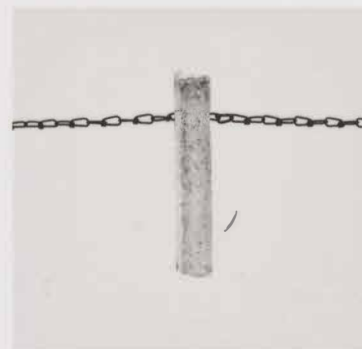


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CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY • THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Harry Callahan Variations on a Theme



Harry Callahan
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Chicago, 1950s. 15.9 x 24.1 cm.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

Environs of Chicago, 1953. 19.4 x 24.5 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 79.29.8.

Lincoln Park, Chicago, 1948. 26.9 x 26.7 cm.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

Eleanor and Barbara, 1954. 19.4 x 24.3 cm.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

Proof print, Mexico, 1973.

Harry Callahan Archive.

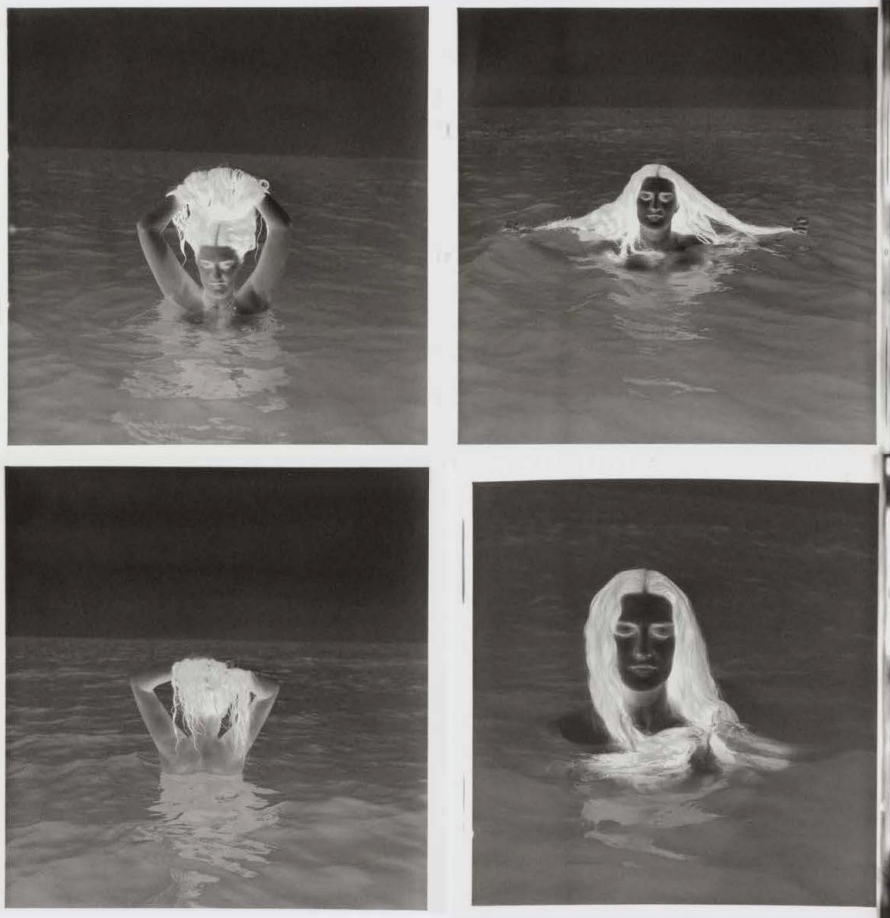
Page 2

Barbara, Chicago (detail), 1955. 19.2 x 19 cm.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

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Negatives for *Eleanor*, Chicago, 1949.

Images: 5,8 x 5,5 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive.

Harry Callahan has been integral to the Center for Creative Photography since its founding in 1975. The Center's first director, Harold Jones—who worked with Callahan in his previous role as director of LIGHT Gallery, in New York—was instrumental in attracting Callahan to contribute his work as one of the Center's founding archives. In 1980, Sally Stein authored an exhibition and catalogue devoted to Callahan's color work; a 1981 issue of *The Archive* presented research on Callahan's early street photographs by John Pultz.

