ferry, New York Harbor, February 1990"; for the third, "Worker's Booth in Bankrupt Todd Shipyard, Two Years after Closing, Los Angeles Harbor, San Pedro, California, July 1991." Sekula, *Fish Story*, 10–13, 30.



across the room or flipping to a separate page of captions, they reveal another site: a closed, bankrupt shipyard in Los Angeles. Abruptly, viewers are thrown across the country to another harbor and back in time, through the ruins of the present, to the history of maritime industry and subsequent piecemeal deindustrialization in a California port city. This alternation among different views first situates viewers in a more-or-less familiar, contemporary place, demonstrating how that place and the bodies that inhabit it are crisscrossed with already existing relations of desire and power. But the view then shifts to another, less recognizable site of maritime work, recalling a buried or neglected history through the evidentiary, singular traces of past labor. The human figures that appear in Sekula's work emerge within this process of placement and linkage. In *Fish Story*, this opening montage of tourism and disappeared work establishes the larger concern of the project: investigating the movement of capital and goods across a globe organized by an international division of labor, whose movement partly destroys an older working-class culture of the docks.

The frequent use of diptychs and triptychs similarly allows for the selective grouping of both photographs and human figures without resorting to the serial grid, which requires a minimum enforced uniformity—and perhaps leveling equivalence—between images. The diptychs often create a sequence of oppositions and contrasts that do not always resolve in a neatly dialectical or symmetrical way: in a scene of pipefitters working in the engine room, the first frame is oriented horizontally, the second vertically, each tracking the reach and stretch of the worker's body in the foreground (figs. 4.4–4.5). This pair does not stand apart from the larger sequence: their scene of work continues from the abandoned welder's booth that preceded them and introduces the shot that follows them, again in the deserted booth, but this time of a disused wrench, flipped over from its resting place, leaving a clean silhouette of the tool in the layer of grime on the table (fig. 4.6). Diptychs are sometimes used to contrast two disparate places and times, as in the facing views of a small, calm inlet we are told shows the remains of an ancient Roman harbor, and a view from above of a crane stacking cargo containers, its large steel boom blocking out the ocean horizon in the background. Or the pairings might set off different scales: in perhaps the most well-known diptych from *Fish Story*, a close-up of the red, arched spirit level on a ship's inclinometer is juxtaposed with a panoramic view of the open ocean from the cargo ship's upper decks, its neatly stacked containers on the deck below dwarfed by the clouded sky (figs. 4.7–4.8). The engraved, regularly spaced numbers on the inclinometer's scale suggest a rational mastery over nature, providing a sense of human order echoed in the perspectival grid of boxes receding into the horizon—but quietly undermined by the immensity, grandeur, and unpredictability of the weather and the sea. Lest the contrasts set up by this juxtaposition settle into a simple opposition, or reconciliation, of culture and nature, it is followed by two single photographs of the lower decks, a short text, and then a vertical triptych. At the top of the latter is another view looking out from an upper deck of the container ship over the stacked containers onto an open ocean (fig. 4.9). This time the camera peers off to one side of the ship, with clouds, horizon, and the ship's wake visible, as well as

a new, small white speck on the ocean. The middle and lower shots now leer over the side of the ship. The middle shows a crewman in an orange lifejacket climbing the side with a small boat on the rippled ocean surface below (fig. 4.10). The lower peers vertiginously straight down at the waves and the bow of the sailboat, with its tightly wrapped, perhaps partly ruined, sails scattered on its deck (fig. 4.11). The sublime enjoyment of the panorama's horizontal expanse has veered into horror, as we look down at death: the accompanying text mentions the "memorial service for the two Americans" and reproduces an untranslated French newspaper article, posted around officers' and crews' quarters by the captain, reporting the cargo ship's recovery of the sailboat *Happy Ending* drifting in the mid-Atlantic, its owner dead "dans des circonstances mystérieuses" and his wife missing. The viewer's comfortable and secure enjoyment of the panorama is disturbed by the reminder and threat of death. Bodily injury and loss haunt the otherwise efficient transport of goods across the ocean, the gridded network of just-in-time delivery signaled by the ordered stack of containers on deck.<sup>9</sup> Compare also the trajectory in the first chapter of *Fish Story* from the boy's touristic view from the ferry, through the working and living conditions of the harbor, to dual disasters of fire and water: the burning camera store destroyed by riot and the workers in a boat cleaning up a chemical spill after a refinery explosion.<sup>10</sup> However, these scenes are set alongside less visible kinds of risk, violence, and injury that the viewer must look closely to detect: the remote, blurry silhouette of the chief mate climbing a stack of containers (to check the temperature of refrigerated ones, the caption tells us); an engineer spattered with dark oil spots and perched on a crisscrossed network of pipes in the engine room; a ship impounded for smuggling sits distant in the harbor, with no other clues as to the fate of its passengers.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the most consistent and remarkable diptychs in Sekula's work function as what could be called doubled, or pendant, portraits. These come in two varieties: either a human figure appears in both frames, or a figure is present in one frame and absent in the next. *Fish Story* is filled with them. The binoculars that first appear on the empty ferry are then shown being gripped by the boy, soon followed by the two views of pipefitters working in an engine room. The former shipyard worker seated on the ground at the corner of an overturned container from which she is scavenging copper is counterposed with an autonomous robot-truck hauling cargo in an automated terminal: manual labor and automation, woman and machine (fig. 4.12–4.13). Some of the doubled portraits are of work: the bo'sun driving a

9. On logistics as the "information shadow" of the global factory and its material infrastructure of intermodal transport—a new, global archive of production—see Brian Holmes, "Do Containers Dream of Electric People? The Social Form of Just-in-Time Production," *Open* 21 (2011): 30–44.
10. See Sekula, *Fish Story*, 10–25.
11. In a brief account of the vertical triptych, the sailboat is described as "an icon of bourgeois leisure and flight" in Steve Edwards, "Photography Out of Conceptual Art," in *Themes in Contemporary Art*, ed. Gill Perry and Paul Wood (London: Yale University Press; Milton Keynes, UK: Open University, 2004), 174. See also Pamela M. Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 95.

winch, his back to the viewer in the first shot as he peers off to the left, then in the next shot facing the viewer, looking off to the right, his alternate arm on the control lever (fig. 4.14–4.15). The shipyard worker in overalls, boots, hard hat, safety glasses, and respirator, holding a saw, first hunched over as she cuts a steel plate, then, with saw at ease, looking back toward the camera. A worker in a dirty white T-shirt with his hands on the shaft of a massive drill, first inspecting the targeted hole in the coral wall, then, while grasping the drill, leaning into the shaft with his whole body, pressing and directing its force. They all indicate Sekula's frequent, but not absolute, refusal to depict an individual at work in a single frame; instead, the diptychs show their subjects as agents within the world, applying bodily force or careful attention to the task at hand but then resting or looking away or acknowledging the camera's gaze. Alternatively, they may be shown engaging in a moment of play, like the two shots of a young girl jumping down the steps next to her garage. The doubled frame does not capture the sitters' existence in a single moment of activity or rest but provides them extra space, another time: a pause or a look or a moment that carries them outside of work, even if they are still in the midst of a job. In this sense the doubled frame can advance a rudimentary narrative: presence and absence, action and rest, coming and going, working and not working. However, when sitters turn to face the camera, their frontal address to the viewer functions as a counternarrative device that breaks with the diegetic horizon of the sequence. The doubled portraits thus operate along two axes: the lateral or horizontal relation between images (an axis parallel to the picture plane); and the frontal or facing orientation that breaks with the sequence (an axis perpendicular to the picture plane). But when sitters face the camera, they do not do so in so rigorously a frontal way that they seem to be strictly contained by the picture's frame and surface; rather, the intersection of the two axes makes room for oblique looks and movement, creating a complex, deep space in which sitters look back at the camera, implicating the photographer, and by extension the viewer, in the scene of looking. Yet the pendant portrait does not obey the filmic grammar of shot/reverse shot that establishes a spatiotemporal continuity between views; unlike continuity editing in film, the diptych instead explicitly introduces a temporal interval—a moment of unrecoverable, past time or even blindness or nonsight—into the scene itself. Closer to the jarring discontinuity of the jump cut, this spatial doubling discomposes the original scene.

The doubled portrait also crucially situates the sitters in their everyday world and shows them interacting with, manipulating, or sometimes depending on, a whole series of technological supplements, from tools to transport to shelter. This persistence of a larger sociotechnical framework for life and labor beyond any single individual is most often highlighted by a first shot of someone engaged in an action and then a second shot of the same scene with all its objects in place, but emptied of people. When the surveyor, seen from the side in a barren, empty field, is bent into his apparatus, his legs interposed between the legs of the tripod, his eye pressed up to the optic, the viewer leans in with him and concentrates on the act of looking (fig. 4.16). When, in the next shot, he has disappeared but the tripod and the telescope remain, standing on their own, the visual reversal is stark and disconcerting: the

tool in its objectivity seems to have a greater permanence and visual reality than the transient person (fig. 4.17). As much as the person at work seems to use the tool, viewers can also see that the tool shapes the acts, postures, and gestures of the person.

Like the boy and the binoculars that opened the work, the surveyor and his level also recall photographer and camera.<sup>12</sup> If the opening scene implicated the photographer in a scene of tourism, spectacle, and desire, with the surveyor the camera is associated with a functional remaking of the world—clearing the way for capitalist development by literally leveling the earth for the vast, flat storage areas required for new container terminals. Although the use of montage and the sometimes vertiginous alternation of views may recall earlier moments of modernism, these scenes do not advance the technological optimism that can be found, for example, in the anthropomorphic camera and tripod presented as a felicitous prosthetic, the happy extension of human faculties, in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). And while the optical instruments in *Fish Story* manifest a slightly threatening ambiguity, they still retain a certain fitment between the tool and body of the user. But such accommodation of the human body is absent from the diptych that juxtaposes the laid-off shipyard worker scavenging copper with an automated, robot truck in a new shipyard in Rotterdam (figs. 4.12–4.13). As a text panel in another chapter of the work reports, the engineer who designed the automated cranes and trucks delights at the lack of people in the terminal, before warning the artist to stay out of the path of the trucks: “Watch out, they don't see you!”<sup>13</sup> The contrast between the worker with her gloves and crescent wrench and the self-moving automaton without any graspable controls recalls the distinction in the *Grundrisse* between the “instrument, which the worker animates and makes into his organ and his skill and strength” and “the machine which possesses skill and strength in the place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it.”<sup>14</sup> And when the bo'sun later twists and turns his body in the gap between two large, chest-high blocks of equipment, he appears as a movable linkage in the machine that is the ship (figs. 4.14–4.15). The composition of the pictures seems to hold open the possibility both that he retains some agency across the two frames by working the winch's controls and that he may serve as a living appendage, a “conscious organ” of the mechanical system, like

12. Like the film camera used to make the picture, the surveyor's optical level (a specialized telescope), paired with pen and notebook for recording measurements and calculations, is now obsolete. The latter have been replaced by a device called the “total station,” which increases precision by minimizing the reliance on human vision and manual calculation (and their consequent approximations and errors), taking measurements using electro-optical and laser systems that incorporate an electronic or digital theodolite (used for measuring angles), computerized storage and processing, and, sometimes, global positioning system (GPS) data. See “Total Station,” Nikon, December 2008, <http://www.nikon.com/about/technology/life/others/surveying/>.
13. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 77.
14. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. with foreword by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books and New Left Review, 1973), 692.

the dirty engineer below decks partially lost from view in the tangle of dirty pipes of the engine room.<sup>15</sup> For Karl Marx, when the machine comes to dominate the worker as an external power, automation incorporates living labor into objectified labor, absorbing the knowledge and skill of the laborer into capital.<sup>16</sup> By increasing productivity, automation also decreases the number of laborers required, making them superfluous, breaking worker organization and unity, and suppressing strikes.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, *Fish Story* traces the ways the invention of the standardized shipping container, along with the larger cargo ships built to carry more of them, and the increasingly vast port and warehousing facilities required to handle them, destroys the old port, the working class neighborhoods that surrounded it, and their relation to the larger city. This is not, however, simply a question of the deindustrialization of the United States or Global North, signaled by the disused wrench and its shadow of dust on a table, or the worker's housing being broken up and trucked out of the port of Los Angeles, found at the beginning of the photo-text. Rather, when shown the dismantled cauldrons from the Kaiser steel mill in Fontana, CA, being loaded onto a cargo ship, viewers are asked to follow the move of industry and capital to the south and east, to begin to see the shipyard scavenger in Los Angeles in relation to her counterpart in Korea, the woman with the saw cutting steel in the new shipyards there—and to imagine the possible forms of organizing and resistance that might grow from linking the two sites.

Doing justice to *Fish Story* would require a longer look at the global geography of industry and labor it traces and at the shipping container as concrete abstraction, a cipher of congealed labor power, and a technology for flattening of space, for conquering time and the worker. For now, it suffices that sequential montage and the doubled portrait show people passing through the world of work and its objects, as well as their threatened domination by those objects (and the social relations that produced this particular arrangement of work and objecthood). Even as the sequential montage in *Fish Story* situates these bodies in the realm of necessity, servitude, and the “violence of things,” it also provides the means for viewers to begin associating the individual figures captured in discrete frames.<sup>18</sup>

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15. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 693.

16. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 693–694.

17. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1976), 562–564. See also the debate on deskilling, influential for Sekula, launched by Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). By the 1970s, when Sekula encountered this text, the ambivalent treatment of automation in Marxism as also possessing the capacity to free workers from drudgery in a future, liberated society seemed an increasingly distant promise.

18. “[I]n imagination, individuals seem freer under the dominance of the bourgeoisie than before, because their conditions of life seem accidental; in reality, of course, they are less free, because they are more subjected to the violence of things.” Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. and trans. C.J. Arthur (New York: New York International Publishers, 1970), 84.



As I have argued in the previous two chapters, works such as *Untitled Slide Sequence*, *Aerospace Folktales*, and, later, *Fish Story* all create out of the stasis of photography a strange kind of liberating arrest, in the intervals between people, between photographs, and between actions. This peculiar kind of arrest returns in another more recent work by Sekula, *Eyes Closed Assembly Line* (2010; fig. 4.18). This backlit color transparency shows a woman at her workstation on an assembly line in an appliance factory near Guangzhou, China. Bright fluorescent lights hung from the blue rack encasing the conveyor belt illuminate the factory and other workers on the line. The assembly line and workers recede diagonally into the blur of the background. The women wear coordinated, washed-out pink work shirts with plastic ID badges hanging off them, and the men are in a baby blue that rhymes with the blue bins and racks of the line, suggesting an institution halfway between a barracks and a hospital nursery. Toward the front of the frame at center right, the central figure holds a metal-and-plastic appliance part in her hands. Standing perpendicular to the assembly line, she turns away from the line to face the camera, slightly bowing her head with her eyes closed. Viewers glance over the blurred shoulder of a colleague or manager at bottom right, who prevents a wholly direct encounter with her suspended state. The picture seems the formal counterpoint to much of Sekula's earlier work: the single frame replaces the sequences of images and text; the light box derived from advertising replaces the investigative photo essay; and the individual factory worker's concentrated absorption in her task replaces the communicative theater of the everyday. Eyes closed, she does not confront the viewer or acknowledge the social situation established by the photograph.

Viewers may imagine her lost in a moment of reverie, temporarily freed from the relentless, standardized time of the factory's assembly line or the supervision of the boss. But such escape is not simply or easily won: the slight motion blur of her face and arm, compared with the sharp focus of her collar, suggests this is but a tiny slice of time. Instead of daydreaming, she is likely working, attentively listening for loose parts in the component to check that it has been properly assembled.<sup>19</sup> The moment seized from the working process does not stand so apart from the time of the factory as it first appeared: the manager is still watching her, the assembly line still rolling, her coworkers still toiling alongside her.<sup>20</sup> The moment of photographic stasis cannot be automatically equated with subjective freedom; the photographic portrait alone does not erase the traces of objectification, instrumentalization, or

19. Allan Sekula, interview by author, July 21, 2012.

20. This individual artwork is also not as separate from Sekula's other works as it first appears. *Eyes Closed* is also circulated, without a separate title, as a production still in the press material that accompanies Sekula and Noël Burch's essay film *The Forgotten Space* (2010). The photograph was shot during the making of that film, in which film footage from the same appliance factory appears, and helps to explain the scene. The photograph was originally produced as a light box for display in a street-level window in New York's Chinatown, where it was paired in a gallery exhibition with *This Ain't China: A Photonovel* (1974). See Monika Szewczyk, "Negation Notes (While Working on an Exhibition with Allan Sekula Featuring *This Ain't China: A Photonovel*)," *E-flux Journal* 13 (February 2010): 1–13; and Allan Sekula and Noël Burch, dirs., *The Forgotten Space*, DVD (New York: Icarus Films, 2012).

violence that haunt it and which must be resisted by other means, by altering the social relations of production, ownership, and control.

There are many pitfalls here. Unseen by the sitter, the photographer could be accused, for instance, of indulging in a form of voyeurism or, to the extent the apparent self-presence of the worker masks exploitation, fetishism. Furthermore, if the camera's gaze coincides with the disciplinary gaze of the manager, it risks reinforcing the color-coordinated gender norms signaled by the work uniform. Worse still, by portraying the female laborer with downcast eyes, the image might be thought to serve up her body as only the ground for the viewer's imaginative freedom, for free play of the viewer's gaze. Yet Sekula uncharacteristically allows this photograph to stand alone, rather than situate it within a sequence, because it does not simply confirm the subjection of the sitter but rather stages an undecidable split between the honorific and repressive, between work and worklessness. And although the sitter does not explicitly address the viewer with her look, as many of Sekula's other subjects do, the picture still confronts the viewer with this undecidability, positioning the viewer in close proximity to an other who precedes the viewer's look and whose reserve is not fully encompassed or exhausted by that look.

If a kind of freedom is to be won here, or recorded in and through photography, it is not achieved through the subjugation of nature or of others. It is not the freedom of the sovereign, intentional subject but rather a kind of unmooring, a freedom found by allowing oneself to be carried away, caught in relation to others, supported and even partially supplanted by other images and objects and, crucially, other people. Beyond the milieu of the factory floor, many of Sekula's later works depict actions of solidarity among individuals organized in egalitarian groups: in *Fish Story*, this includes views of the façade of a clothes shop occupied by its women workers who are owed back pay, as well as a crowd of workers gathering at the waterfront at the end of a general strike protesting unemployments cutbacks. Compare, too, not only the informal work group of dockers loading cargo or the activist crew of the museum ship the *Global Mariner* in *Ship of Fools* (1999–2010), but also the volunteers laboriously cleaning by hand, almost speck by speck, oil spilled from a sunken tanker on the Spanish shoreline in *Black Tide/Marea negra* (2002–2003), or the diverse mass of demonstrators gathered in the cold and rainy streets of Seattle during the World Trade Organization meeting in *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]* (1999–2000). Despite Sekula's long-standing criticism of liberal-humanist social documentary, his abiding interest in the moments of intimacy and sociability that lie at the edges of the production line—in the suspended time both inside and outside work—continually returns him to the human figure and to the face as the marker of what cannot be fully subsumed into work and commodity exchange, as the bearer of our unexamined proximity with distant others, even those on the other side of the globe.

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After *Fish Story*, Sekula returns to the maritime space of ports, dockyards, and container ships for much of his work since 1989. From *Deep Six/Passer au bleu* (1996–1998) to *TITANIC's wake* (1998/2000), Sekula records the latest developments in the rationalization and automation of production and transport: the standardized shipping container; the system of intermodal transport between ship, truck, and train it engenders; and the new global geography of production and distribution they enable. The works track the new material spaces and legal vehicles that emerge—from the new supersized container ships, ports, and warehouses required to handle the growing flow of goods; to the flag of convenience system of paper sovereignty that governs the shipping industry, one of the innovative legal maneuvers created by capital to maximize profit, evade regulation, and shift labor costs and environmental risks elsewhere. And his final work, *Ship of Fools/The Dockers' Museum* (2010–2013), which pairs a huge diversity of found objects with portraits of union activists on a cargo ship refitted as a propaganda exhibition, returns to Sekula's contention that the sea is the constitutive, if often neglected, matrix of the contemporary economic and political order. That is, the sea is *The Forgotten Space*, as it was summarized in the title of the 2010 feature-length essay film Sekula directed with Noël Burch, and which is the culmination of Sekula's turn to video- and filmmaking throughout the 2000s.

At the same time, Sekula attends not only to the movement of capital and the way it reshapes the world but also to the humdrum drudgery and manual labor still required to keep the system moving. Sekula focuses on such labor works such as *Black Tide/Marea negra* (2002–2003), which depicts a volunteer-led cleanup of the 2002 oil spill on the coast of Spain after the wreck of the tanker *Prestige*. And *The Dockers' Museum* is a kind of monument to this labor, although one created not as a grandiose structure but as a collection of found objects, one built out of the material traces of this history. *Fish Story* and the works that follow it are thus partly dedicated to recording the disappearance of the old ports and ways of the sailor that were once part of the modern city, at the moment the dockyard workforce is shrunk through technology and the new “super ports” decamp to suburban and exurban sites. These works seek to register a proletarian cosmopolitanism of the sea, one that has at least partly vanished. However, the invocation in *Fish Story*, for instance, of a history of naval mutinies stretching back to the French Revolution is not simply a left-melancholic lament for an insurrectionary past. Rather, in addition to the polemical attack on the abstract humanism of Steichen's exhibition in his critical texts, Sekula also actively documents what he sees as an effort to “re-float” *The Family of Man*: the circumnavigation of *The Global Mariner* and her crew, a container ship refitted by a confederation of maritime and transportation unions as a traveling exhibition on the legal, economic, and working conditions of global shipping documented in *Ship of Fools*. Beyond this union of transport workers, Sekula also seeks to document more provisional moments of association, whether of the volunteers laboriously cleaning by hand, almost speck by speck, oil spilled from a sunken tanker on the shoreline in Spain in *Black Tide/Marea negra*, or of the demonstrators gathered on the streets of Seattle as they attempt to intervene in the negotiations of the global financial elite in *Waiting for Tear Gas [White*

*Globe to Black]* (1999–2000). By attending to these forms of association, Sekula demonstrates a kind of “sympathetic materialism” that I outline in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

World: *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]* (1999–2000)

*And then there was the question of space: the police line represented one kind of order, the union stewards another. And between the two of them, a space. A space that had to be filled.*

—Chris Marker, *Grin without a Cat (Le fond de l'air est rouge)* (1977/1993)

A jagged, silver gash breaks up the dark mass of people standing shoulder to shoulder in the street (fig. 5.1). The figures are wrapped in deep blues and blacks, their scarves, hats, and hair blown by the wind. Shot from below, they seem to fill the corridors of the city, reaching to the top of the buildings in the background, even the sky above. They stand two or three or more deep and occupy the full width of the photograph's frame, eclipsing the horizon and the receding depth of the street. Bright faces limn the top of the picture. Some people chant, some clap, some stand silently with folded arms. The pair in the middle look off calmly, solemnly, in opposite directions. With their heads tilted obliquely in the damp, radiant air, their gazes are drawn away from each other to the edges of the frame; their bodies are drawn together in quiet intimacy. This young man and woman also hold between them, at the center of the picture, a makeshift, three-quarter-length mirror. Light splashes across its surface, piercing the indigo huddle of bodies and tracing another picture: in the reflected image, gray buildings across the way highlight a staggered line of police clad in black uniforms, their faces unrecognizable behind the glare of plastic visors, their bodies thickly padded with armor, their truncheons raised. Enfolded by a picture that seems to project forward into the street and backward through the mirror at once, the viewer is caught between the demonstrators stretched out ahead and the police stationed to the rear—and is cast into the open, virtual space of the street.

This picture belongs to a sequence of color photographs titled *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]* (1999–2000) taken by Allan Sekula during protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in 1999. Made with the customary photojournalistic means of a portable film camera and available light, the project exists both as a slide installation and in book form.<sup>1</sup> The photos record the

1. The slideshow includes eighty-one images projected in a fourteen-minute-long loop. The complete set of images is reproduced in Allan Sekula, *TITANIC's Wake*, exh. cat. (Cherbourg-Octeville, France; Le Point du Jour Éditeur, 2003), 87–104; a smaller selection of thirty-two images is reproduced in Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St. Clair, and Allan Sekula, *Five Days That Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond* (London: Verso, 2000). Here I largely follow the sequencing of the latter publication, not only because of its wider availability, but also because its reproduction of a single photograph per page resembles the “flow” of the single-channel slideshow. While the facing pages of the book format lend themselves to paired, contrasting and grouped images, the slideshow emphasizes the rhythm of passing time between each image.



emergence within the cities of the global North of a resistance to neoliberalism and corporate globalization that had already been building in the global South during the previous decade. By documenting this new political formation, *Waiting for Tear Gas* helps constitute it as visible and historically significant in the face of its dismissal and trivialization in the mass media. In this sense, the project functions as a kind of “anti-photojournalism,” which Sekula defines not only in a thematic, but also a formal and technical sense:

In photographing the Seattle demonstrations my working idea was to move with the flow of protest, from dawn to 3 a.m. if need be, taking in the lulls, the waiting, and the margins of events. The rule of thumb for this sort of anti-photojournalism: no flash, no telephoto lens, no gas mask, no auto-focus, no press pass, and no pressure to grab at all costs the one defining image of dramatic violence.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, the emphasis that *Waiting* places on describing the sensations and experiences of these people as they assemble in the street suggests that the form of their collective appearance is fundamental to the makeup of this new politics. In other words, it suggests that the ways in which these participants occupy and thereby transform the space of the street may be just as important for politics as the goals or ends that this new movement—if it is or was just one—aims to pursue.

The project also provides an occasion to reexamine some aesthetic issues raised by Sekula’s artistic practice, emerging as it does not only from a tradition of documentary photography, but also from conceptual art. Since the 1970s, Sekula’s work has cannily combined the serial format and photo-text pairings of photoconceptualism with the investigative photo essay, seeking to register the facts of everyday life while questioning the naturalness and transparency of the documentary image.<sup>3</sup> While Sekula’s practice is most often understood within the framework of ideology critique and of Brechtian aesthetics more narrowly, *Waiting for Tear Gas* troubles some of the premises that undergird this framework. Many of the devices familiar to this approach—self-reflexive acknowledgement of the constructedness of the artwork, a text or script that determines the production of the image, theatricality, pedagogy, and didacticism—often abandon aesthetic inquiry to point to a social or political truth presumed to lie beyond images. However, Sekula’s photographs also deserve to be examined as pictures and attended to at the phenomenological level of their surfaces, surfaces that are consistently positioned within a field of bodily intersubjectivity. The persistence of the portrait, especially—which retrospectively illuminates the indispensability of the human figure to Sekula’s previous work—presents issues of identification and absorption often assumed to be alien to his approach. The depiction of people gathered in the street provided by *Waiting for Tear Gas* troubles the oppositions between identification and estrangement, and between absorption and theatricality, that underpin ideology

2. Sekula, untitled preface to *Waiting for Tear Gas*, in Cockburn, St. Clair, and Sekula, *Five Days That Shook the World*, 122.
3. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Allan Sekula: Photography between Discourse and Document,” in Allan Sekula, *Fish Story* (Rotterdam: Witte de With; Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1995), 189–200.

critique and modernist criticism respectively. The reliance on the group portrait and what Sekula calls “a simple descriptive physiognomy of the crowd” develops certain absorptive themes without denying the existence of the beholder in a broader social realm.<sup>4</sup> In place of absorption or estrangement, *proximity* and *exposure* prove to be key dynamics animating the photos.<sup>5</sup>

If the rise of the photographic portrait coincided with the flowering of bourgeois

4. Sekula, untitled preface to *Waiting for Tear Gas*, in Cockburn, St. Clair, and Sekula, *Five Days That Shook the World*, 122. Sekula is well aware of the scientific and racist history of physiognomy as a pseudoscience, which he carefully recounts in “The Body in the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986), 3–64; he also uses physiognomy to link photographic portraiture to the mug shot in “Walker Evans and the Police,” in *Walker Evans and Dan Graham*, ed. Jean-François Chevrier, Chris Dercon, and Mat Verbeek, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Witte de With; Marseille: La Direction des Musées de Marseille; Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte; New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992), 193–96. Without erasing photography’s historical role in this violent operation of power, he is also echoing Walter Benjamin’s positive use of the term to describe a method of materialist criticism. Although Benjamin’s widespread use of this fraught concept deserves more intensive treatment, he explicitly applies it to photography when approving of the “social functions” inherent in August Sander’s photographic catalog of German society. For Benjamin, these photographs, like Soviet film of that era, are no longer portraits, but instead a scientific, “physiognomic gallery” of social and “facial types.” Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography,” in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1931–1934, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 507–530. If I cling to the term portrait, it is partly because *Waiting for Tear Gas* pursues something other than such a typology.
5. That Sekula eschews the journalistic apparatus that would distance him, as a privileged observer, from the protestors and the bodily dangers they face is pointed out in Kaja Silverman, “Disassembled Movies,” *Synopsis 3: Testimonies: Between Fiction and Reality*, ed. Anna Kafetsi (Athens, Greece: National Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003). Philip Armstrong also presents a compelling reading of *Waiting for Tear Gas* that emphasizes the experience of exposure, with particular reference to the work of Jean-Luc Nancy. Since I encountered his article after finishing this chapter, I can only second the impressive constellation of contemporary political theory he brings to the work, with which I hope my account of the strike resonates. One remaining point of disagreement would be with his claim for the “untechnical matter-of-factness” and “banal, almost dumb facticity” of the photos, which seems contradicted by color, sequencing, and the scale of half-length or three-quarter length views of individuals—elements further magnified when presented in an exhibition context that projects them as slides. See Philip Armstrong, “Seattle and the Space of Exposure,” in *Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 185–244. In his excellent reading, Steve Edwards helpfully addresses some of the formal aspects of *Waiting* with the concept of “horizontal montage” that creates, alongside works by Chris Marker and Joel Sternfeld, “an alternative vision of multitude from below.” Steve Edwards, “Commons and Crowds: Figuring Photography from Above and Below,” *Third Text* 23, no. 4 (July 2009): 447–464. See also Zanny Begg, “Recasting Subjectivity: Globalisation and the Photography of Andreas Gursky and Allan Sekula,” *Third Text* 19, no. 6 (November 2005): 625–636; and Daniel Hoffman-Schwartz, “Empire/State: Artists Engaging Globalization,” *Afterimage* 30, no. 2 (September–October 2002): 13.

individualism in the nineteenth century, one important thread in the history of twentieth-century art and photography is the disappearance of this bourgeois subject.<sup>6</sup> Not only overcome by the large-scale crowds of mass society in the 1920s and 1930s, the individuals who have gone missing from the empty streets of Atget's old Paris will find no home in the vacant postwar industrial, suburban, and urban spaces of photoconceptualism, whether in its pop (Ed Ruscha's *Twenty-nine Parking Lots*) or agitational (Martha Rosler's *Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*) modes. Sekula's photography and his critical writing register the challenge this crisis in portraiture poses to humanist tenets of liberal social documentary, in which the photographer or viewer confers a compensatory beauty, innocence, or dignity on the unfortunate individual in the face of broader exploitation, impoverishment, or violence. Yet Sekula still insists on picturing human figures, especially as they are found at the margins of typical work, home, and social spaces. In *Waiting for Tear Gas* Sekula responds to the absence of a world-historical political subject neither by dogmatically reasserting, against all odds, the presence of a coherent class subject nor by romantically celebrating the anticapitalist revolutionary. Instead, he records the simultaneously singular and plural existence of the people in the street, linking them to each other and their surroundings through the careful sequencing of images. As Sekula points out, the demonstrations assert the materiality of the body over and against the abstraction of commodity exchange, global trade, and finance capital flows.<sup>7</sup> However, as my opening reading suggests, the street is also a virtual space—not in the limited sense of digital technology, but in the sense of images and appearances, capacities and potentialities—albeit one that accommodates a certain kind of collective embodiment. And while the street is a space for collective action, that action is here recast as patient waiting or as the militant refusal to act that is the strike. In these photographs of the street, the oppositions between active and passive, material and virtual, human and inhuman, particular and universal are quickly complicated by the dynamics of appearance, visibility, and representation, beginning with the mirror.

The mirror held by the demonstrators in the photograph enacts a reflexive use of images to arrive at a truth that lies if not wholly outside the image, then just at its edge—the protestors use the mirror to point out the threatening violence of the police. As an allegory of critical documentary work in general, the shock and estrangement that result are expected to provoke a more self-conscious, knowledgeable, and even enlightened grasp of the political situation: this reflexive meditation on the external, often invisible social conditions that limit and direct the construction of the image and the viewing subject reveals the ways state power constrains who can appear and assemble in public. But perhaps more importantly, the photograph also contrasts two different ways of facing and encountering others.

6. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Residual Resemblance: Three Notes on the Ends of Portraiture," in *Face Off: The Portrait in Recent Art*, ed. Melissa E. Feldman, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1994), 53–69. As Buchloh observes, this crisis also continually provokes attempts to reassert a unified, hieratic subject.
7. Sekula, preface to *Waiting for Tear Gas*, 122.

Although it appears in the middle of the sequence, I take this photo as a starting point because of the contrast it stages between two different kinds of lines, lines that organize different postures, attitudes, and looks. Despite the apparent symmetry of their lines as they occupy public space, the two formations differ in their stance: the declarative frontality of the demonstrators is firm but open; the police are crouched back on one foot, both defensive and ready to advance on command. Each policeman clenches a nightstick, advertising its combative use; the demonstrators clap with empty hands, hold signs, or prop up the mirror, whose flimsy reflection seems ill suited to shield against physical violence.

Deep shadow engulfs the crowd, dissolving the contours of their bodies and making palpable the free space that fuses them together. The atmospheric light that draws individual faces from the shadow gives them a rounded, fragile, haptic quality. Meanwhile, the silhouettes of the police remain only dark outlines in the glare; their armor leaves no patch of skin showing. The standard uniform and helmet makes each police officer identical and unidentifiable. Unlike the resolute authority of those blank statues, the pair of demonstrators at the center strike a subtle balance of inwardness and outwardness. Their bodies merge in the darkness behind the mirror, yet their faces remain distinct. Although they stand close enough to be touching, they regard not each other, but what lies beyond the frame. Have they just met? Are they lovers? Do they remain anonymous and unknown to each other? Their momentary proximity is unbroken by word or look. Wrapped in their closeness, they do not look directly at the viewer or the police; at the same time, the world around them draws out their looks, as the sides of their faces, angled toward the viewer, are offered up to the gaze of others.

In contrast, the demonstrators cannot see the police, who have tried to make themselves invisible, untouchable, and spectacularly so.<sup>8</sup> Any reciprocity between the two lines has been cut off by the visors of the police, who attempt to conduct surveillance without being seen, and whose gaze cannot be returned, or rather is always reflected by their armor (see also fig. 5.2).<sup>9</sup> As a picture of sovereignty, this photograph of absent, commanding bodies recalls that exemplary painting of another era, Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. Although *Waiting for Tear Gas* stands on the other side of modernity from the classical model of representation identified in *Las Meninas*—a separation that can be summed up by the word “biopolitics”—these

8. Walter Benjamin touches on this curious invisibility of the police when he denounces the “spectral mixture” of law-making and law-preserving violence in the police because it is not open to critical evaluation as is written, sanctioned law. When the police not only apply existing law, but suspend written law—as during the state of emergency declared in Seattle—thereby instituting new, unwritten law, the police’s “power is formless, like its nowhere-tangible, all-pervasive, ghostly presence in the life of civilized states.” Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence” (1921), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996), 243.
9. For an account of the asymmetry of the “visor effect”—the experience of not being able to see who looks at us—in the ghost of the king, in the figure of the father, and in the law; as a call to justice; and as a general condition of ethics and politics, see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), esp. 6–8.



two works share a similar composition. They both markedly superimpose sovereign, artist, and viewer in the same viewing position, exterior to the surface of the picture and consequently use a mirror image to circuitously reflect the sovereign back into the picture. Of course, the differences are instructive: in the photograph, the figure of the creator-painter is eclipsed and elided with the figure of the spectator-demonstrator; there is less play with the means of representation (the unfinished canvas, the finished portraits hanging on the wall, and the light-filled window in Velázquez's painting are all condensed in the mirror and visor); the figure of the sovereign has joined the anonymously plural and monolithic ranks of the police; in a new willingness to appear in the open, the couple has switched sides to join the ranks of spectators and attendants; and the viewer now occupies the less fixed, more vertiginous terrain of the street. And yet we may still learn something from the description of the sovereign couple in *Las Meninas* as the invisible "center" and "essential void" whose image reflected in the looking glass is nonetheless: "the palest, most unreal, most compromised of the painting's images: movement, a little light, would be sufficient to eclipse them."<sup>10</sup> Looking again at Sekula's photograph with these words in mind, the viewer may be more inclined to notice the woman's fingers lightly pinching the corner of the mirror, creating an indentation in the plastic sheeting and releasing a puddle of silver whose deformation of the image threatens to spread across the scene.

The pair at the center seem to register this armored invisibility of the police and so look beyond the police line, beyond the immediacy of the scene, even as they are aware of—can feel—the threat confronting them. Nor do they look at the mirror, which they display for others to see. Instead, the mirror serves to publicize this image of the police and to expose what was previously hidden: the violence necessary to enforce the law and maintain the rule of the state. And since the police are there to keep the demonstrators from blocking the streets and disrupting the WTO meeting, the violence that backs the prerogatives of the state also stands in for the reigning order of economic governance and the normally invisible, systemic violence of exploitation and uneven development it involves. Seen in this context, the armored police instantiate the unaccountable, nontransparent, and closed nature of the ministerial meeting that protects from scrutiny the imperative of trade and profit—rather than economic, social, or environmental justice—motivating the economically powerful nations who dominate the organization. This asyndeton, which superimposes structural economic violence and spectacular police violence, is the strength and weakness of the demonstration. In this rhetorical gambit, the state serves as the nexus of both economic governance and sovereign law. One of the risks of this argument is that it loses sight of the broader field of government operating beyond the nation-state.<sup>11</sup>

10. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 14, 16.

11. See, for example, the distinction between an *art of government* that manages goods and populations, and the *problem of sovereignty* and juridical rule over a territory in Michel Foucault, "Governmentality" (1978), in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, vol. 3, *Power*, trans. Robert Hurley et al., ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New



The mirror serves first of all to reflect the ways in which the equipment and task of the police dehumanize their appearance and their senses, or—if “dehumanize” assumes too much of a human essence only secondarily lost or corrupted—to deaden their ability to touch, to feel, to be affected by others. (They retain, presumably, the ability to feel the hardness of the inside of their armor, the warmth then chill of their sweat underneath it.) Confronting the police with their own image might force them to confront their place in a scenario of domination. However, it remains doubtful that the police will recognize this image of themselves, or in recognizing it find it so countervailing to their own self-image that they would be compelled to drop their weapons or refuse their orders. In this case, the mirror is also aimed at anyone who passes by, at a broader public who in disapproval of this violent stance would shame the police and those responsible for their conduct.<sup>12</sup> In publicizing this image of the police, the mirror functions as a means of persuasion, a trope: an apotropaic deflection that turns the image of violent conduct into one that exposes, and by implication denounces or counteracts, that violence.<sup>13</sup> A visual equivalent of the well-worn chant “The whole world is watching”—a phrase that entered the public lexicon during the television broadcast of police beating demonstrators and passersby outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago—the mirror points to bearing witness as an important function of protest, as well as exemplifying its reliance on media and mediation.<sup>14</sup> (In this way, the mirror serves as a metonym of the different media that might reproduce the event, Sekula’s photographs included.) A similar kind of pointing or demonstrative showing occurs in other photographs where an outstretched hand cups rubber bullets collected from the street or a pair of them carefully holds a spent ammunition canister, makings

Press, 2000), 201–222.

12. See Thomas Keenan’s analysis of “mobilizing shame” as an axiom of human rights discourse, especially his interrogation of the Enlightenment model of reason underpinning such a tactic, which assumes an automatic transfer from shameful public exposure to guilty knowledge and corrective action. Thomas Keenan, “Mobilizing Shame,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 435–449.
13. A corollary to this exposure of police violence would be an opposition between the mirror as nonviolent means of persuasion and the club as instrument of physical violence. (The plastic sheet that serves as an improvised mirror indexes not only a paucity of means, but also an economy of violence: as if in prison, real glass is prohibited since it might break and cut, and those holding the mirror don’t want to give the police any excuse to make preventive arrests based on an alleged weapon.) But while it remains ethically necessary to distinguish bodily harm from other kinds of violence, the force at work in persuasion may not be so simply or completely disentangled from violence. For the club is already a sign, a threat of what awaits those who do not obey the law. And like Perseus’s shield, the blinding glare of the mirror can have its own disorienting, if not dangerous, physical effects. Setting aside the perennial debate about whether and to what extent property damage should be considered violence, we might consider instead an example that mobilizes the strange, bloodless violence of light in contrast to the “less lethal” weapons of the police, which mark the body with bruises from rubber bullets or the tears and coughed up blood from tear gas.
14. This slogan is also associated with this photo in Armstrong, “Seattle and the Space of Exposure,” 210.

its military markings legible for the camera to examine, even as the demonstrator's face is sometimes cropped from the frame. These hands serve a dual function: first, as testimony, that I was here and witnessed someone being attacked; second, as evidence, a record of what happened that draws on the photographic index, that this was here. This deictic gesture appeals to an unseen viewer who is interpellated, and so partially created and imagined, through the act of demonstration. The gesture seeks to assemble a public, if not a court of judgment, beyond that already found in the street.

Yet it may be that publicizing or exposing is not enough; exposure does not automatically lead to understanding nor understanding to action. After all, nothing guarantees that the world will watch without changing channels, or that in watching viewers will make sense of the images in the same way as the demonstrators. And because the viewer of the mirror, and by extension of the photograph, remains structurally undetermined—positioned in the same viewing position, or just to the side of, that enjoyed by the police—this exposure does not guarantee viewers will see the scenario from the standpoint of the demonstrators, thereby siding with them and their cause.

There is, however, another kind of exposure at work in the image—that of the viewer. This image exposes not only the actions of the police, but also the look of the viewer. At first, the viewer seems to approach the scene from the vantage point of the police. Yet the mirror also troubles the fantasy of security embodied by the police. As the viewer gazes at the demonstrators, the mirror points out the viewer's blind spot, creating the sensation of being looked at, and approached, from behind. This vulnerability intimated in the viewer would seem to ruin the ideal of a simultaneously fortified and panoptic vision figured by the police. The loss of an invulnerable, all-seeing standpoint subverts any facile notion of perfect security. Discomfited, exposed, and no longer safe in the anonymity of looking, the viewer is caught between the two lines, perpetually suspended between them *and* urgently asked to choose sides.

The photograph certainly seems inclined toward one side: although they face off against the viewer, the broad scale, openness, and intimacy of the demonstrators in the foreground overshadow the figures of the police. For some viewers already inclined to the demonstrator's cause, the imbalance in weaponry will automatically confirm the moral rightness of the activists. However, this moral feeling cannot trump a broader struggle over the uncertain politics of the image, a struggle over how others not already committed to the activists' ideals will understand the events. And there may be good reasons to linger suspended between the lines. First, as much as the photograph invites identification with the demonstrators, viewers who discover in the mirror an uncomfortable confrontation with the police in place of their own image may also be called to reflect on their own place in the economy of violence for which the police serve as placeholders. Second, when considered within a broader climate of fear, the attraction of this fantasy of invulnerability personified by the police cannot be discounted. Such a fantasy, no matter how impossible or irrational, may not be dispelled, but rather can be strengthened by any discomfort, vulnerability, or threat with which the public is confronted. Despite

the clear asymmetry between the two groups in their inclination and capacity for violence, the image of confrontation risks a specular doubling (fig. 5.3). Depending on the viewer's preconceptions about who is entitled to speak and act in the name of the people, about legitimate and illegitimate forms of public conduct, the police response is liable to be justified as protective of a larger public, as a preemptive strike construed as defense against anticipated—or imagined—violence originating from the other. After all, the years following the Seattle protests have repeatedly reminded us of the ways in which the rhetoric of defense can serve to justify all manner of aggression.

In another photograph, a young man in the center of the frame wears a gas mask over his face (fig. 5.4). The segmented tube that protrudes from the mouth of the apparently World-War-Two-era gas mask snakes across his torso, and is tucked into a gray satchel hanging off the shoulder of his chestnut-brown leather jacket. He lightly holds a video camera in one hand; the other hand is held up to his face, gingerly touching the gray plastic that forms a second skin, as if he were adjusting it, still uncomfortable with its fit and feel. Castoffs from the military-industrial complex are recycled and turned against the nexus of corporate and government interests that produced them. The obsolete, army-surplus tech repurposed for civilian defense gives him the look of a retrofuturistic citizen superhero or a posthuman media vigilante. Mixed in with some steelworkers sporting T-shirts, ball caps, and the occasional backward hard hat, a larger group of young men with kerchiefs and gas masks over their faces mills about behind him, also equipped to defend themselves against police violence. At first glance, the center figure's gas mask mimes those of the police. The key difference is that he holds in his hand neither a club nor a gun, but a camera. Like the mirror previously, the gas mask and video camera are technological supplements to human vision. While the mirror exhibited the dehumanization of the armored police, the masked videographer enacts the reflexive dehumanization of the demonstrator. The camera and insulating, protective gear intervene in the field of vision, displacing existing human faculties precisely in the service of recording, publicizing, and exhibiting the police attempt to disable those same senses by overloading them.

In this encounter, both police visors and the gas masks and kerchiefs worn by demonstrators disturb the ideal of a liberal public sphere in which parties recognize each other as interlocutors in a rational dialogue. Even as the camera promises to promote enlightenment, it is deployed within a public sphere structured by antagonism. The footage that results may be used as a tool for refining protest tactics, as a document in history told from below, or as evidence in a search for legal accountability; more immediately, the camera also serves as the means by which

government violence might be portrayed as unjustified and illegitimate.<sup>15</sup> This agonistic struggle over the meaning and significance of the events takes place not only in the media, but also in the streets, in a struggle over the ability to be seen and heard in public space. In this struggle the camera, unlike the tools of the police, is not likely to inflict bodily harm; the improvised, militant defense staged here must be distinguished from the willingness and capacity of the police to inflict bodily injury. However, even given these important differences, the masking and pose of these demonstrators still partially mirror those of the police, forming their militant, if defensive, complement. The specular doubling persists. When public space is occupied by those with no authorization or prior right to do so—an appropriation signaled by the demonstrators' chant "Whose streets? Our streets!"—it is often justified with reference to the sovereignty of the people. It is worth asking to what extent this embodiment of the people occurs in the mode of the fictional "as if," the contingent, or the provisional, like the performative contradiction of claiming a right—in this case, to occupy public space—precisely at the moment in which it is being forcefully denied. However, rather than meeting police sovereignty with popular sovereignty, it may be instead a question of relinquishing the pose of sovereignty altogether.

Perhaps for this reason, *Waiting for Tear Gas* largely sidesteps the iconic images of confrontation familiar to photojournalism. The mirror photograph, which appears roughly in the middle of the sequence, does not lead to an ensuing battle with the police. Instead, it is followed by another line of demonstrators cloaked in tans, browns, and grays arrayed frontally across the frame, with the camera positioned just off center from the double yellow line that leads the way down the center of the street (fig. 5.5). The couple at the middle each tread on the line with alternate legs, and their contrapuntal step leads the whole front row, holding hands, mouths open in chant or song, in a syncopated march down the street. Proceeding

15. The demonstrations in Seattle also saw the debut of the Independent Media Center (IMC), to which unpaid, freelance contributors—often demonstrators themselves—posted to a website live reporting on the demonstrations, including photos, video, and audio. The material was distributed to other noncommercial media outlets as an alternative to mainstream, corporate news coverage. Locally-run IMCs since spread across the world, but have largely been replaced by user-generated posts to social media networks. This archiving cuts both ways, however: since Seattle, the videocamera has passed to the cops as well, who often conduct blanket surveillance of demonstrations. And while independent videographers have been issued subpoenas to provide material to aid in the prosecution of demonstrators, they have also provided material that has helped exonerate demonstrators who were falsely accused. See, for example, the work of I-Witness Video, recounted in Jim Dwyer, "Videos Challenge Accounts of Convention Unrest," *New York Times*, April 12, 2005; Dwyer, "In Day of Mass Arrests, Divergent Versions of Events," *New York Times*, August 29, 2007; and Colin Moynihan, "City Subpoenas for Access to Tapes of 2004 Protests," *New York Times*, June 20, 2008. On the struggle to limit police surveillance, see, for example, Jim Dwyer, "Judge Says Police Violated Rules In Videotaping Public Gatherings," *New York Times*, February 16, 2007; Benjamin Weiser, "Plaintiffs Are Surprised by New Rules on Taping," *New York Times*, November 10, 2008; and Dwyer, "In the Courts, a Merry-Go-Round on Police Surveillance," *New York Times*, November 11, 2008.

through lateral moves, Sekula investigates what it looks like to stand alongside the demonstrators, replacing the head-on address of the mug shot or forensic photo with both frontal portraits of demonstrators surrounded by others on the street, and sidelong glances down their horizontal lines as they link arms. As the crowds become dense, each individual is no longer oriented on their own vertical axis and spaced out across a horizontal row. Instead, the scale shifts away from the individual as bodies start to overlap, giving a contour to the group. Then, as the demonstrators begin to disperse, the camera returns again to the free space that links smaller groups, couples, and singles. But the sequence does not proceed chronologically, by imposing a narrative of dramatic actions with beginning, middle and end.<sup>16</sup> Instead,

16. Most stories told about Seattle contain the following: in the early morning of the opening day of the conference, November 30, hundreds blockade the conference center and Paramount Theater, soon reinforced by thousands in a mobile demonstration and roving occupation of intersections downtown. The Seattle police respond with tear-gas and pepper-spray assaults in an attempt to break the blockade, clear lines of access to the conference, and take control of the streets. In the early afternoon, tens of thousands participate in a rally sponsored by organized labor and attended by a number of environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The subsequent protest march is diverted away from the demonstrations and street blockades near the convention center, despite which thousands break off from the march to reinforce those engaged in civil disobedience. With delegates still unable to reach the meeting, officials announce the WTO opening ceremonies are cancelled. Under pressure from the federal government to clear the streets, Seattle mayor Paul Schell declares a state of emergency, prohibiting everyone except WTO delegates, business people and employees, and residents from entering downtown. (The order is soon revised to include journalists and city council members.) The police enforce the order as a blanket ban on any otherwise lawful speech or activity critical of the WTO or government and police response. Reinforced with more chemical weapons and extra officers from surrounding areas, police again move to clear the area. Black-bloc activists vandalize some downtown businesses, focusing on banks and multinational corporations. Pushed from downtown, demonstrators retreat to the nearby Capital Hill neighborhood, where police continue gassing and attacking demonstrators, onlookers, and residents into the late evening. The next day, police use indiscriminate force, including tear gas and less-lethal munitions like wooden dowels, bean bags, and rubber bullets, to keep protestors out of downtown, in the process ejecting, attacking, or arresting demonstrators, residents, city officials, journalists, and individuals passing out flyers on the sidewalk. The open-air Pike Place Market is gassed and the assault on demonstrators and residents in Capitol Hill is repeated a second night. After the police make mass arrests, demonstrators switch to protesting at the jail to have detainees released and charges dropped. The WTO meeting gets underway and is addressed by President Bill Clinton. The talks collapse at the end of the week with no agreement among the most economically powerful nations on a framework for further trade negotiations and with strident protest from delegates from developing countries, who were locked out of crucial meetings. (The Doha Round of negotiations, begun at the 2001 meeting in Qatar, remains stalled). Eyewitness accounts include Jeffrey St. Clair, "Jeffrey St. Clair's Seattle Diary," in *Five Days That Shook the World*; and Chris Dixon, "Five Days in Seattle: A View from the Ground," in *The Battle of the Story of the Battle of Seattle*, ed. Rebecca Solnit and David Solnit (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009), 73–107. For an overview of key actors and events, see Paul de Armond, "Netwar in the Emerald City: WTO Protest Strategy and Tactics," in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror*,



the photos track an ongoing process of alliance or—after the term “affinity group,” designating a unit assembled for direct action—affinitization, elaborating a repeated crescendo and diminuendo as individuals gradually fill up and drain out of the frame.

With the exception of the opening and closing shots of globes taken in a library, which I discuss later, nearly all the photos in *Waiting for Tear Gas* are taken in the street. The sequence begins with close-up portraits, moving to full-length shots of individuals picked out of crowds as the assembly grows, switching to a line of police with weapons drawn, then to a number of isolated demonstrators, some injured, as they mill about in the gas-filled night. Some delegates, surrounded by police guards, watch and wait from within an illuminated glass entryway, monitoring the events in the street that have waylaid them; returning to a day-lit scene, other delegates with conference badges and business suits enter and exit their hotels. The account is not without moments of levity: as one delegate tosses his head over his shoulder to speak with a colleague, his tie—the top half battened down by a tie pin, the bottom half blown upward by the wind—comically juts upward, threatening to poke him in the face once he turns back toward the camera (fig 5.6). The image suggests that, at least once they leave their glass cocoon, some things lie outside the bureaucrats’ control, and everyone is subject to the weather. In the middle of the sequence are paired the two pictures of lines of demonstrators in daylight, those with the mirror followed by those marching with clasped hands. They lead to a climax of two other photographs shot from just over the heads of crowds who move across the picture plane diagonally, each frame in the opposite direction (fig. 5.7). Each line is now a thick mass filling the depths of the city: chilled, wet, tired, and festive. In both pictures, the tangle of bodies blots out the horizon line, and the diagonal composition further upends their orientation and perspectival stability; onlookers are denied any fixed viewing position, as if the ground were giving way beneath their feet. Moving away from the static lines of confrontation shown earlier, the crowds have slipped from their moorings. Evening settles in with a set of half-length portraits, and it becomes more difficult to separate the protestors from passersby, especially after a number of residents were caught downtown after work or holiday shopping, and others, hearing the news, rushed there from surrounding

*Crime, and Militancy*, ed. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 201–235. For a comprehensive account of the widespread and indiscriminate police violence, see the ACLU report *Out of Control: Seattle’s Flawed Response to Protests against the World Trade Organization* (Seattle: American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, 2000). For an attempt to dispel the false claims repeated in major newspapers that demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails, engaged in arson, or attacked police with excrement, see Rebecca Solnit, “The Myth of Seattle Violence: My Battle with the *New York Times*,” in *The Battle of the Story of the Battle of Seattle*, 56–71. Further documentation can be found in: University of Washington Libraries, WTO Seattle Collection, <http://content.lib.washington.edu/wtoweb/>; University of Washington, WTO History Project, <http://depts.washington.edu/wtohist/>; and the reports by the Seattle City Council, WTO Accountability Review Committee, <http://www.seattle.gov/archive/wtocommittee/>.

neighborhoods to join the scene.<sup>17</sup> The anarchists and hippies and steelworkers with their hard hats mix with more ordinarily-dressed folk, some white, some Black, some Latino.

A woman in a red jacket stands at the center of the frame, facing the camera. In an apparent call for peace, she holds both hands up with fingers in a V, a gesture directed outward to a threat on the other side of the photographer. She steps into the open to intervene between that beyond and the out-of-focus row of black-clad activists who hover a few steps behind her, everyone backlit with yellow light streaming from the windows of a nearby store. In another shot, a messenger in a blue jacket, with shoulder bag and radio, fills the frame and lifts his head to gaze past the viewer as he walks by, with a scattering of people in the empty street and sidewalk behind him. In another, a young man dressed in cargo pants, sweatshirt, and knit cap pushes his bike as he walks out of frame, his back turned to the viewer; at the same moment a bald cop strides across the frame, reaching out to stop him by fastening onto the man's backpack with a gloved hand; another frame shows a police officer wrestling a demonstrator to the ground, the faces of both momentarily lost in a blur of motion. In the middle of an empty street, a man strums an electric guitar plugged into the amplifier apparently being tugged along in the cart beside him; his hands, face, and long hair are a blur as he plays. In an interior scene awash in the same reddish light from the street, a young woman in profile grins slightly as she gazes out from the white cocoon of a chemical-protection suit (fig 5.8). Behind her sits a stack of broken-down computer parts and the edge of a window that opens out onto the orange-colored cityscape. Having taken temporary refuge in an artist's studio that had been raided earlier by the police, she has donned a cast-off hazmat suit left behind by the authorities.<sup>18</sup> Her look of wonder overflows the protective shell. The highlights that play across the clear, crinkled plastic of her hood resemble stars glinting off an astronaut's visor, hinting at some unseen vastness. The defensive armor is transformed into a vehicle for space travel. Then an armored truck streaks by with a helmeted cop in riot gear hanging off the back. Later, two

17. Some accounts emphasize a split between those engaged in direct action and those in the labor rally and ensuing permitted march, and construe it as the division between those committed to abolishing the WTO and those looking to reform it. Thus tactics come to symbolize the division between liberalism and anticapitalism, reform and revolution. (Cockburn and St. Clair attack mainstream environmental NGOs and organized labor, with some exceptions for local dockworkers and steelworkers unions—without addressing the WTO delegates from the global south also trying to attend the meeting—for demanding a “seat at the table.”) To these political divisions could be added those between the labor and environmental movements, advocates of protectionism and internationalism, the metropole and the countryside, and, perhaps most importantly, the global North and the global South. Such divisions are difficult to perceive in Sekula's photos. Without claiming to have transcended these differences, the photos nevertheless open onto other dimensions of affective and bodily life. On the split between those engaged in direct action and the labor march, see Cockburn & St. Clair, *Five Days That Shook the World*, 22, 29–30. Sekula himself began the day at the labor march before making his way downtown and later up to Capitol Hill. Sekula, interview with author, May 1, 2010.
18. Sekula, interview with the author, May 1, 2010.

women appear in the entryway to an all-night sex shop, apparently the “live girls” featured in the ad for “peep shows” and “fantasy booths” posted on the wall behind them (fig. 5.9). Performing for the camera a parody of arrest, one woman in high heels and a bright, scarlet-red dress leans with hands against the wall, legs spread, her behind to the viewer; the other playfully administers a spanking. As cops-and-robbers turns into sex play, business is never far off. It isn’t easy to tell whether this free show is a ludic break from work or a preview meant to advertise the commodity sold inside. Acknowledging the erotics of urban voyeurism from behind the enclosed, windowed doorway, these working women also remind the viewer that not everyone can afford to take the day off. The final figure, a masked man in a red devil suit, turns to leer at the viewer as he carries an oversized chainsaw crudely fashioned out of cardboard (fig. 5.10).<sup>19</sup>

The photographs in *Waiting for Tear Gas* trace an arc of events through the alternating emptiness and density of the streets as they fill with people. By attending to the way these figures inhabit the space of the street, the photographs in the sequence question the terms in which nongovernmental politics is conventionally understood. The term *protest* too often connotes a merely symbolic message of discontent that fails to challenge the material and discursive framework of government, and *direct action* too often suggests an allegedly unmediated physical force that will prove effective in altering or abolishing government. It thus becomes important to challenge some of the key assumptions on which these terms rely, starting with the implicit distinction between symbolic speech and physical act.<sup>20</sup> Of course, as the mirror photograph from *Waiting for Tear Gas* has already made clear, protest often requires the physical occupation of public space, and direct action requires mediation to be tied to any larger political universe. However, the images in *Waiting for Tear Gas* focus less on the messages communicated or on the acts committed by those assembled in the street. Instead, they concentrate on people as they gather together and drift apart in the sometimes anxious, sometimes quiet intervals between events—as they march and stand and wait.

19. In the longer slide version of the work, the chainsaw-wielding devil is the second human figure in the sequence, after a line of demonstrators in turtle costumes, while the previously mentioned woman in the hazmat suit is the final human figure. In both versions, the opening photograph of a white globe and the concluding two photographs, of an empty street and the black globe, discussed below, are the same.
20. Of course, *protest* may signify not only negative opposition or dissent, but also a more neutral act of announcing, declaring, or testifying publicly. For a definition of *direct action* which includes as examples “street manifestations, blockades, trespass, sit-ins, banner hanging, squatting, sabotage, croptrashing, piethrowing,” as well as a mordant overview of some of the other keywords of anticapitalist struggle, see Ian Boal, “Glossary,” in *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement*, ed. Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George Katsiaficas (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004), 389–403. For more on the Direct Action Network (DAN), the Ruckus Society, and others who helped carry out direct action in Seattle, see the entry under “Direct Action Network” in Boal; and John Sellers, “Raising a Ruckus,” in *The Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?* ed. Tom Mertes (New York: Verso, 2004), 175–191. On DAN and direct action after Seattle, see David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009).

As the photographs capture people lingering at the edges of the crowd, picked out on a street emptied of daily traffic, paused as they clasp hands in a march, or halted before a line of police, stillness infuses the scene. The photographs abet this stillness, and in each single frame duration reigns outside of time. As a sequence, the intervals between frames assemble the images together and release them back into time. By attending to the “lulls, the waiting, and the margins of events,” and integrating those pauses into the sequential form of the work, *Waiting for Tear Gas* marks another time apart from the impatient, immediate rhythm of politics. This conduct is better understood in terms of the *strike*, an event which troubles many of the conceptual oppositions that structure conventional accounts of politics, such as the oppositions between protest and direct action, speech and act, mediacy and immediacy, violence and nonviolence, manifestation and withdrawal.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast with the rhetoric of protest, the strike is more than the “expression” by individuals of previously held political opinions, or the exercise of free speech. While government loudly proclaims the right to free speech, it often simultaneously seeks to limit the right to assemble—for example, by restricting the time, place, and size of demonstrations, by confining demonstrators in “protest pens,” or by excluding them from public space by declaring “protest-free zones.”<sup>22</sup> In this

21. This opposition between protest and direct action could also be mediated by the third term of *civil disobedience*, a form of collective action that violates unobjectionable laws (like traffic regulations) to indirectly protest other unjust laws or government policy. Hannah Arendt seizes on this “indirect disobedience” as its proper form, analytically separate from either conscientious objection or breaking a law in order to test its constitutionality in court. By concentrating on the political character of this group action and the collective appearance it requires, she rightly extracts civil disobedience from the individualistic and moralizing framework that justifies it only with reference to moral conscience, higher spiritual law, or suffering and self-sacrifice as guarantees of sincerity and commitment. For reasons I hope will become clear, I prefer to conceive of what she calls the “art of associating together” not in terms of action, but of its suspension in the strike. Hannah Arendt, “Civil Disobedience,” in *Crises of the Republic* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1972), 49–102.
22. Although the plans for direct action to shut down the meeting had been publicized widely and also openly announced in dialogue with the police, the Seattle demonstrations largely took the authorities, and the country, by surprise. Since then, local governments have learned how to better control demonstrations by limiting in advance the ability to publicly assemble, under the rationale of security or other normative uses of the city. (In one notorious example, New York City officials denied an antiwar rally the right to assemble on the Great Lawn of Central Park during the 2004 Republican National Convention due to the allegedly nonpartisan—but nonetheless biopolitical—reason that they needed to protect the health of the grass.) These “time, manner, and place” restrictions are largely accepted within the law. In addition to permit requirements, unfounded predictions of violence are often circulated, which also serve to discourage attendance. The use of direct physical force and less-lethal weapons to clear the streets, as in Seattle, has largely been replaced by a governmental apparatus that also mobilizes increased surveillance, a greater number of police, and miles of temporary, sometimes mobile, fences to control crowds. And when the movements or actions of certain groups can no longer be controlled, overwhelming numbers are used to make indiscriminate mass arrests, often on pretextual grounds, sometimes followed up by prolonged detainment without charge, or on trumped up charges that are later



framework, protest is reduced to a merely symbolic activity by an aggregate of rights-bearing individuals that may be conducted anywhere, preferably apart from legitimate government activity and without disrupting the normative uses of space dedicated to an atomized public. As a collective manifestation of dissent that exceeds this framework of individualized speech, the strike also appears as a contest

dropped. This is to say nothing of the willful abrogation of the rights to speech and assembly through surveillance, provocateurs, and preventive arrest and detention. Those in government seem increasingly willing to make the cynical calculation that it is worthwhile in the long run to break up demonstrations, illegally arrest and detain protestors, and then pay for court costs and damages in the *post facto* legal battle, than to allow the disruption of official or authorized events as they occur. Of course, these struggles must also be understood in the context of the post-9/11 dismantling of limits formerly placed on police conduct during the Church committee era, and new measures legitimized by security concerns amid the so-called War on Terror. For an overview of the increasingly restrictive preemptive regulation of public assembly in the US, see Tabatha Abu El-Haj, "The Neglected Right of Assembly," *UCLA Law Review* 56, no. 3 (2009): 543–589. For another view that holds that "freedom of action" will never be adequately covered under the First Amendment, and may not finally be legally justifiable, see Arendt, "Civil Disobedience," 101. For a comprehensive index of post-Seattle police tactics used to disrupt demonstrations, see Heidi Boghosian, *The Assault on Free Speech, Public Assembly, and Dissent: A National Lawyers Guild Report on Government Violations of First Amendment Rights in the United States* (Barrington, MA: North River Press, 2004). Some specific examples of post-Seattle policing can be drawn from New York City: see Christopher Dunn et al., *Arresting Protest: A Special Report by the New York Civil Liberties Union on New York City's Protest Policies at the February 15, 2003 Antiwar Demonstration in New York City* (New York: New York Civil Liberties Union, 2003); and Christopher Dunn et al., *Rights and Wrongs at the RNC: A Special Report about Police and Protest at the Republican National Convention* (New York: New York Civil Liberties Union, 2005). On the widespread surveillance and infiltration of nonviolent groups prior to the 2004 RNC meeting, including those who evidenced no intent to break the law, see Jim Dwyer, "City Police Spied Broadly Before G.O.P. Convention" *New York Times*, March 25, 2007; Diane Cardwell, "Mayor Defends Spying by Police Before G.O.P. Convention," *New York Times*, March 28, 2007; and Colin Moynihan, "Judge Orders Police Department Files on Preconvention Surveillance Opened," *New York Times*, May 17, 2007. On the prolonged detainment of RNC protestors in dangerous conditions and subsequent lawsuits, see Jim Dwyer, "City Arrest Tactics, Used on Protesters, Face Test in Court," *New York Times*, September 17, 2004; Dwyer, "City Fights Efforts to Release 2004 Convention Arrest Records," *New York Times*, December 13, 2006; Dwyer, "At the Protest, A Civics Lesson Gets a Twist," *New York Times*, April 25, 2007; and Dwyer, "Four Years Later, Still Sorting Fallout of Republican Convention," *New York Times*, September 5, 2008. For evidence documented by I-Witness Video that police spying includes the use of provocateurs, see Jim Dwyer, "Police Infiltrate Protests, Videotapes Show," *New York Times*, December 22, 2005. On the Central Park controversy, see Christine Hauser and Diane Cardwell, "Judge Lets City Bar Convention Protest on Park's Great Lawn," *New York Times*, August 24, 2004; Diane Cardwell, "In Court Papers, A Political Note On '04 Protests," *New York Times*, July 31, 2006; Alan Feuer, "Settlement on Use of Central Park's Great Lawn," *New York Times*, January 8, 2008; Simon Akam, "Report Backs Limits on Great Lawn Crowds," *New York Times*, August 5, 2009; and Simon Akam, "Expert in Lawn Report Worked for Parks Dept.," *New York Times*, August 7, 2009.



over the use of public space. In the strike, the withdrawal from the specialized spheres of life and work may become a paradoxical retreat into public space. Like the secession of the plebs from Rome, this retreat is also a gathering that may constitute other discourses, social relations, and spaces of politics. However, unlike the retreat to Aventine Hill, it need not occur only as an escape from the city, but also as the convergence on and occupation of the public square.<sup>23</sup> In the process, the street is transformed from a space of commerce into something other than a channel for the efficient transport of people and goods toward their predestined ends—thus the importance of the economic strike by dockworkers and taxi drivers in Seattle that accompanied the WTO demonstrations.

In contrast with the rhetoric of activism and direct action, the strike appears here as an anomalous suspension of action: a withdrawal of the body from the workplace; from the empty, segmented time of wage labor; from the familiar rhythm of shopping and consumption; from the spaces and routines of domestic life; as well as the withdrawal of consent and participation from the normal operation of government. As a form of abstention that does not seek to govern events as they unfold or to impose an order on the world, the strike may remain nonviolent; as a work stoppage, its disjunctive force threatens to annul the ruling order.<sup>24</sup> This withdrawal realizes itself as manifestation, when people, often unknown to each other, find themselves standing together in the street.<sup>25</sup>

23. On the plebeian secession, see Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 23–27. These struggles should also be considered as part of a broader “right to the city” theorized by Henri Lefebvre in *Le droit à la ville* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1968); and Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 73–79.
24. For Benjamin, “an omission of actions, a nonaction, which a strike really is, cannot be described as violence [*Gewalt*]. . . . The moment of violence, however, is necessarily introduced, in the form of extortion, into such an omission, if it takes place in the context of a conscious readiness to resume the suspended action under certain circumstances that either have nothing whatever to do with this action or only superficially modify it.” While the second form of interruption of work is violent, the first, “as pure means, is nonviolent,” whatever its allegedly violent effects may be, since “it takes place not in readiness to resume work following external concessions and this or that modification of working conditions, but in the determination to resume only a wholly transformed work, no longer enforced by the state, an upheaval that this kind of strike not so much causes as consummates.” Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” 239–240, 245–246.
25. In his reading of the “Critique of Violence,” Werner Hamacher writes that “for Benjamin, the strike is the social, economic, and political event in which nothing happens, no work is done, nothing is produced, and nothing is planned or projected.” As a “severing of relations,” it “does not permit itself to become effective in any form other than as the bare minimum of its existence, the manifestation of the social *tout court*. . . . in it the sheer mediacy of all social relations opens up, and all the formal and especially juridical restrictions of these relations are suspended.” Werner Hamacher, “Afformative, Strike: Benjamin’s ‘Critique of Violence,’” trans. Dana Hollander, in *Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London: Routledge, 1994), 121. Giorgio Agamben has also recast the “politics of pure means” sketched in Benjamin’s “Critique” as “means without end” in

By documenting this manifestation, *Waiting for Tear Gas* undertakes the group portraiture of an emerging political collective and the individual actors who make it up, granting visibility to those often demonized or simply ignored by mainstream journalism. In an age of individuals, the group portrait is a neglected genre, but Sekula does not return to it by taking as his models the great twentieth-century images of masses sutured together through photomontage.<sup>26</sup> The rows of figures, when arranged on vertical axes maintain their individuality, do not settle onto a single plane or into a single image; meanwhile, the atmospheric, free space between them puts them into close bodily contact. The figures exhibit a “coordinative attentiveness” somewhere between activity and passivity as they stand and wait and look—they are drawn to each other and the world without imposing their will on it.<sup>27</sup> They maintain this attentiveness as openness even in the face of violence: while the phrase “waiting for tear gas” suggests the certainty that repression will meet such a gathering, another kind of expectation emerges from that experience of

*The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Cesarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). The former is partly a response to Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). The politics of pure means—analogue to Benjamin’s account of the “immediate mediacy” of language in “On Language as Such”—proves an important contrast with the anarchist account of direct action as the unity of means and end: that is, as a form of action that immediately embodies the political end it seeks. Taking groups like DAN as a “model of consensus-based, decentralized direct democracy,” David Graeber defines direct action as an ideal “form of action in which means and ends become, effectively, indistinguishable . . . the form of action—or at least, the organization of the action—is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about.” Graeber, *Direct Action*, 210. In contrast, the politics of pure means refuses to take for granted those common ends, whether prefigurative or otherwise. As refusal to work, the strike might instead be thought of as manifestation without ends, or participation in the common without commonality. That we cannot act without orienting ourselves to some end or presupposed common ground—that the politics of pure means cannot be simply implemented or practiced—does not absolve us from attending to its occurrence.

26. The foundational study of the group portrait as a genre is Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans. Evelyn M. Kain (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999). While many of the formal aspects of the group portrait discussed in this paragraph are drawn from Riegl, he ties the group portrait to the emergence of a bourgeois-democratic political order and its accompanying subjectivity and describes a careful balance between the individual and collective in both new civic institutions and the business corporation. The question is what of this genre survives in picturing subjects at the margins of that order. On modernist photomontage of the masses, see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “From Faktura to Factography,” *October* 30 (Autumn 1984), 95–119.
27. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 74–86. Compare also the treatment of physical activity and a certain neutralization of the hands “as a manifestation, so to speak, of nonactivity” (103).

waiting, one oriented to the as yet unseen or unknown.<sup>28</sup> Giving equal time to each image in sequence, the regular intervals at which the photos click through the slide projector also invite a similar attentiveness from the viewer. Refusing to subordinate any individual composition to a larger whole, or the sequence to a single action, narrative, or subject, the work does not provide a unified picture of the group. Instead, Sekula assembles this picture over time, working slowly and recurrently, at different scales and moments, first approaching individuals to catch their faces, drawing back to show them interacting with others, then finally surrounded in a crowd, coordinating singular and plural views in the same nonhierarchical way that the demonstrators gather themselves. After the introductory picture of two globes, the initial photographs of the demonstration are two head-and-shoulder portraits of women, each shown in profile but facing opposite directions, with their heads slightly raised to meet the sunlight cast across them (figs. 5.3 and 5.4). In the first picture, a young woman faces to the left and sports a black sweater and cropped, bright red hair; an equally red jacket contrasts with the long, black hair of the rightward-facing middle-aged woman in the following frame. Although they are pictured individually in separate frames, the similar pose and inverted red and black colors begin to twine them together.<sup>29</sup> Another photograph shows a woman seen from the side as she steps forward down the street, simultaneously pivoting on her heel to laugh and talk with a man behind her, her blue jacket rhyming with the blue background of the union banner held by the man as he marches with a line of dockworkers across the frame. Not absorbed by the group, her pivot nonetheless articulates the free space between them as a kind of bond.

As a meditation on the importance of the bodily occupation of public space for dissent and democratic politics, *Waiting for Tear Gas* nonetheless does not

28. Discussing a series of photographs by Anthony Hernandez, Sekula remarks that “by and large waiting is what poor people do, for the bus, for the next meager paycheck, for the welfare check; waiting is an instrument of humiliation, worsened only by the condition of no longer having anything to wait for. Waiting is for people for whom time is little money, or no money at all.” And yet in Hernandez’s photos of welfare offices, in the smear of a cigarette put out on the wall of the waiting room, emerge “veiled propositions that attentive esthetic impulses can emerge from waiting, that waiting in line can lead one to step out of line.” After all, “waiting is also what photographers do.” Allan Sekula, “Waiting for Los Angeles,” in Anthony Hernandez, *Waiting for Los Angeles* (Tucson, AZ: Nazraeli Press, 2002), 5–6. See also the discussion of waiting in Armstrong, “Seattle and the Space of Exposure,” 190–91.
29. Silverman has emphasized the importance of color in the photographs. In her generative reading of *Waiting*, she draws on Roland Barthes to contrast the manufactured “average affect,” the emotional solicitation made by government as it interpellates subjects (literalized by the forced crying produced by tear gas), with another kind of affect exhibited by the protestors in Sekula’s photographs as they “invent a new political relationality.” Pointing out that *Waiting for Tear Gas* is arranged chromatically, she observes that as it moves through red, blue, and yellow passages, the colors are increasingly divorced from the properties of objects so that “they pulse with human affect” and suffuse the scene, thereby affirming the demonstrators’ presence in and connection to a broader world. Silverman, “Disassembled Movies.”

champion the vitalism of the multitude.<sup>30</sup> Rather, the sequence emphasizes the provisional appropriation of public space and the precariousness of the life that occupies it. The demonstration emerges as the shared exposure and vulnerability of those bodies—to the warmth and glare of light, to the damp and chill of the weather, to the possibilities and constraints of the city, and to the force and violence of armed police. After a number of introductory portraits set off against the assembling crowd, a woman appears in close-up (fig. 5.11). She turns back toward the camera with a look of grace and composure as her silver-gray, shoulder-length hair falls neatly around her head. Behind her an out-of-focus young policeman stands with a drawn visor, stern look, and wooden club across his chest. Turned away from him, she registers his presence as a few strands of hair blow across her face, hinting at the other kinds of force that threaten her. Yet her poise absorbs all this with equanimity; resolved to wait in defiant openness, she does not move.

Shortly afterward, the viewer is faced head-on with a line of police in complete riot gear, shin guards and visors gleaming in the yellow streetlight, alternately holding truncheons and oversized tear gas launchers, blocking the way. This is followed by an image of a street flooded with the same pale mustard hue of light, where two young people crouch at the center of the frame (fig. 5.12). The camera is also low to the ground, and only the blurred legs of the oblivious crowd are visible in the background. One young woman, frightened and bleeding at the mouth, has knelt down and clasps her hands together in front of her torso, as if in prayer, her gloves carefully laid on the ground before her knees. The neatly stacked gloves, stark and small in their deliberateness, provide a meager anchor against the chaotic blur that threatens to overtake her. Her companion perches on one knee beside her and strokes her hair. Of all the images in the project, this one most risks sanctifying the righteousness or innocence of the injured demonstrator. Too often civil disobedience is justified only through a sacrificial moralism, through the purity of the individual who willingly endures suffering. As if to prevent such monumentality, a second image appears, with the camera now moved in a ninety-degree arc, showing the same scene from the side (fig. 5.13). As the woman begins to cry with her companion's hand on her back, this lateral move brings the viewer closer to her, making her less a fixed, moral icon than a picture of creaturely life, another person vulnerable to injury to whom we might respond. The second image reinserts her into the time and space of assembly, into a world of others. No longer an exalted symbol, she is a person who is approached and touched, in a responsive situation with others.

In another frame, a young man in a black sweater, tan kerchief, and ball cap tilts his head back to the night sky, his face lost to the viewer as his wet hand rubs the chemicals from his eyes; this gesture of defacement paradoxically allows the camera to draw nearer to him than it would otherwise (fig. 5.14). Approaching,

30. A theory of the multitude is advanced in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). For a critique of the vitalism underpinning their argument, and Marxism more broadly, see Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 178–208.

almost touching, his torso, as if to reach out in aid, viewers encounter him less as an identifiable actor or type than as someone whose injury demands care. Distant regard is replaced by bodily proximity. Dispensing with the moralization of suffering seems to require a certain *blindness* to identity and to the recognizable boundaries that structure the social order.<sup>31</sup> This disidentification also entails suspending judgment about the guilt or innocence of the actors. What remains is a situation in which the viewer may approach or be approached by anyone at all, as if anyone at all could step into this space and be seen.<sup>32</sup>

As a young woman runs toward us with a handkerchief over her mouth and others scatter from the empty street behind, the whole scene goes out of focus, as if the viewer's vision has begun to blur. A lone man dressed in white shoes, white poncho, and straw hat flinches as a concussion grenade flashes behind him; he clutches his placard and folds his chin to his chest as five policeman run to encircle him. An older woman, also in white, reclines on a park bench; apparently injured, she holds a towel over her right eye, covering the side of her face (fig. 5.15). The yellow light cast across the scene draws together the cream-colored glove, towel, scarf, and blanket in which she is wrapped, almost allowing us to take comfort in her susceptibility. While it is an anticapitalist commonplace to oppose lived, embodied experience to the deathly abstraction of capital, we are here reminded of the way in which life remains inherently exposed to injury and death. Instead of seeking to transcend the body's limits through collective revolutionary action, the viewer is enjoined simultaneously to prevent injury and to affirm the vulnerability that allows us to be affected by others.<sup>33</sup> If injurability and even death are part of

31. In this scenario, the kerchief no longer signifies the threat of a disguised terrorist or violent opportunist, as it so often does in the news. In addition to establishing anonymity or screening out tear gas, the kerchief also signifies a collective solidarity verging on radical substitutability: it could be assumed by anyone at all. This still leaves the task of differentiating it from the state-issued police visor—another of the sweeping emergency ordinances in Seattle made wearing gas masks illegal and later had to be amended to carve out an exception for law enforcement. Although anonymous speech is constitutionally protected, when masking is treated as conduct it can be outlawed. A number of cities and states passed “mask laws” prohibiting masks in public demonstrations before and after the WTO demonstrations. On recent uses of the New York State mask law against demonstrators as well as its long history—it was passed during the mid-nineteenth-century Rent Wars to prevent tenant farmers, dressed and masked as “Indians,” from physically resisting eviction by landlords—see Clare Norins, “Mask Law Memo,” National Lawyers Guild, New York Chapter, 2004; and L.M. Bogad, “Facial Insufficiency: Political Street Performance in New York City and the Selective Enforcement of the 1845 Mask Law,” *The Drama Review* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 75–84.
32. On the peculiar equality that is not predicated on identity or the parting out of common lots, but rather the “equality of anyone at all with anyone else,” see Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), esp. 15–19, 28–42.
33. Here I draw on the ethics and politics of vulnerability outlined in Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life* (London: Verso, 2004) and *Frames of War* (London: Verso, 2009). She has since developed these themes with regard to post–Arab Spring street demonstrations in the essays collected in Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative*



life, this makes opting for life in opposition to the forces of abstraction and death a more complicated matter. Part of the political force of the assembly lies in the way, at least for the duration of the demonstration, it carves out a counterpublic of care, responsiveness, and collective action apart from the state. However, rather than simply celebrating a spontaneous, vital freedom, the photos depict the experience of collective assembly as dependence on others. And what began as an operation of enlightenment and increased visibility transforms into an exposition of blindness. As artificial tears mix with real ones, they blur the dividing lines between life and technics, nature and culture.<sup>34</sup> As we move among these injured and blinded figures, this blurring also forces us to negotiate with the inhuman conditions that augment life—that discipline and control life, but also support and maintain it—including not only the instruments, means, and tools required to care for others, but also capital, the state, law, and the varied prosthetic institutional and civic bodies on which we have come to rely.

The final, parting figure of the sequence occupies a netherworld between the realms of human and inhuman, life and death. He appears alone on the sidewalk, outside the existing socius of other demonstrators or delegates or police, covered head to toe in flame red: a grinning demon who wields a chainsaw with wickedly pointed teeth (fig. 5.10). At first glance, this devil serves as a stark symbol of the evil wrought by profit-based exploitation of natural resources without regard to environmental destruction, sustainability, or social justice. But this moral equation does not fully account for the strangeness of this figure. His otherworldly nature provokes a response somewhere between terror, bathos, and glee. If he seems a not thoroughly convincing embodiment of evil, it is due not only to the outlandish sight of a grown man with a slight paunch in bright red pajamas alone on the street. If his figure continues to unsettle the viewer, it may also be that the ghostly embodiment enacted here also precisely figures the fate of labor under capitalism.

*Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

34. The forced crying produced by tear gas has a mythical precedent in the tears of Niobe, whose prideful boasting about her numerous children offended the goddess Leto (Latona), who sends her only children Apollo and Artemis to slaughter Niobe's progeny. In Ovid's fable, although Niobe is spared, her grief-stricken body turns to stone even as her tears of mourning continue to flow. Benjamin takes this tale of fate as the very paradigm of law. According to Benjamin, while the gods kill the loved ones closest to her, they leave Niobe's life intact "as an eternally mute bearer of guilt and as a boundary stone on the frontier between men and gods." Touched not simply by anger or revenge, she is the victim of an inaugural legal violence. The violence of fate, in laying down political frontiers, marking out the borders of the world, and fixing life with guilt, "brings to light a law." Struck mute, Niobe can no longer respond to the gods or other people, but must silently and eternally bear her guilt; the ethics of responsibility are replaced with the timelessness of a moral norm, with culpability. Her fixed body, the representation of what Benjamin later calls "mere life," figures as the ground on which law imposes itself. Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 294–295. We witness in Niobe an *arrest* that codifies a certain arrangement of bodily life and the world of things. The photographs of *Waiting for Tear Gas* allow for a duration in each instant that runs wholly counter to this specious eternity of arrest. They perform a kind of reverse magic that seeks to turn stone back into flesh.

Capital not only drains “living labor” from the body of the worker, congealing it in the dead value of the commodity and its universal form, money. Once transmuted into the form of capital, that dead labor apparently comes to life again when capital seems to go on generating value out of itself, like an “animated monster.”<sup>35</sup> Thus the disembodied labor suffers a paradoxical reincorporation when it appears in abstract-sensuous form, in a demonic body as if possessed by life, in a life that is not life.<sup>36</sup> Apprehending this devil and the fate he portends may provoke a sense of terror. However, this feeling is also accompanied by an unexpected joy at seeing his garish luminance cut through the dreary equivalence of his surroundings, the officious khaki and dull gray of passing traffic, the drab tan of surrounding concrete. Not just serving as an allegory of alienation, he may also provoke a flash of recognition on the viewer’s part, because the figure also serves as a reminder of the ways the forces of creative destruction escape the capitalist’s control, often in monstrous ways.<sup>37</sup> Some of those forces may return here in the disruptive protestor who haunts his world. In short, the viewer might be forgiven a little sympathy for this devil, the red disrupter of heaven’s order. As sharp moral division gives way to the ambiguity of this figure—the difficulty of deciding whose side he is on—it again turns out that life cannot be lived without encountering death. The issue quickly shifts from moral denunciation of limitless exploitation to the political question of how to reappropriate and redistribute these forces justly. This question of appropriation is further broached by the two images that begin and end the work.

*Waiting for Tear Gas* opens with a close-up of a pair of globes sitting on top of a filing cabinet in the Seattle public library, into which Sekula had retreated during the day (fig. 5.16). In the left foreground stands a globe whose empty seas

35. “As the capitalist turns money into commodities which serve as the building materials for a new product or as factors in the labor process, as he incorporates living labor into their dead objectivity, he simultaneously transforms value—i.e., past, objectified, dead labor—into capital, value which can perform its own valorization process, an animated monster [ein beseeltes Ungeheuer] which begins to ‘work,’ ‘as if its body were by love possessed.’” Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976), 302 (translation modified). This formulation was developed earlier in the *Grundrisse* in the context of machinery and automation. The final phrase, a quote from Goethe’s *Faust*, cites the chorus of a drinking song about the contortions of a rat poisoned by a cook, and entails a nest of problems concerning body and spirit, compulsion and will, gift and poison, finitude and the illusory free lunch. Part of the moral of the tale is that the devil seems to return to extract payment from whoever would profit from his offerings. For discussions of the monstrous, ghostly, and vampiric in Marx’s text, see, among others, Thomas Keenan, “The Point Is to (Ex)Change It: Reading ‘Capital,’ Rhetorically” in *Fables of Responsibility* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 103–104, 114–122; Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*; and Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 197–200.
36. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 125–126.
37. “Modern bourgeois society . . . has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, [it] is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the netherworld which he has called up by his spells.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 478.

are rendered in white; behind it stands its out-of-focus twin, whose multicolored patchwork of countries is set off against black seas. The sequence closes by reiterating that shot, although this time the white globe has fallen away, and the black globe occupies the foreground, standing in the center of the frame (fig. 5.17). The pairing suggests, as the artwork's subtitle points out, a movement from *White Globe to Black*, from one vision of the globe to another. What has transpired in the intervening sequence amounts to something more like counterglobalization, rather than a reductive, simple-minded antiglobalization, for which so many pundits would castigate the demonstrators.

White or black, the globe already figures a certain relation to the world: it is an artifact of a certain kind of appropriation, a grasping of the world as a map. With the globe, the world is turned into an object, its surface produced through standardized measurement that presumes one continuous, uniform space, and grasped as if no longer standing on Earth.<sup>38</sup> Not just a product of science, the globe is also the tool of explorers, princes, and merchants, and a symbol of the reach of geographic, political, and economic power. Yet this repetition of the globe uncovers a kind of latency in the interval between the two objects. Like photography itself, the movement from white globe to black registers an image that, when developed, yields a reversal of values. However, the reversal signaled in the shift from white to black is not divorced from another sense of revolution, that of the daily turning of the earth, “the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence,” and of nature’s

38. “Only now has man taken full possession of his mortal dwelling place and gathered the infinite horizons, which were temptingly and forbiddingly open to all previous ages, into a globe whose majestic outlines and detailed surface he knows as he knows the lines in the palm of his hand. Precisely when the immensity of available space on earth was discovered, the famous shrinkage of the globe began. . . . Prior to shrinkage of space and abolition of distance through railroads, steamships, and airplanes, there is the infinitely greater and more effective shrinkage which comes about through the surveying capacity of the human mind, whose numbers, symbols, and models can condense and scale earthly physical distance down to the size of the human body’s natural sense and understanding. Before we knew how to circle the earth, we had brought the globe into our living rooms to be touched by our hands and swirled before our eyes.” Although speed has conquered space and united the earth in a “continuous whole” whose space has “become small and close at hand,” this bringing-close of the immense simultaneously distances humankind from its earthly surroundings. “It is in the nature of the human surveying capacity that it can function only if man disentangles himself from all involvement in and concern with the close at hand and withdraws himself to a distance from everything near him.” Thus the globe grasps the earth as if from a groundless outside, from the “Archimedean point” of outer space. Here the globe is only one part of a larger process, which also includes the protestant reformation and the development of modern science, that leads to “world alienation,” the “twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self.” This alienation arises from a particular kind of appropriation of the world and therefore, according to Arendt, runs counter to the self-alienation described by Marx. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 250–251, 5, 254. Arendt is silently drawing on Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” (1938), in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 115–154.

“eternal and total passing away.”<sup>39</sup> This ceaseless passing lends an urgency to waiting, producing a sensitivity to what is at every moment lost, and suggesting that any revolutionary political transformation must stay in touch with the mundane rhythms of earthly life. This rhythm is also built into the constant passage of images through the slide projector and the looped structure of the work, where the final image returns viewers to the beginning of the sequence.

This turning also recalls the turning of the Earth and highlights the aspectual character of the globe: one part of the Earth is always in shadow. In the black globe, it is as if this shadow has begun to spread from the far side over the entire surface. Attention to these aspects of the globe make it less a picture of totality than a body existing in time and space, and seen from a particular, embodied standpoint. Running counter to the reduction of world to picture, this shadow globe might give way to a more expansive attempt to imagine a world of variable light and shadow, of passing time and of contiguous, but not necessarily continuous, spaces—and therefore of a world with a plurality of others spread across it.<sup>40</sup> Insofar as this shadowed globe figures another world, it is a world whose contours are sketched out in the interim between the globes that open and close the *Waiting for Tear Gas*, in the moments of equality, solidarity, democratic organization and participation, care, and dependency on unknown, anonymous others witnessed in the demonstration. Combined with the experience of waiting explored throughout the work, the black globe also figures a certain relation to the future. It seems, however, that darkness clouds this picture, so that it is oriented not toward foreseeable ends that unfold through historical progress, but toward ends that cannot be fully prefigured or pictured.<sup>41</sup> A kind of impossible image, the black globe adumbrates something like

39. Walter Benjamin, “Theological-Political Fragment,” in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, 1935–1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 306. The date of this text is contested. Although Gershom Scholem maintained it was written in 1920–1921, in the early period of the “Critique of Violence,” Theodor Adorno held it was from late 1937 or early 1938. See Benjamin, “Theological-Political Fragment,” 306n1.
40. Implicitly in dialogue with Arendt, Pheng Cheah traces a certain conception of the world back to Goethe and Marx, and highlights an important distinction between globe and world. “The world is a form of relating or being-with. The globe, on the other hand, the totality produced by processes of globalization, is a bounded object or entity in Mercatorian space. . . . The globe is not the world.” Pheng Cheah, “What Is a World? On World Literature as World-Making Activity,” *Deadalus* 137, no. 3 (Summer 2008), 30. See also the important engagement with Arendt and the opening onto a world in Kaja Silverman, *World Spectators* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
41. Once the immense or gigantic is so wholly surveyed and quantified that it undergoes a qualitative shift, “what can seemingly always be calculated completely, becomes, precisely through this, incalculable. This becoming incalculable remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere when man has been transformed into *subiectum* [i.e., the subjective ground of what is] and the world into picture. By means of this shadow the modern world extends itself out into a space withdrawn from representation, and so lends to the incalculable the determinateness peculiar to it, as well as a historical uniqueness.” It is then a question of thinking this invisible shadow, not as lack of light, but as “that which, withdrawn from representation, is nevertheless



the unfigurable, the incalculable, or the not yet possible. Part of its disjuncture with the present, globalized world seems to come from the darkness in the image that resists knowledge or calculation—as a poet once put it, like the shadow of an unknown future cast across the present.

By figuring the passage from light to dark, the turning of the globe from day to night and the spread of shadow over the world, the photo also questions the new visibility enjoyed by these demonstrators in the global North, as compared with the relative invisibility, at least from the vantage point of the US, of those actors from the global South with whom they may seek to collaborate.<sup>42</sup> The challenge of linking the WTO meeting in Seattle with systemic violence and exploitation elsewhere is inscribed in the international division of labor and the global geographical division between the global North and the often postcolonial or neocolonial global South.<sup>43</sup> An expanded, more capacious sense of the world would start to link those resisting neoliberalism and corporate globalization in the center and on the periphery. If something like a global general strike seems unthinkable today, it is not only because of the double bind that Engels identified in the strike: the proletariat needs enough resources to sustain the strike long enough to overthrow the ruling class; and if the working class had these resources, it wouldn't need to strike.<sup>44</sup> Compounding this problem is the double bind that as global capital becomes ever more mobile, linking far-flung locations, it simultaneously reinforces borders restricting the rights and movement of labor, preventing the development of the

manifest in whatever is.” Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” 135–136; 154, appendix 13.

42. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak rightly cautioned against focusing only on the Seattle protests and in turn activists from the global north, as well as the often middle class, migrant activists of the global south, who appeared there. This risks romanticizing global social movements, to the neglect of the long-term formation from below of subaltern collectivities, which for her should take education as its model. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “A Note on the New International,” *Parallax* 7, no. 3 (2001), 12–16.
43. As Sekula and other critics have noted, Seattle was a significant locale for the meeting because of its status as a port city and node in the global economy, as home to both Microsoft and Boeing. This issue of the global economy in Seattle links *Waiting for Tear Gas* with two of Sekula's other works: *Fish Story* (1988–1995), the long-term project documenting seafaring, ports, and international containerized shipping; and *Dear Bill Gates* (1999), a meditation on art and the sea, and the watery metaphors that link it to the digital economy. Sekula was visiting Seattle partly because *Fish Story* was on exhibit at the Henry Art Gallery, an exhibition cosponsored by the labor center at the University of Washington, which also enabled the creation of *Dear Bill Gates*. See Allan Sekula, “Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea (Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs),” *October* 102 (Fall 2002). 3–34.
44. Rosa Luxemburg recounts Engels's objection and argues that he mistakenly applies it only to the anarchist theory of the strike, which treats it only as a tool—that is, a technical means that can be intentionally employed—for triggering revolution. In contrast, she argues that the mass strike is not a “pocketknife” to be unclasped when needed, but should be understood as a historically produced contributor to daily political struggle, including parliamentary politics. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, The Political Party, and the Trade Unions*, trans. Patrick Lavin (New York: Harper, 1971), 10–17.



world community that it establishes materially. In addition to those who appear in Sekula's photos, it becomes crucial to acknowledge those who cannot afford to take a day off work or travel to confront the global financial elite. In this sense, the shadow that falls across the globe also marks the limit beyond which lie those others excluded from the realm of visibility and appearance. Even as the spread of light over the surface of the globe suggests the ideal of a world community, its drop off into shadow points to those who fall outside its range.

In the penultimate shot of the sequence, just prior to the appearance of the black globe, day has passed and night settles in (fig. 5.18). Darkness surrounds an empty, rain-slicked street. Every surface under the streetlight glistens. The only trace of the previous events is the red scrawl of an anti-WTO graffiti set adrift on the nondescript, gray metal of a municipal utility box, the sort of anonymous street fixture that houses traffic-signal controls or telecommunication cables. It stands upright at the edge of the sidewalk like a lone sentry. The red inscription quietly unsettles the usually invisible order of the urban infrastructure; it is as if all the objects of the world were still in place, but the relations between them slightly altered. The street has emptied out and the people have gone. The responsibility for attentively waiting and watching over this space has passed to the viewer.

The "question of space" cited in my epigraph is raised by one of the narrators of Chris Marker's essay film *Grin without a Cat*.<sup>45</sup> He describes footage of protests in 1967 in France and elsewhere, detecting "a new attitude in the demonstrations" that marked the rise of the New Left, which rushed in to occupy the open space between the territory between the police and the unions. The narrator remarks that this "new kind of confrontation" with government and the institutional left was marked by an increased militancy, but suggests that this occupation was not its only legacy. Even as the space of the street between the police and union lines calls out to be filled, those who enter it may do so less as its rightful proprietors than as stand-ins: when the film cuts to another shot showing demonstrators surging into such a space, a pan across the banner they carry reveals that they trusted "the workers will take the flag of struggle from the fragile hands of the students," prompting the narrator to qualify the students' optimism by adding that "those fragile hands have left us the mark of their fragility." Similarly, while *Waiting for Tear Gas* is devoted to picturing those who rush into the space opened between the police line and union line, it closes by marking their withdrawal from the scene. Rather than ending by grounding the protestors in the earth, it is as if the air that had so palpably linked them before—the atmospheric free space between the figures—has itself become visible. The space of the street is not completely or permanently filled. Instead, this concluding photograph seems to hold this space open, as a space whose light falls evenly on every object it touches, a space that awaits whoever next steps into its amber glow.

45. *Grin without a Cat (Le fond de l'air est rouge)*, dir. Chris Marker, DVD (1977/1993; Brooklyn, NY: Icarus Films, 2001).

## CONCLUSION

### Critique, Praxis, and the Documentary Ethic

*So why are you so interested in a picture of two poor lost dory fishermen, momentarily high on a swell, peering into a wall of fog? They're about as high as they're ever going to be, unless the sea gets uglier. They are going to die you know, and it won't be a pretty death.*

—Allan Sekula, *Dear Bill Gates* (1999)

In his 1986 essay “The Body and the Archive,” Allan Sekula seeks to show how photography, as it develops as a social and material institution in the nineteenth century, establishes an essential unity between its “honorific” treatment of the body in portraiture and its “repressive” picturing of individuals in surveillance and identification by the police (with the Taylorist discipline of the factory not far off).<sup>1</sup> For Sekula, “to the extent that the legal basis of the self lies in the model of property rights, in what has been termed ‘possessive individualism,’ every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police.”<sup>2</sup> Sitters for photographs emerge as individuals and subjects only in differential relation to a set of marginalized others and through systems of unequally distributed property, rights, and legal subjectivity that are backed by force. Beyond the specific archiving techniques and institutions that arose in the nineteenth century to manage the files of the police, readers learn that even their most intimate, treasured portrait of a loved one is haunted by a kind of “*shadow archive*.”<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the ubiquity of this shadow archive that haunts every portrait does not prevent Sekula from continually returning in his artistic practice to picturing human figures. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, a close look at Sekula’s photographic works reveals another treatment of the body, one that supplements the account provided in his critical texts.

This problem of the human figure can be situated within a broader critique of photographic humanism. For Sekula, the recurring paradigm of photographic humanism is Edward Steichen’s exhibition and book *The Family of Man*, first shown at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955 and subsequently sent on multiple tours around the world through partnerships with the U.S. government and sponsoring corporations such as Coca-Cola.<sup>4</sup> The problem with this humanist paradigm,

1. Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 8.
2. Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 7.
3. Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 10; emphasis in original.
4. See Allan Sekula, “The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War,” *Artforum* 14, no. 4 (December 1975): 35; Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” *Art Journal* (Spring 1981): 21–33; Allan Sekula, “An Eternal Esthetics of Laborious Gestures” (1996), in “Allan Sekula and the Traffic in Photographs,” special issue, ed. Marie Muracciole and Benjamin J. Young, *Grey Room* 55 (Spring 2014): 16–27; and Allan Sekula, “Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea (Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs),” *October* 102

Sekula maintains, is that its allegedly universal values, communicated through the purportedly universal language of photography, or, more broadly, the discourse of formalism in aesthetics, overwrite specific histories of social struggle. Thus, Sekula partly inherits from Roland Barthes a model of ideology critique in which myth suppresses social and historical meaning through stasis: myth naturalizes history and value as fact, turning the contingent and the social into a speciously eternal second nature or pseudo-nature. As Barthes argues, even the infinite diversity of human figures can provide the ground for ideological mythification where the history and actions of individuals and groups are turned into an image of timeless, organic nature; the inequitable and contingent order of things registered on the body can appear as an inevitable, natural fact.<sup>5</sup> Photography can abet this naturalization of the contingent by arresting individual appearances, in which case its stasis would be analogous to the reification of social relations within everyday life. The task of the critic is to destroy the apparently natural, given appearances of the world and thus prepare the way for the reappropriation of alienated nature, which is the work of an active, free political subject.<sup>6</sup> But what if the overcoming of nature by the critical subject is not so simply achieved, and what if photographic stasis could function as something other than suppression or mythification? The critical writing of Barthes or Sekula may well exceed the model of ideology critique sketched here—which Barthes retrospectively summarized as engaging simultaneously in “semiology” but also in a kind of shattering “semioclasm”—but Sekula’s photo-works pursue another tack.<sup>7</sup>

The specific problems of picturing human figures that emerge in Sekula’s photo-works supplement the model of ideology critique—specifically the critique of photographic humanism—at work in some of his texts. By attending to his photo-works, we can begin to question the privilege or authority of the critical voice that diagnoses the ways in which both photographs and human subjects are determined by oppressive social, economic, and technological forces or the generalizing equivalence of the commodity, a logic that Sekula finds at work in both myth and the archive.<sup>8</sup> Questioning the abstract universality of humanist photography

(October 2002): 3–34.

5. Roland Barthes, “The Great Family of Man,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 100–102; and Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Mythologies*, 109–159. See also Sekula, “An Eternal Esthetics.”
6. Barthes, “Myth Today,” 129–143, 155–158.
7. Roland Barthes, “Preface to the 1970 Edition,” in *Mythologies*, 9.
8. The tension and perhaps incompatibility between Barthes’s model of ideology as myth and Michel Foucault’s account of the archive and disciplinary power remains unresolved in Sekula’s texts. Unlike Foucault, Sekula does not abjure a discussion of ideology; instead, Sekula partly assimilates Foucault’s work to a Marxian framework when he finds in the archive a logic of formal equivalence that reproduces social hierarchies, as the commodity-form does, especially when photography is treated as a universal equivalent and medium of exchange. See Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” 17; and Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs.” Compare also Sekula’s affirmative reading of the archive as possible site of “counter-forensics” in Allan Sekula, “Photography and the Limits of National Identity,” *Grey Room* 55 (Spring 2014): 28–33; and the

and the instrumental, particularizing function of the archive need not entail a reductive antihumanism or the negation of all appearances of the human figure. The question is not one of simply shattering myth but a retelling, a piecing together of new stories—even if reflexively constructed and therefore not mythic in the same way. The question may be not simply of overcoming nature but of inscribing and picturing the human in nature; not winning the freedom of the active subject but discovering a nonsubjective freedom of social being, of being constituted in relation to others and through dependence on them.

The observational and descriptive capacities of photography are for Sekula also part of a larger dialectic of necessity and freedom. Photography's historical subservience to other disciplines—photography's usefulness for other arts and to the larger institutional demands made on it for documentation, record-keeping, identification, surveillance, and archiving—functions, in Sekula's terms, as "esthetic servitude." (The term could also be translated back into John Baldessari's ironic deployment of photography as a "slavish announcer of facts.") Sekula's response is not to elevate photography to an artistic realm of freedom apart from the world.<sup>9</sup> Instead, for him the practice of photography "allows for . . . a radical consciousness from below" of this aesthetic servitude, which he claims reveals "the modesty of this medium, and the radical wisdom that follows from close and sustained attention to observation," and which is already "a schematic philosophic argument for photography's special aptitude for depicting economic life, for what used to be called 'documentary,' and for an affinity between documentary and democracy."<sup>10</sup> "What used to be called 'documentary,'" and what comes after it, is not exactly an aesthetic, a style (documentary or otherwise), or a realism conceived around mimetic reproduction or the model of the index; it is, instead, an *ethic*. This documentary ethic orients the artist or photographer toward the given, emphasizing the priority not only of the phenomenal world as it appears (through history and myth) but of the everyday social world of others that precedes and structures individual lives and artistic practices. This ethic marks a crucial break with the model of artistic modernism and the politics and aesthetics of liberation that can be found, for example, in the work of Sekula's teacher Herbert Marcuse.<sup>11</sup> Thus the conclusion to "The Body and the Archive," which ends neither with simply the achievement of a reflexive, critical knowledge about the operations of police power nor with the revolutionary charge to take up active resistance to state or disciplinary

explication of Sekula's alternate views on the archive in Thomas Keenan, "Counter-forensics and Photography," *Grey Room* 55 (Spring 2014): 58–77.

9. Contrast, for example, the defense of art photography as a privileged site for viewing the world "from outside" and "*sub specie aeternitatis*" in Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), esp. 76–80, 328–329.
10. Debra Risberg, "Imaginary Economies: An Interview with Allan Sekula," in Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal: University Galleries, Illinois State University, 1999), 251.
11. See especially Herbert Marcuse, "Art as Form of Reality" (1970), in *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, *Art and Liberation*, ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 2007), 140–148; and Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

power. Instead, it concludes with the remarkable call—especially for lookers and makers “near but not at” the centers of power—to “prevent the cancellation of the testimony” of the oppressed and exploited.<sup>12</sup> As a turn of phrase, “prevent[ing] the cancellation” marks a peculiar causality; it indicates neither the critical destruction of official myths nor their sublation, their practical overcoming, through art or politics. Instead, it suggests the work of preserving and sustaining an anterior trace—a task of attentive, critical looking at and listening to documents, evidence, testimony.

In tension with a model of critique based on negating photographic stasis—and the aim stated by Sekula in an early manifesto to “go beyond the phenomenological and ideological surface of the social realm”—Sekula’s photography-based artistic practice involves a documentary ethic of attending to the given appearances of the world.<sup>13</sup> This documentary ethic emphasizes the priority of an anterior trace that structures photographic picturing, but it need not innocently affirm the facts it records as inevitable or natural. The critical and historical return to documentary modes for which Sekula has argued approaches the phenomenal as much as a product of history and myth as of nature.<sup>14</sup> This documentary ethic is oriented toward attentively observing everyday life, specifically the economic life of production, labor, unemployment, and worklessness.<sup>15</sup> This identification of photography with the realm of the necessary and the given also continually returns Sekula to the limits and impingements of the human body. In spite of the shadow archive that haunts every portrait and the erasure of this violence by the myths of photographic humanism, Sekula continually returns to the problem of how to picture human figures in both their subjection and their possible freedom.

In this dissertation, I have traced the ways in which Sekula’s photo-works portray the conflicted status of the human figure: through photographic documents torn between police profiling and activist antiphotography in chapter 1; as

12. Sekula, “The Body and the Archive.”

13. Allan Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)” (1976/1978), in *Dismal Science*, 122; and compare my discussion of the documentary ethic in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

14. The call to reinvent documentary takes place alongside the critical analysis of the power relations between photographer and depicted subject in, among others, Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary”; Martha Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)” (1981), in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 151–206; and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Who Is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography” (1987), in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 169–183. What I am calling the documentary ethic is the attempt to develop a photographic practice even in the light of this difference of power and therefore differs from the debates over exploitation and victim photography usually indicated by the phrase “ethics of documentary.”

15. Although Sekula’s work is associated with a so-called documentary turn in contemporary art, beginning with the exhibition of *Fish Story* at Documenta 11, his emphasis on the priority of the given distinguishes it from some recent practices that employ wholly fictionalized and invented documents.



exercises in portraiture, including performative self-portraiture that implicates the artist in the picture, in chapter 2; and, in chapters 3 through 5, the development of new forms of group portraiture that, combined with the use of sequential montage and the problem of worklessness continually situate individuals within a wider field of environmental conditions and social relations. By addressing the formal problems raised by sequential montage—and, specifically, the way those problems reconfigure the conventions of portraiture as a genre—I show how Sekula’s photographic practice opens onto a politics of the human figure, one that registers the relation between body and archive and rethinks the global reach of photographic humanism.

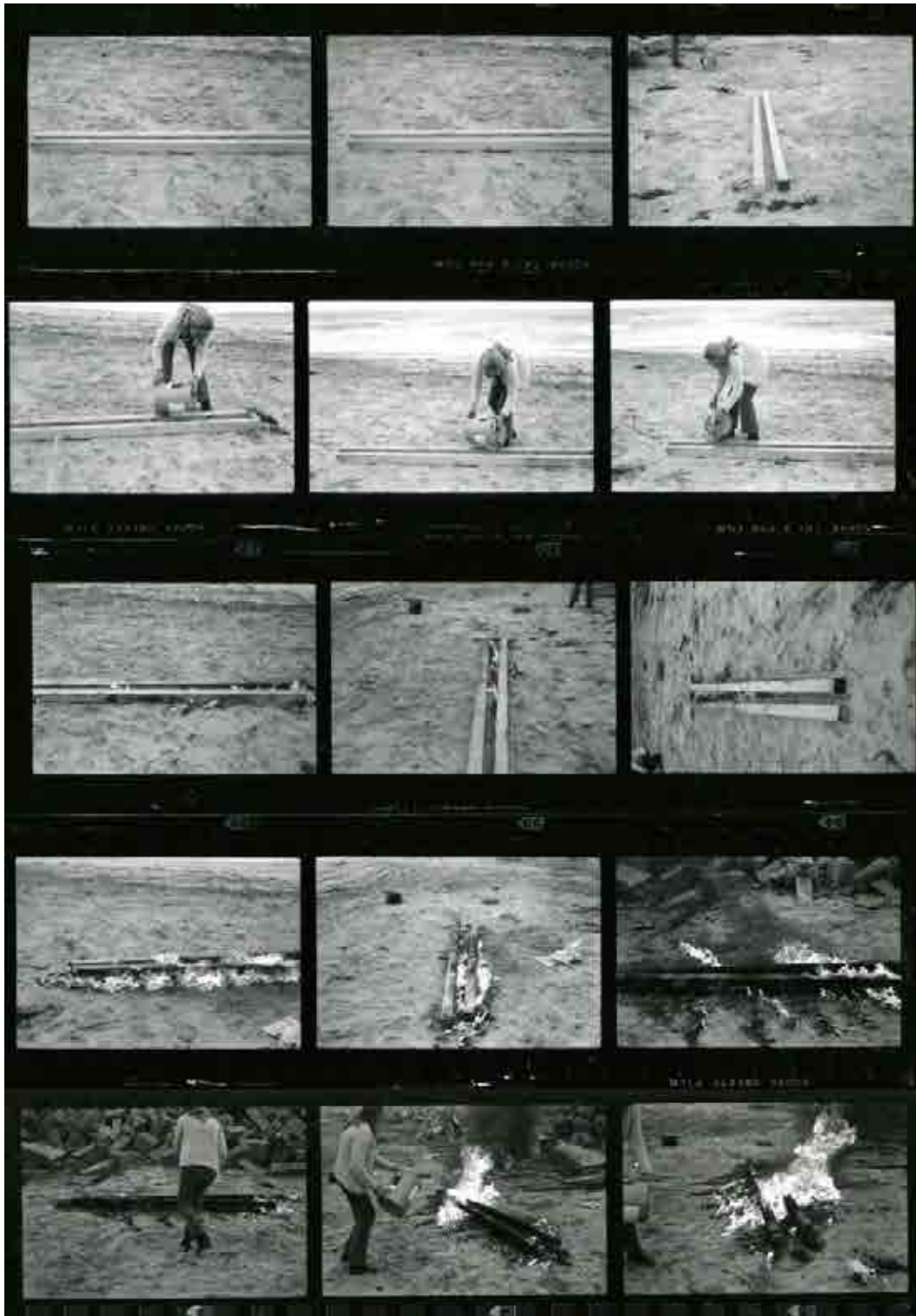
Another name for the documentary ethic is “sympathetic materialism.” Sekula puts this sympathetic materialism into practice when he jumps into a cold lake in Seattle in November, refusing to wear a wetsuit in order to expose his skin to the elements, to shoot *Dear Bill Gates* (1999). Piqued by the purchase of Winslow Homer’s painting *Lost on the Grand Banks* (1885) by a baron of digital capitalism for a then-record-breaking price, Sekula types up an anonymous letter to the collector inquiring about the painting’s meaning for him (figs. 6.1–6.2). Of course, the private acquisition represents not just the possible aestheticization of suffering, since the lost fishermen in the picture are facing their deaths at sea. The deal, “shrouded in secrecy,” “catapults American fine art into the . . . financial stratosphere,” lifting the downward-peering fishermen up to the heights of financial speculation and commoditization, floating on money generated by one of the chief engineers of the digital world.<sup>16</sup> Sekula’s response is to ask what, in a world of digital image archives and networked finance capital, remains of this old experience of physical toil and bodily danger depicted in the painting. The question is framed in terms of immersion: after asking whether Bill Gates, seemingly elevated above the water, is lost or found “on the net,” he asks whether “the rest of us—lost or found—are we on it, or in it?”<sup>17</sup> Against the metaphors of surfing *on* offered by the chief proponent of “friction-free capitalism” in the digital world, Sekula contrasts the physical experience of swimming *in* the water, captured in three color photographs shot from water level.<sup>18</sup> His act of immersion is one of resistance, physical and metaphorical, to a certain imaginary world of fluid value, of aesthetics and work. And this performative portrait is premised on a kind of bodily vulnerability that recalls other kinds of physical labor and points to the bodily suffering and risk of death they entail.

Although he appears by himself in the middle of the triptych, body submerged

16. Carol Vogel, “Sale of Homer Seascape Sets Record,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/05/us/sale-of-homer-seascape-sets-record.html>. The then-record price of \$30 million has since been broken many times over.
17. Sekula, *Dear Bill Gates*, in *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 306–309.
18. Gates coined the term “to refer to the enhanced efficiency of markets resulting from the widespread use of the Internet,” which allegedly “abolished such traditional market imperfections as physical distance, lack of information, lack of choice, and local regulation.” S.v. “friction-free capitalism,” *A Dictionary of Business and Management*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); see also Bill Gates with Nathan Myrsvold and Peter Rinearson, *The Road Ahead* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995), ch. 8.

in the water with his head peaking above the water, he is not alone. In addition to recalling the lost fishermen, he is positioned between two other views: there are the lights from the house on dry land inhabited by the captain of industry in the background at left; at right, the swimmer's co-conspirators waiting for him in the small boat. When he winks at the viewer in the central self-portrait, it is not just an invitation to complicity, a self-reflexive nod to the performance situation, or a knowing acknowledgment of the conventions of the portrait and the monoscopic gaze of camera. Rather, because the photographer is nearsighted in one eye and farsighted in the other, he must squint to see the camera held at arms length and then trip the shutter. This documentary gaze from the water line is hardly all-seeing. Partially blinded and immersed in the water, it is only by virtue of physical resistance against, as well as floating along with, the inhuman elements that surround the swimmer that any distance is traversed and any progress is made—and there is always the risk that one will be carried away to the sea.

FIGURES



1.1. Allan Sekula, creation of *Phoenix* (?), November 1971. Proof sheet, Allan Sekula Archive. The frames have been rearranged to match the order in which the negatives were exposed. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.2. Allan Sekula, demonstration and blockade of Sante Fe railroad tracks, Del Mar, California, May 12, 1972. Proof sheet, Allan Sekula Archive. The frames have been rearranged to match the order in which the negatives were exposed. © Allan Sekula Studio.





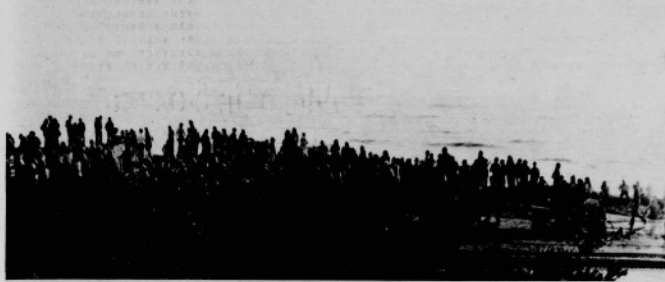
1.3. Allan Sekula, burning timbers for *Phoenix* (?), November 1971 (left); and burning railroad ties, Del Mar, CA, May 12, 1972 (right). Frames from two different proof sheets, Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.4. “500 Blockade D.M. Rails,” cover of *Triton Times* 16, no. 15 [17] (16 May 1972), with uncredited photo by Tom Keck captioned “San Diego Sheriff’s Deputies making an arrest in last Friday’s attempt to block the rail lines in an anti-war protest. 39 were arrested in the incident.”



# "Bringing the War Home to Del Mar"



These are people



these are other people



who disagree



the burning of wood



becomes a crime



while bombs drop somewhere



and Johnny comes marching home



with his head held high



as Big Brother looks on

poem: donated

May 16, 1972 Triton Times Page 3

1.5. Photographer unknown, "Bringing the War Home to Del Mar," *Triton Times* 16, no. 15 [17] (16 May 1972): 3.



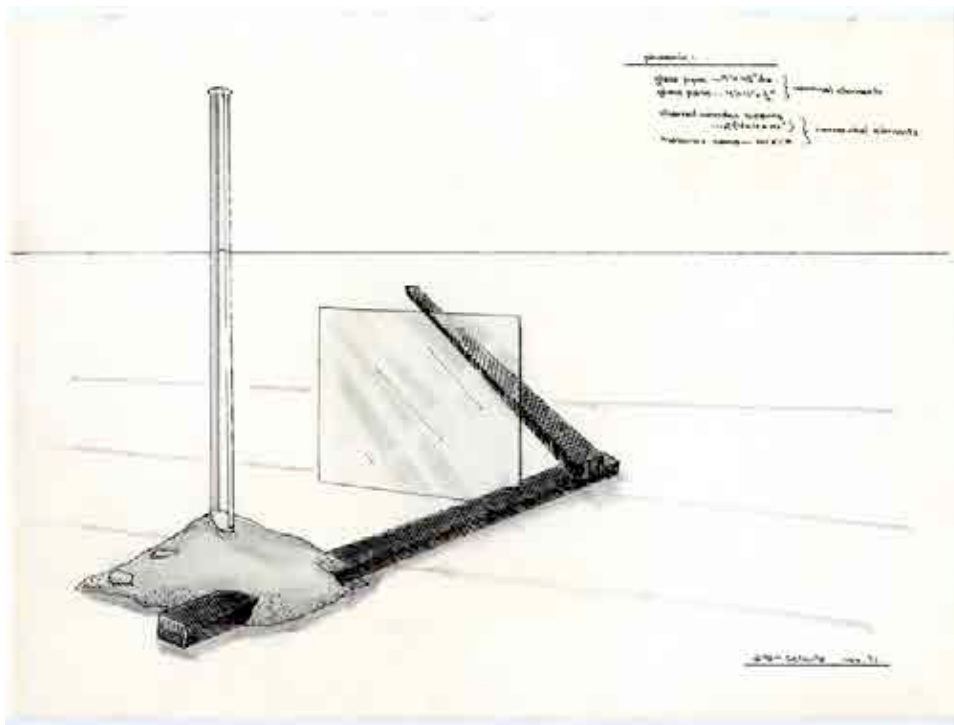
1.6. Tom Keck, Del Mar, California, May 12, 1972. Tom Pearson, mayor of Del Mar, attempts to intervene in the arrest of twenty-two-year-old Vietnam veteran Howard Fisher.



1.7. Christo, *Projet du mur provisoire de tonneaux métalliques (rue Visconti, Paris 6)* (Project for a Temporary Wall of Metal Drums [rue Visconti, Paris 6]), 1961–1962.



1.8. Daniel Buren (left) with Guido Le Noci, in front of Buren's *Papiers collés blanc et vert* (Green and white pasted paper, 1968), which seals closed the entrance to Galleria Apollinaire, Milan, 1968.



1.9. Allan Sekula, drawing of *Phoenix*, 1971. Caption: "Phoenix: Vertical elements: glass pipe—9' x 4 1/2" dia., glass pane—4' X 4' x 1/4"; horizontal elements: charred wooden beams—2 (4 x 4 x 10'), masonry sand—400#." Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.10 and 1.11. Allan Sekula, installation views of *Phoenix*, 1971. Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego. Gelatin silver prints, Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



WRONG

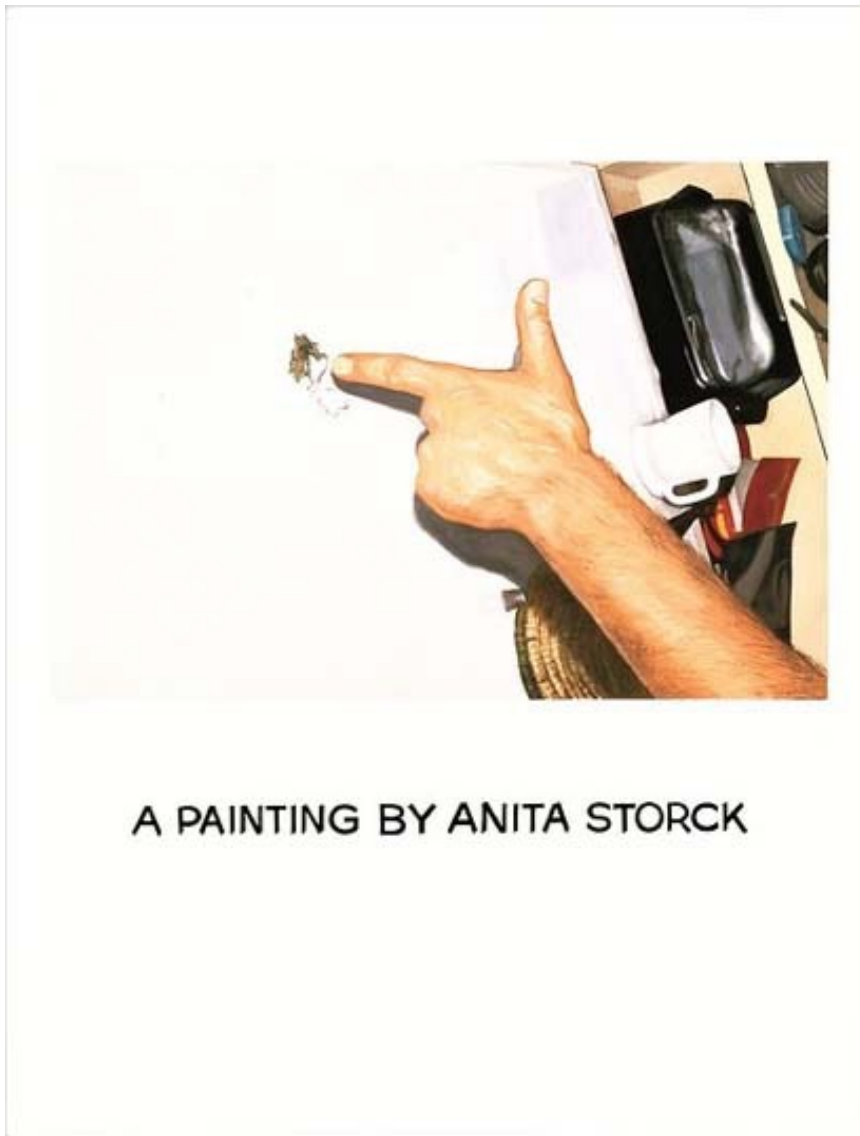
1.12. John Baldessari, *Wrong*, 1966–1968.





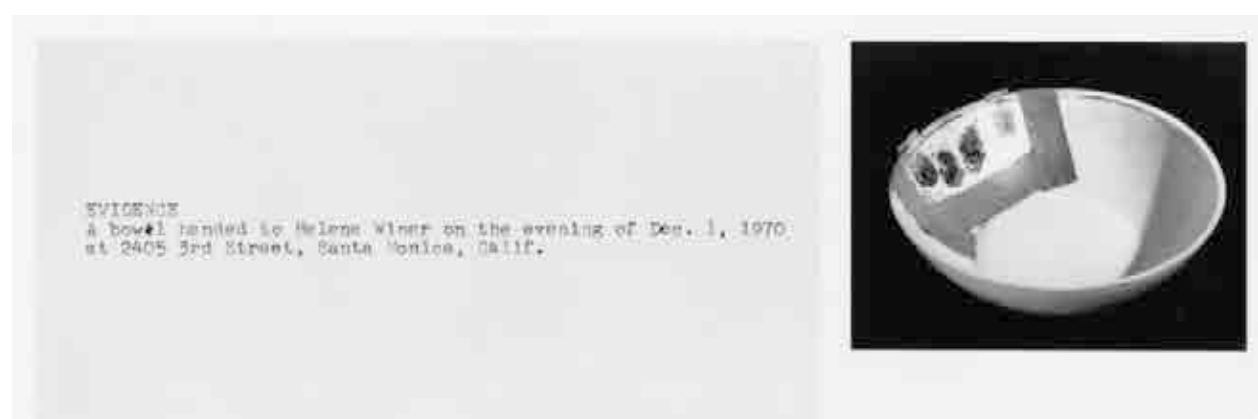
AN ARTIST IS NOT MERELY THE SLAVISH  
ANNOUNCER OF A SERIES OF FACTS.  
WHICH IN THIS CASE THE CAMERA HAS  
HAD TO ACCEPT AND MECHANICALLY  
RECORD.

1.13. John Baldessari, *An Artist Is Not Merely the Slavish Announcer of a Series of Facts, Which in This Case the Camera Has to Accept and Mechanically Record*, 1966–1968.

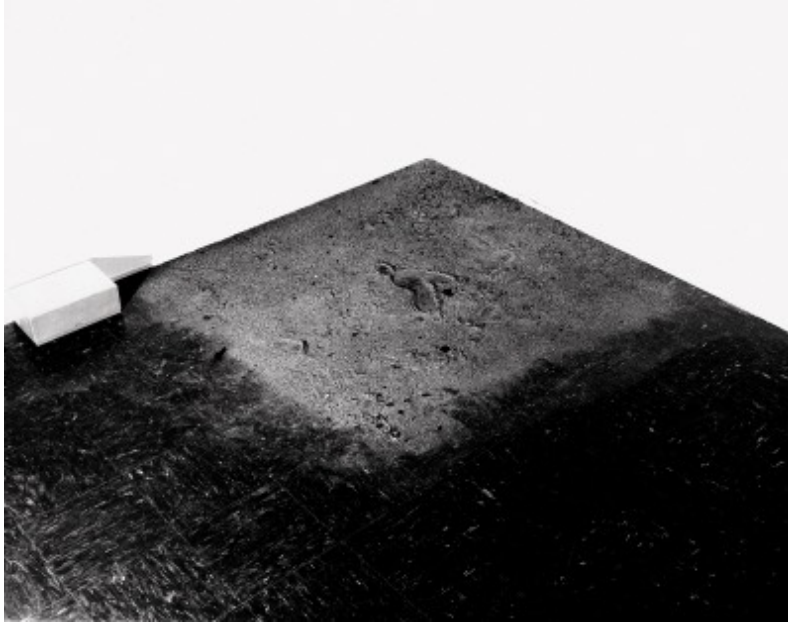


A PAINTING BY ANITA STORCK

1.14. John Baldessari, *Commissioned Painting: A Painting by Anita Storck*, 1969.



1.15. John Baldessari, *Evidence: A Bowl Handed to Helene Winer, Dec. 1, 1970*, 1970.



#### A Potential Print

Most prints are on paper. The materials used as an ink might vary more, but not a lot. What is seen here is an attempt to avoid both ink and paper, but also the ACT, or at least delay it or stretch it out in time as long as chance permits.

Having just completed a piece in which I had cremated a body of my paintings, reducing them to ashes, I was struck by reading the following account:

Ashes were often used in divination, one of the strangest examples being in Yorkshire where, on the eve of St. Mark's day (24 April) the ashes were riddled in the hearth and left overnight, and in the morning carefully examined for any mark resembling a footprint. Should this be found, the member of the family whose foot fitted the print was doomed to die within 12 months.

While I say that I am not overly superstitious, I must admit considering some other powdered substance seems not as effective. To use ashes seems to give the piece more power, and to use the ashes of my burnt paintings seems even more powerful.

Still, the main point of it a potential print. Let's just say that the superstition gives it overtones.

John Baldessari  
Santa Monica, Calif.  
November 1970

1.16. John Baldessari, *A Potential Print*, 1970.



1.17. John Baldessari, *Police Drawing*, 1970. Still from video.



1.18. John Baldessari, *Choosing: Green Beans*, 1972.



1.19. Allan Sekula, *Sculpture Commemorating the 102nd Anniversary of the University of California*, 1970. Installation view, Revelle Plaza, University of California, San Diego. Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.20. Fred Lonidier, photograph of antiwar action now known as *Body Bags* or *Meat Piece*, 1970. Revelle Plaza, University of California, San Diego.





1.21. Fred Lonidier, photograph of antiwar action now known as *Body Bags* or *Meat Piece*, 1970. Revelle Plaza, University of California, San Diego. Allan Sekula pictured at left.



1.22. Fred Lonidier, photograph of antiwar action now known as *Body Bags* or *Meat Piece*, 1970. Revelle Plaza, University of California, San Diego. Allan Sekula pictured at left.



Meat Mass

Over a period of several weeks,  
expensive cuts of meat were stolen  
from a supermarket and stored in a  
freezer. The thawed steaks were thrown  
beneath the wheels of freeway traffic.

January 1972

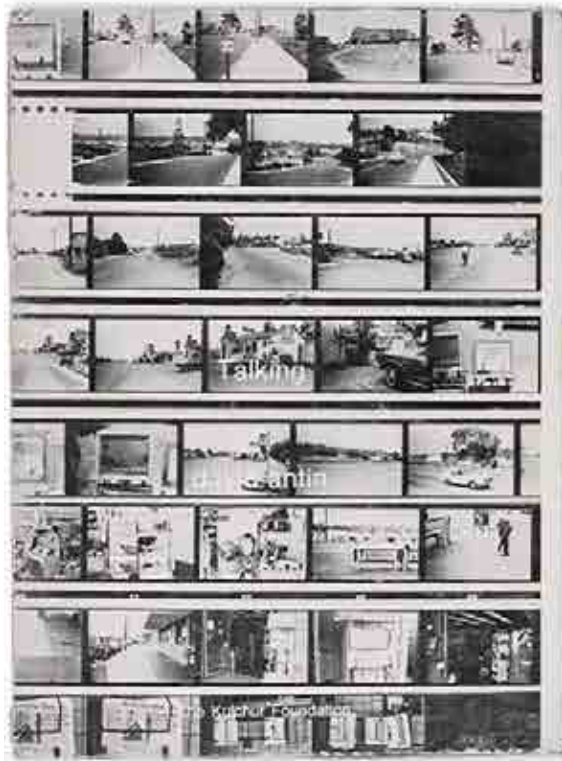


1.23. Allan Sekula, *Meat Mass*, 1972. Twelve silver gelatin prints with typescript. Detail.



1.24. Allan Sekula, *Meat Mass*, 1972. Twelve silver gelatin prints with typescript. Detail.





1.25. David Antin, *Thirty Days of the News*, 1971, as shown on the cover of David Antin, *Talking*, 1972.



1.26. Martha Rosler, *Tron (Amputee)*, ca. 1968–1970 (left), as shown on the back cover of *Goodbye to All That!*, no. 3, October 13, 1970.

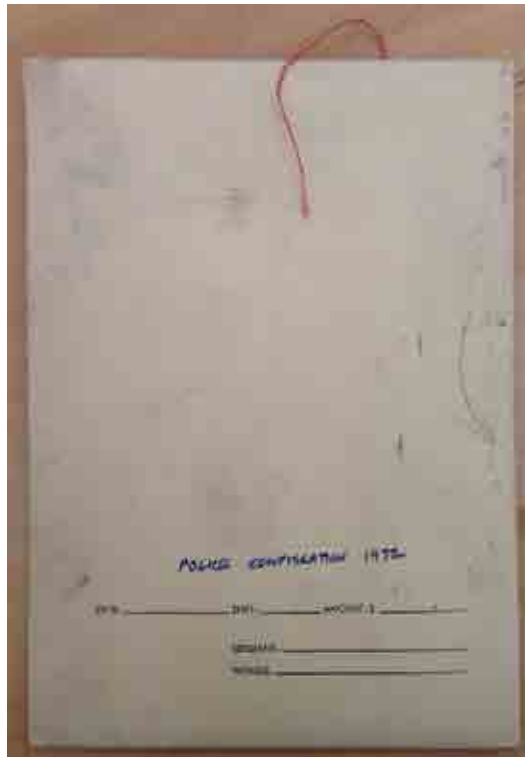


1.27. “For Tron, Gifts and a New Leg,” *Life*, December 12, 1969, with photographs by Larry Burrows. Two-page spread showing Tron shopping for new shoes paid for by *Life* readers alongside advertisements selling “news” by RCA and “real life” by Coca-Cola.



1.28. Cover of *The Agitator*, December 21, 1967, with photographs by Fred Lonidier.





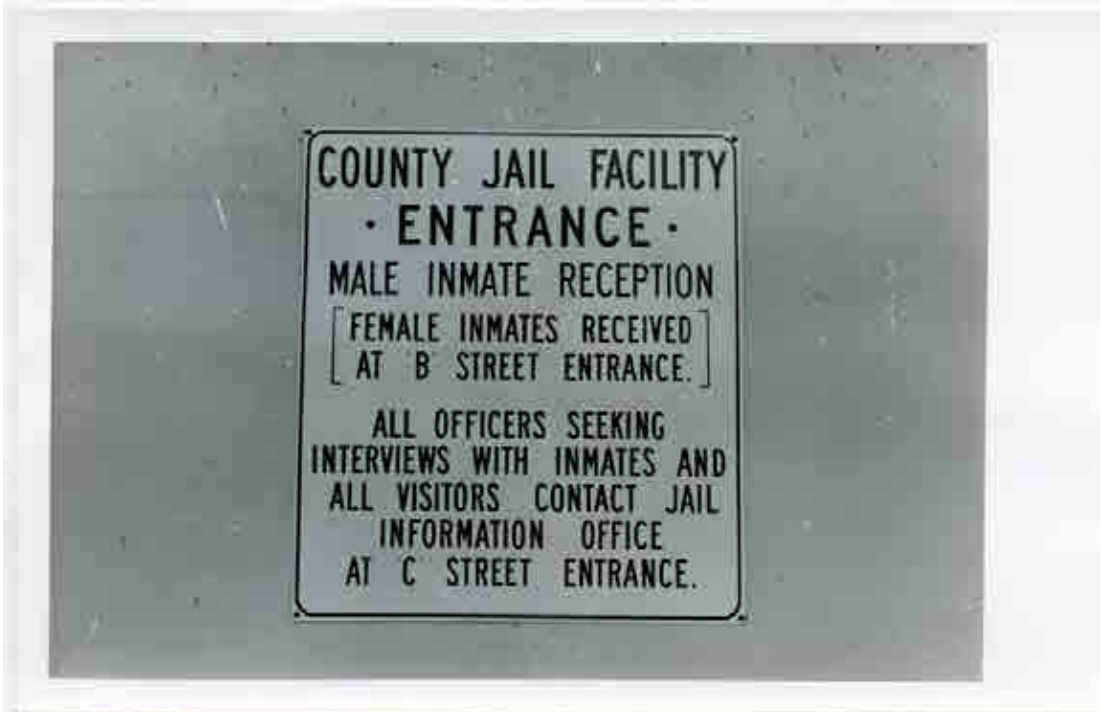
1.29. Police property envelope marked “Police Confiscation 1972,” Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.30. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.31. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.32. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.33. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



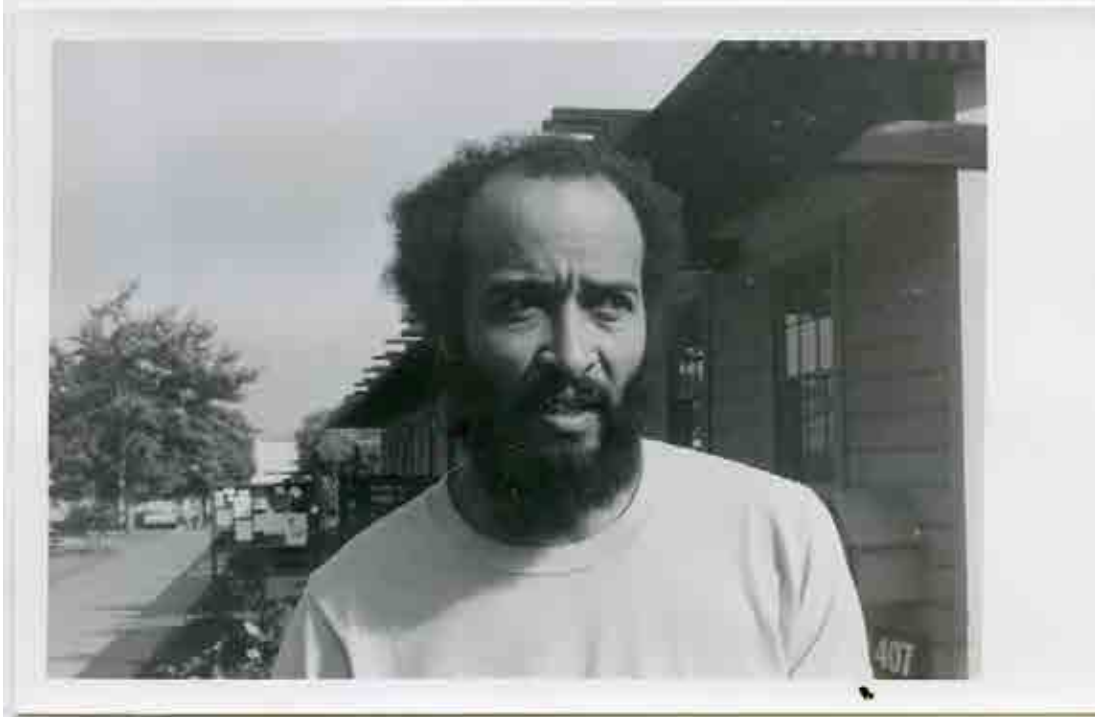
1.34. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.35. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.36. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.37. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



1.38. Silver gelatin print from “Police Confiscation” envelope, 1972. Photograph by Allan Sekula printed by San Diego Police Department(?). Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.





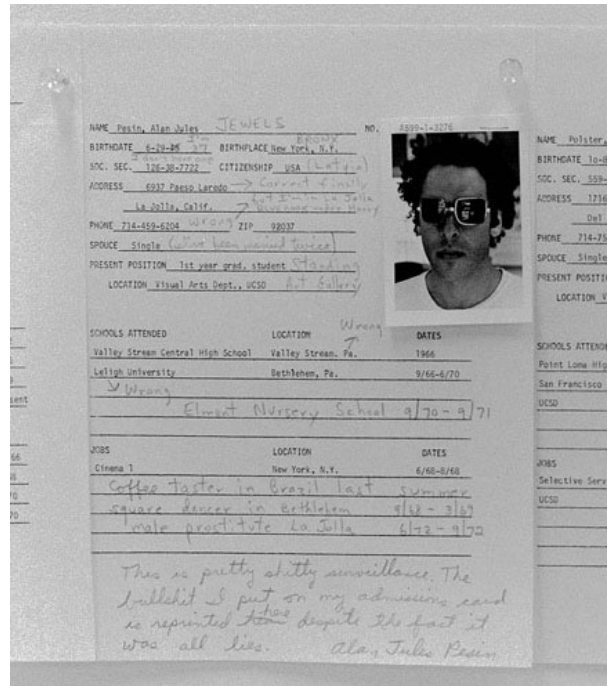
1.39. Fred Lonidier, *29 Arrests: Headquarters of the 11th Naval District, May 4, 1972, San Diego, 1972*. Twenty-nine silver gelatin prints with title card.



1.40. Fred Lonidier, *29 Arrests: Headquarters of the 11th Naval District, May 4, 1972, San Diego, 1972*. Twenty-nine silver gelatin prints with title card. Detail.



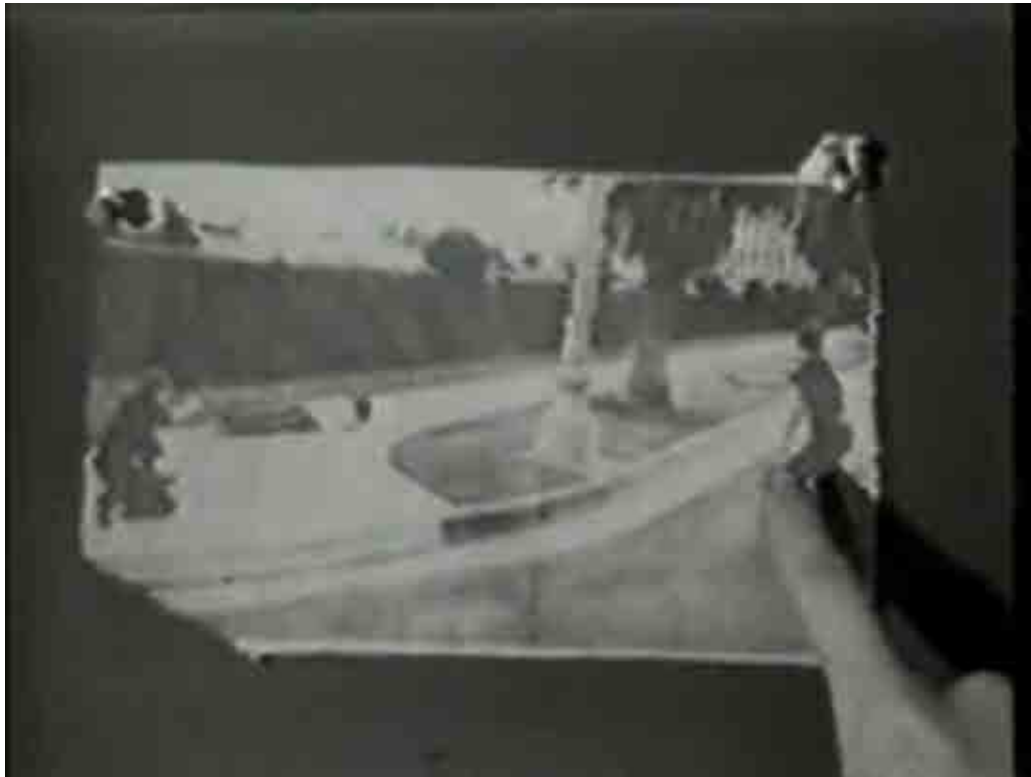
1.41. Fred Lonidier, *Pornography*, now known as *Girl Watcher Lens*, 1972/2012. Details.



1.42. Fred Lonidier, *Surveillance*, 1972. Details.



1.43. Allan Sekula, *Red Squad (San Diego, 20 January 1973)*, 1973. Two silver gelatin prints, printed 2005.

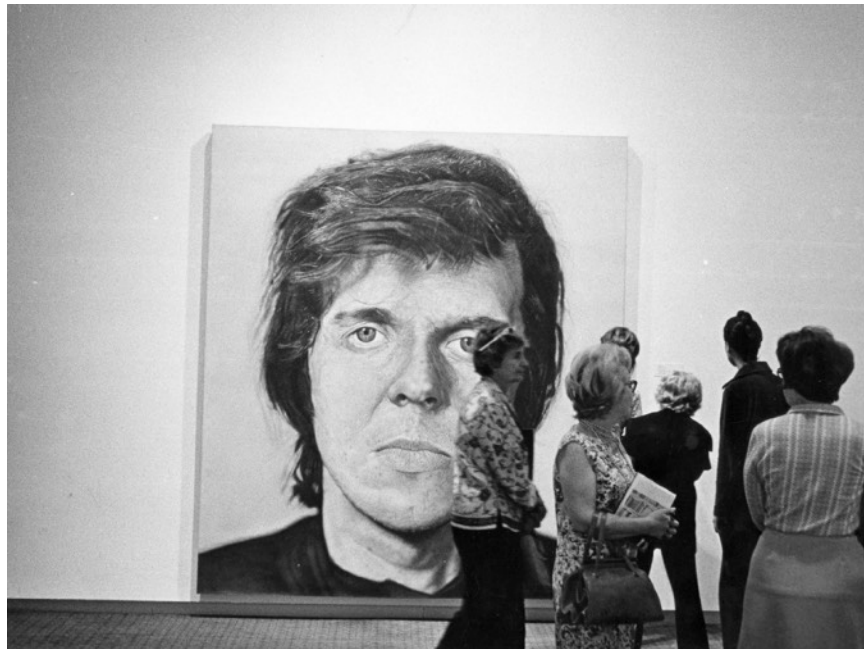


1.44. John Baldessari, *The Meaning of Various News Photos to Ed Henderson*, 1973. Still from video.





2.1. Allan Sekula, gallery view, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971. In the background: Chuck Close, *Keith*, 1970. Silver gelatin print, Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



2.2. Allan Sekula, gallery view, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971. In the background: Chuck Close, *Kent*, 1970–1971. Silver gelatin print, Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.





2.3. Allan Sekula, *Gallery Voice Montage*, 1971. Two unprimed, stretched canvases with hidden speakers, 9 min. audio loop; reconstructed 2003. Installation view. Photo: Werner Kaligofsky.



2.4. Allan Sekula, proof sheet, 1972. Allan Sekula Archive. © Allan Sekula Studio.



2.5. Allan Sekula, *Self-Portrait as Sculptor/Painter/Photographer*, 1972. Three silver gelatin prints.

①



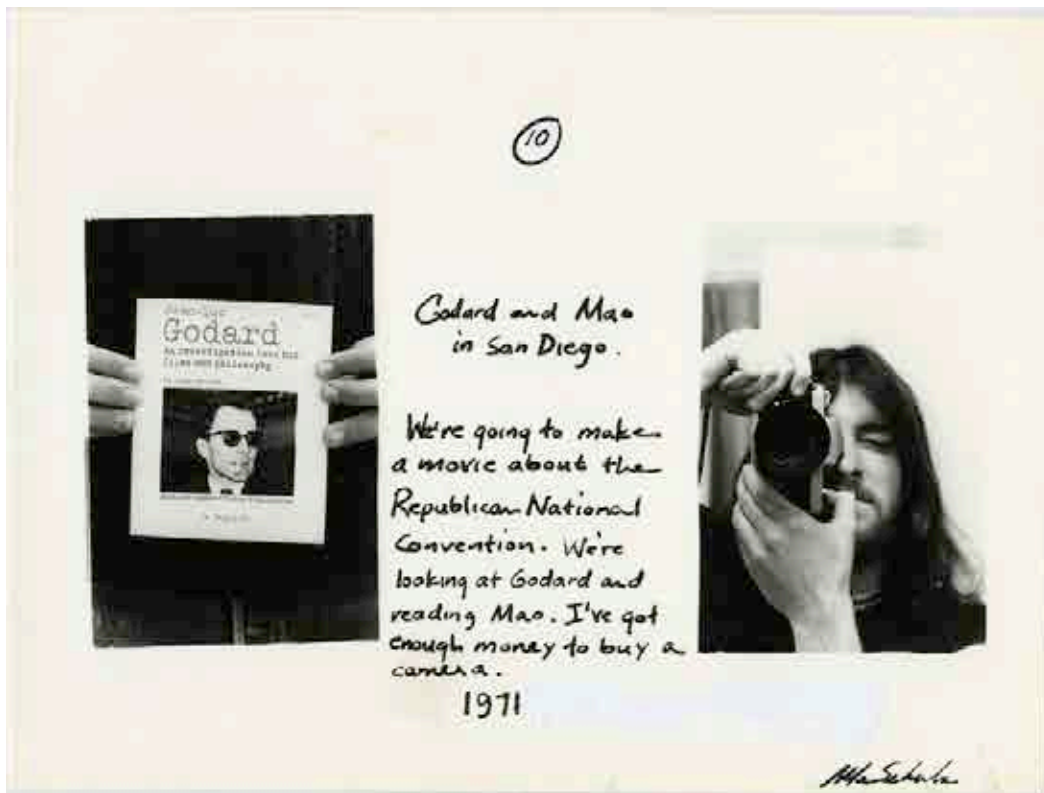
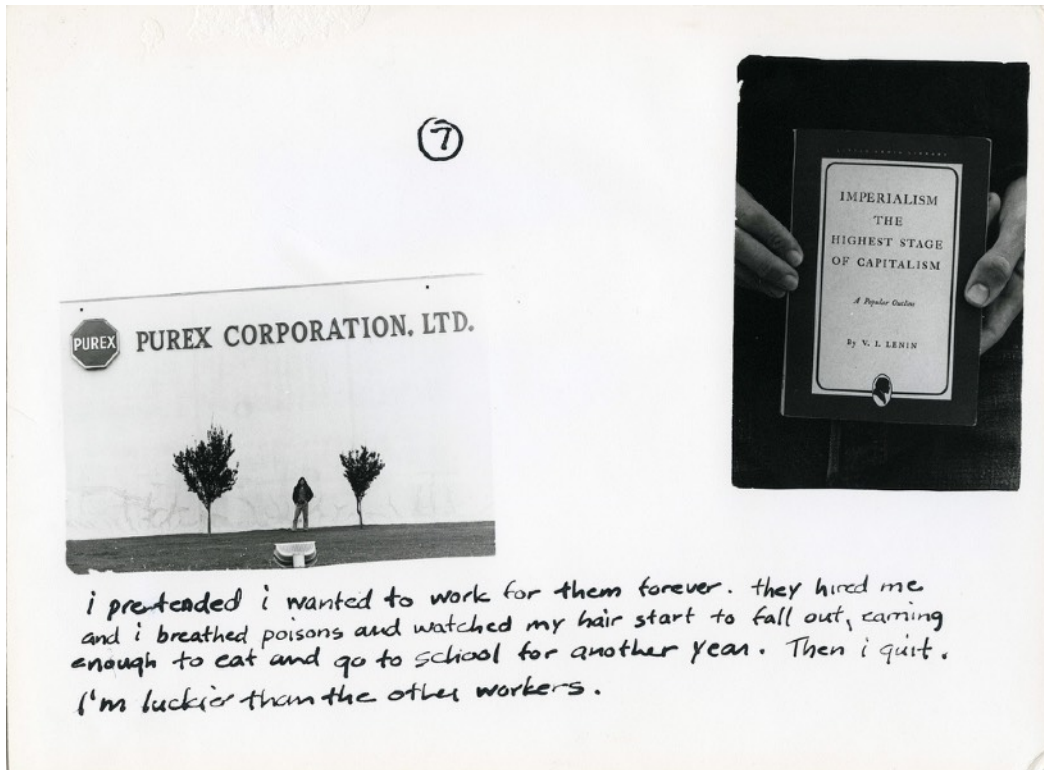
housewife (employed) and aerospace engineer (unemployed)  
my mother and my father, a bit unused to  
me behind the camera... it's saturday, and both  
are dressed for work. My father is about to  
go mail out a batch of resumes.

③



The neighbor kids got married, arrested, or sent to Vietnam.  
My high-school classmates went to universities. It's all a matter  
of "educational tracking."

2.6. Allan Sekula, *A Short Autobiography*, 1971–1972. Ten silver gelatin prints with ink. Details.

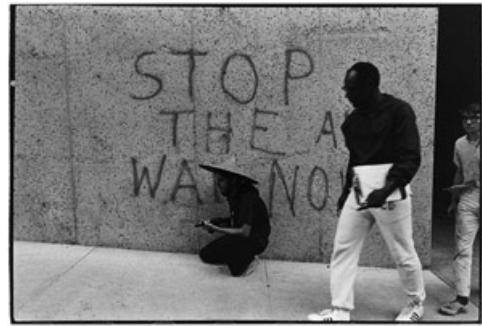


2.7. Allan Sekula, *A Short Autobiography*, 1971–1972. Ten silver gelatin prints with ink. Details.





2.8. Allan Sekula, *Meditations on a Triptych*, 1973/1978. Three chromogenic prints with text booklet, reading table, chair. Detail.



2.9. Allan Sekula, *Two, Three, Many . . . Terrorism*, 1973. Six silver gelatin prints.





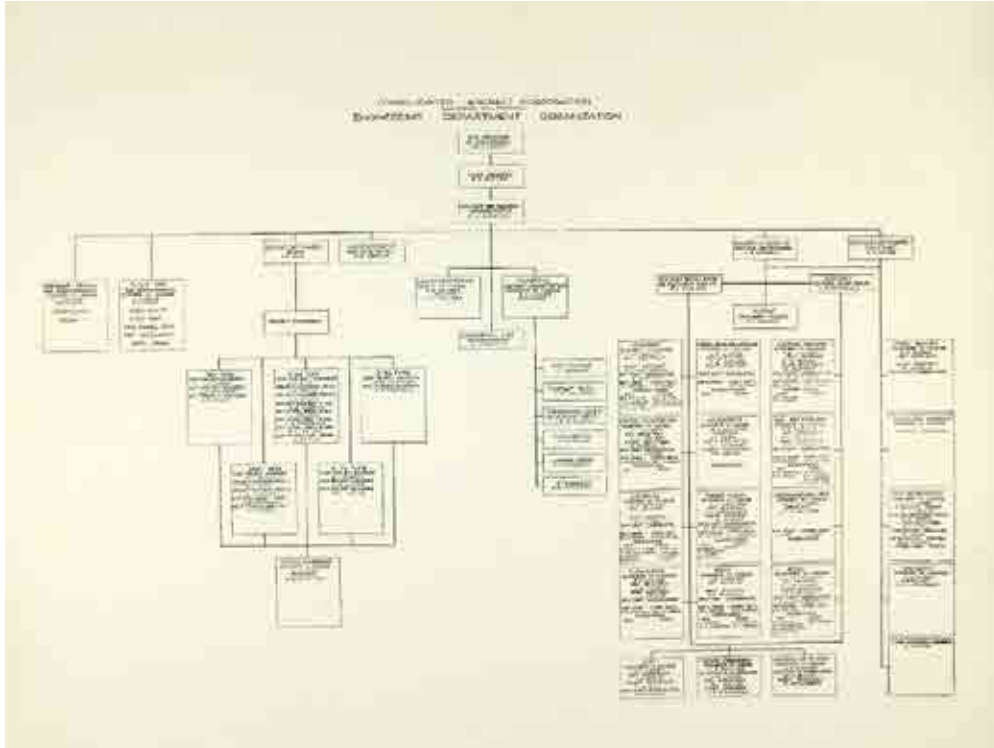
3.1. Allan Sekula, *Untitled Slide Sequence*, 1972. Twenty-five black-and-white transparencies projected in 13 min. loop. Detail. The first image in the sequence.



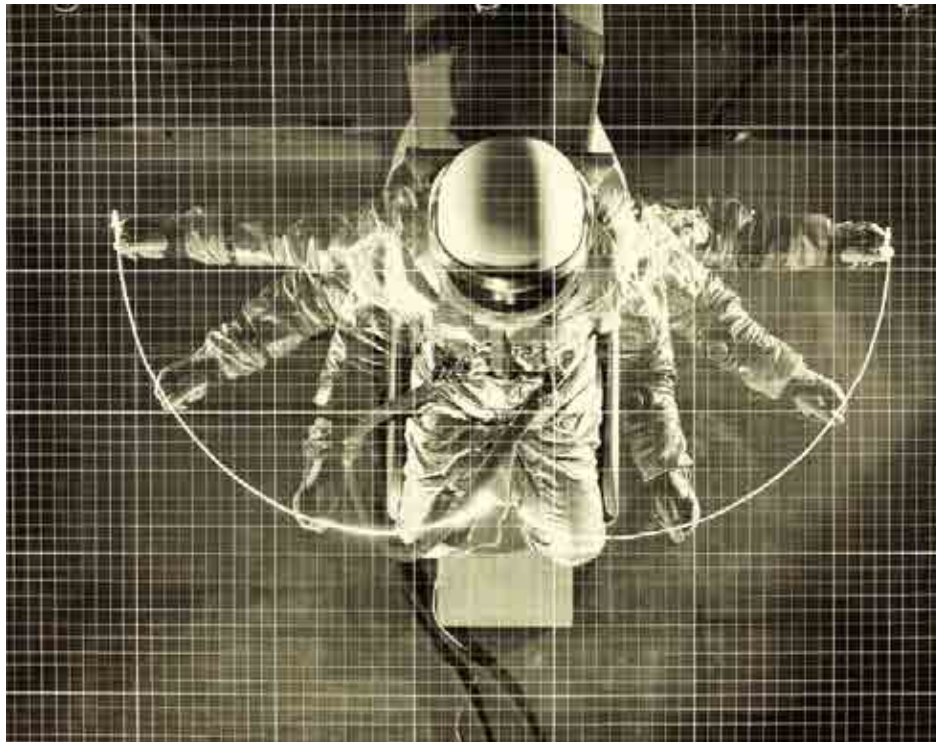
3.2. Allan Sekula, *Untitled Slide Sequence*, 1972. Twenty-five black-and-white transparencies projected in 13 min. loop. Details.



3.3. Allan Sekula, *Untitled Slide Sequence*, 1972. Twenty-five black-and-white transparencies projected in 13 min. loop. Details.

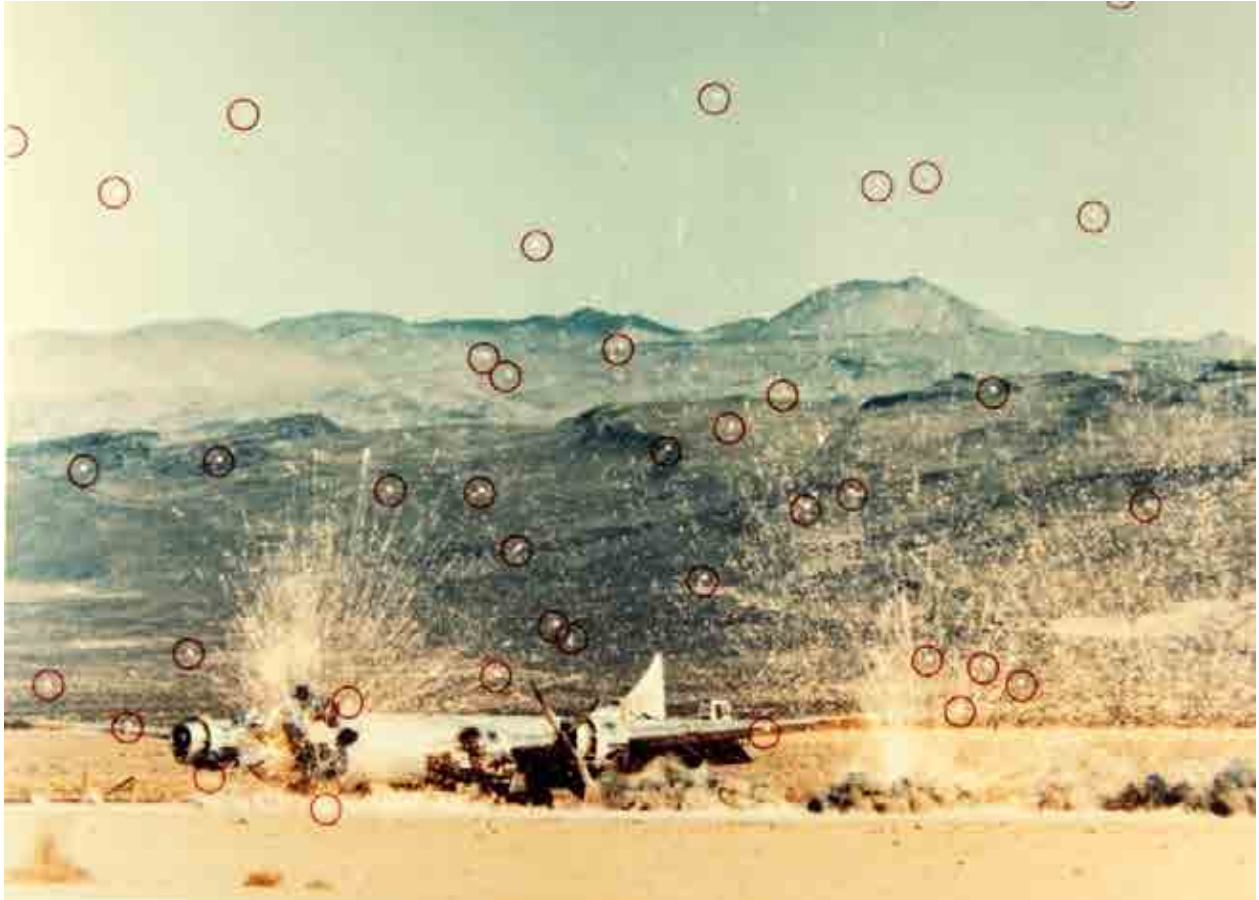


3.4. Consolidated Aircraft Corporation (later Convair), *Engineering Department Organization*, ca. 1955–1969. San Diego Air and Space Museum (SDASM) Archives, no. 10\_0005647.



3.5. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Plant and Personnel, Dry Immersion Bed*, ca. 1960–1969. SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0008118.

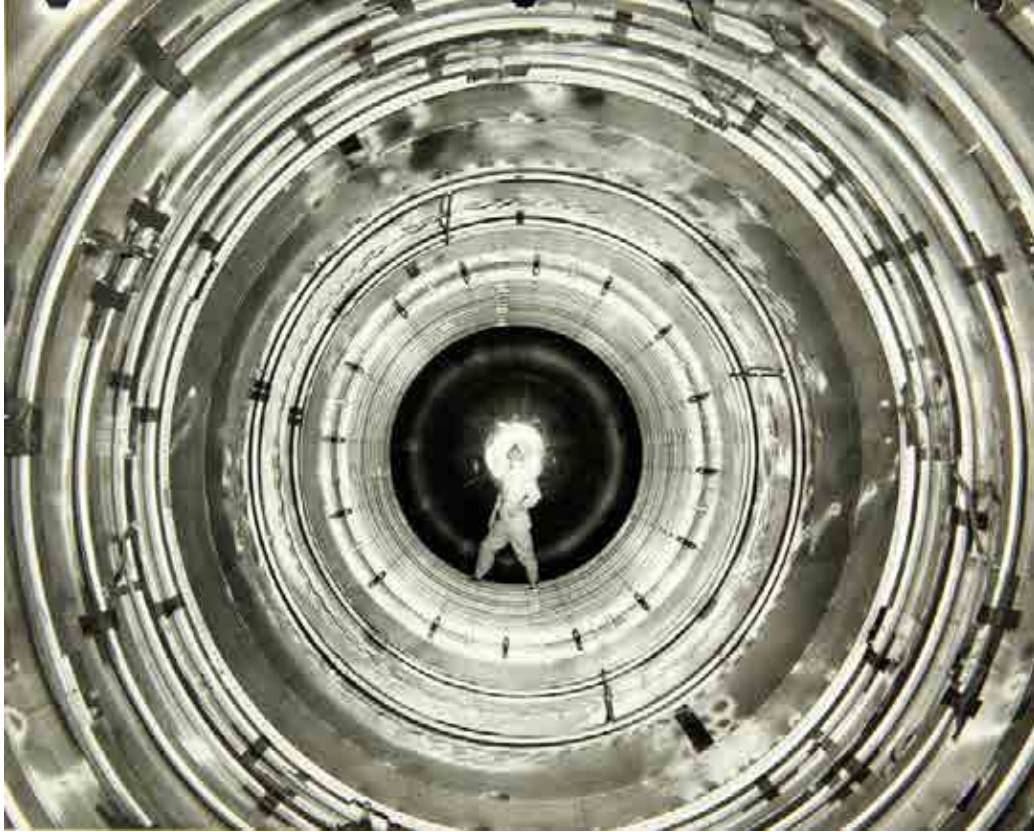




3.6. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Tomahawk*, ca. 1970–1979. SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0006495.



3.7. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Kearny Mesa Plant and Personnel*, ca. 1955–1969. SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0006256.



3.8. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Atlas, Atlas Missile*, ca. 1955–1969. SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0007434.



3.9. Lewis Hine, *Powerhouse Mechanic*, 1921.





3.10. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Facilities—Lindbergh Field Plt. 19*, 1959. SDASM Archives, no. 14\_000232. Pictured: U.S. Army officers, Mercury astronauts (in suits, wearing round badges), and, second from left, Wernher Von Braun(?).



3.11. Convair Division, General Dynamics Corporation, *Convair/General Dynamics Atlas*, ca. 1960–1969. SDASM Archives, no. 10\_0009872.



3.12. Russell Lee, *Workmen Entering Consolidated Aircrafts Early in the Morning. San Diego, California, 1940.* Library of Congress, lot 382, call number LC-USF34-038202.



3.13. Dorothea Lange, *End of Shift 3:30* (also known as *Shipyard Construction Workers, Richmond, California*), 1942 or 1943. Caption reads: "Notice, how these people are entirely unrelated to each other. This is the story of these times and the shipyards."



3.14. Dorothea Lange, *End of Shift, Richmond, California*, 1942 or 1943.



3.15. James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1964–1965. Installation view, Museum of Modern Art.

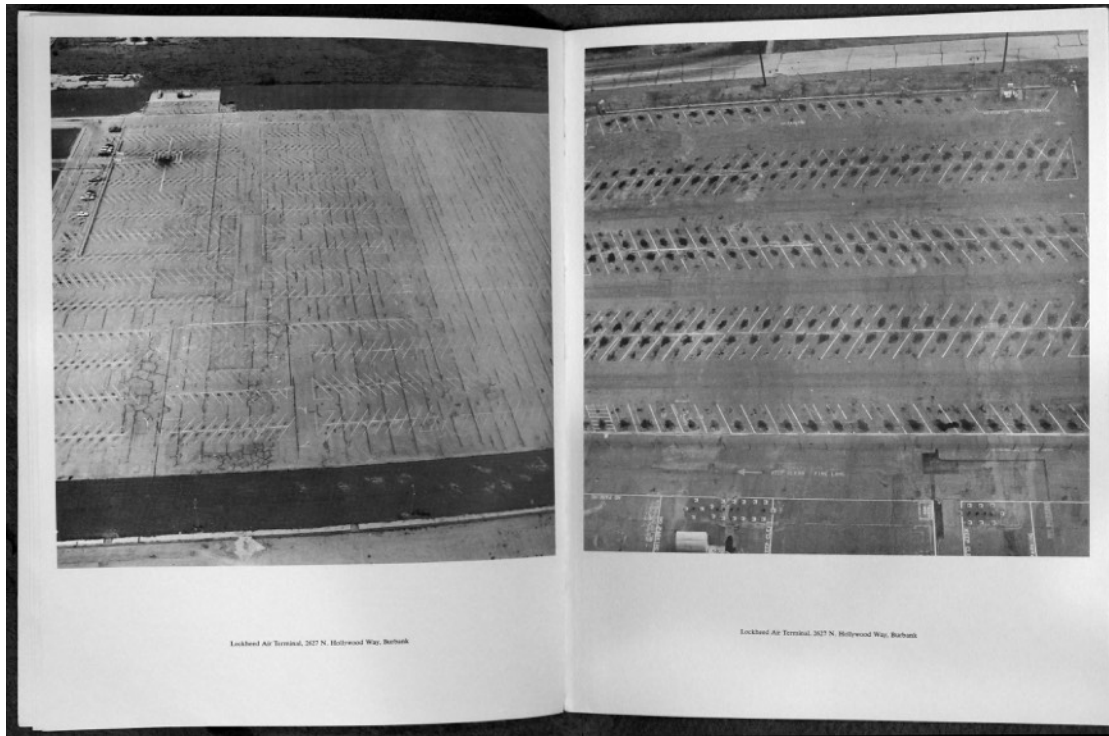




3.16. James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1964–1965. View showing panels arranged end to end.



3.17. James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1964–1965. View showing panels arranged into three rows.



3.18. Ed Ruscha, *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles*, 1967. Two-page spread showing photographs captioned “Lockheed Air Terminal, 2627 N. Hollywood Way, Burbank.”



3.19. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director’s chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Detail. Preceding title card: “The engineer and his old friend stood in the empty Lockheed parking lot while I photographed them. Unable to fathom my motives, they were uneasy.”





3.20. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director's chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Detail.



3.21. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director's chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Detail.



3.22. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director's chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Detail.



3.23. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director's chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Details.



3.24. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director's chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Detail.



3.25. Allan Sekula. *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973. Fifty-one silver gelatin prints, three red director's chairs, potted plants, two audio recordings, text. Detail.





4.1 and 4.2. Allan Sekula, *Boy Looking at His Mother. Staten Island Ferry. New York Harbor*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.3. Allan Sekula, *Welder's Booth in Bankrupt Todd Shipyard. Two years after Closing. Los Angeles Harbor. San Pedro, California*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.





4.4 and 4.5. Allan Sekula, *Pipe Fitters Finishing the Engine Room of a Tuna-Fishing Boat*. Campbell Shipyard. San Diego Harbor, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.6. Allan Sekula, *Welder's Booth in Bankrupt Todd Shipyard. Two Years after Closing. Los Angeles Harbor. San Pedro, California*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.7 and 4.8. Allan Sekula, *Detail. Inclinometer. Mid-Atlantic* (top) and *Panorama. Mid-Atlantic* (bottom), from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.9, 4.10, and 4.11. Allan Sekula, *Conclusion of Search for the Disabled and Drifting Sailboat Happy Ending*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.12. Allan Sekula, "Pancake," a Former Shipyard Sandblaster, Scavenging Copper from a Waterfront Scrapyard, Los Angeles Harbor. Terminal Island, California, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.13. Allan Sekula, *Testing Robot-Truck Designed to Move Containers within Automated ECT/Sea-Land Cargo Terminal. Maasvlakte, Port of Rotterdam, the Netherlands*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.





4.14 and 4.15. Allan Sekula, *Bo'sun Driving the Forward Winch. Mooring at ECT/Sea-Land Cargo Terminal. Maasvlakte, Port of Rotterdam*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.





4.16 and 4.17. Allan Sekula, *Surveying New Container Storage Area, Veracruz, Mexico*, from *Fish Story*, 1988–1995.



4.18. Allan Sekula, *Eyes Closed Assembly Line*, 2010.



5.1. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.2. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.





5.3. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.4. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.5. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.6. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.





5.7. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.8. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.9. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.10. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.11. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.12. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.





5.13. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.14. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.15. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail.



5.16 and 5.17. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail of first and last slides.





5.18. Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [White Globe to Black]*, 1999–2000. Eighty-one color transparencies projected in 14 min. loop. Detail of penultimate slide.



6.1. Winslow Homer, *Lost on the Grand Banks*, 1885.



November 30, 1999

Dear Bill Gates,

I never met your dream house the other day, but didn't stop to know. Gladly, your underwater window was my window. I would have liked to make a look at Windows 95's page on the Grand Banks. It's a great painting, too, showing us a fish and yellow citizens, at \$50 million you paid too much.

FORGET THE EYES SAID FOR AN AMERICAN PAINTER!!!

Do you see you is interested in a picture of the your last day? Tomorrow, tomorrow, sign on a wall, painting into a wall of light? I've never seen it, but you are, going to be, unless the sea gets uglier. They are going to die you know, and it won't be a pretty death.

And as for you Bill, when you're on the sea, are you lost? Or found?

And the rest of us--lots of them--are we on it, or in it?

Your friend

6.2. Allan Sekula, *Dear Bill Gates*, 1999. Three color photographs, typescript.