The symposium "Variations on a Theme" complemented the 2006 exhibition *Harry Callahan: The Photographer at Work*. Taking Callahan's belief that "you could have a whole man's life in a body of photography" as a departure point, it was the first in a series of projects dedicated to the theme "the photographer at work." The present publication continues another Center series: *The Archive*, begun in 1976 and dedicated to presenting new, primarily collections-based research on photographic history. Encouraged by our Board of Fellows, we saw the Callahan symposium as an excellent opportunity to relaunch *The Archive* and highlight key aspects of our mission. "Variations on a Theme" demonstrated how art and archives illuminate each other; recognized creativity and rigor in scholarship and artistic practice; and fostered dialogue between curators, scholars, artists, and members of the public.

The audience contributed significantly to the success of the symposium. Although we could not translate into print their sensitive comments or palpable emotion, those who attended on March 3 and 4, 2006, will know what I mean. I would like to thank every audience member, along with the participants: Linda Connor, Keith F. Davis, Jim Dow, Edith Gowin, Emmet Gowin, Harold Jones, Kenneth Josephson, Peter MacGill, Ray K. Metzker, Peter Schjeldahl, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, David Travis, Kate Ware, and honored guests Eleanor Callahan and Barbara Callahan Hollinger. The Callahan family also participated in public programs at the exhibition's two subsequent venues, The Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego. We greatly appreciate their wisdom, intelligence, and generosity.

Harry Callahan: The Photographer at Work, my first major exhibition at the Center, gave me a thrilling—and daunting—opportunity to dive into the Center's renowned archives. My top-notch team of colleagues, who are named on page 76, made the exhibition and symposium possible. Together, we are proud to present the proceedings of the symposium "Harry Callahan: Variations on a Theme."

Britt Salvesen
Curator and Interim Director

Chicago, 1949. 30.8 x 20.4 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 77.70.10.



The Callahan Gaze, and How We Look Now

Peter Schjeldahl

PETER SCHJELDAHL was born in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1942. He attended Carleton College and the New School and worked as a newspaper reporter in Minnesota, Iowa, and New Jersey. After a year in Paris (1964–65), he settled in New York and began writing for *ArtNews*. Between 1967 and 1981, he published six books of poetry. He was a regular art critic for the Sunday *New York Times* (1969–75), the *Village Voice* (1966, 1980–82, 1990–98), and *7 Days* (1988–90). He joined the *New Yorker* in 1998. Five books of criticism include *The Hydrogen Jukebox: Selected Writings* (1991). For four years, until 2001, he taught a seminar for studio seniors in the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. He has received a Guggenheim fellowship and the Frank Jewett Mather Award for excellence in art criticism from the College Art Association.

I have been invited to give a “keynote address.” I like the idea. It entitles me to indulge in oratory, as at a political convention—which, in a way, this symposium resembles. It’s a party of the interested: experts, scholars, functionaries, collectors, dealers, patrons, and others who define a field—roughly, art photography—and who are concerned about its future. How are we doing? What challenges us?

I’m not in the field. I’m a journalist serving here as a sort of political consultant. This isn’t far-fetched. I have made my livelihood by operating in zones where art overlaps with the wide world.

Here’s my first observation as a spokesperson for our party: we’re in trouble. I have in mind the first and most vulgar question anybody asks about photography these days: what have digital technologies done to the field? They seem to me to have blown it sky-high. In art terms, they have accelerated the photographic invasion of other specialties, including painting and design. In photographic terms, digitality explodes definitions of the medium. What technical basis exists for comparing one photograph to another, or photography itself to things that aren’t photography? You used to be able to rough out an answer. Not any more.

This moment casts the history and philosophy of modern, pre-digital photography in a defining historical light—no one’s modern photography, incidentally, being more definitive than Harry Callahan’s. Granted, there’s something melancholy now in terming something “modern.” Modern used to mean new. Now it means old. If you want to say new you are supposed to say “postmodern,” if you can stand it.

What was and is photography, and how and why might it interest us? I’m assuming a certain level not just of interest but of knowledge, though there are probably some amateurs here. But everybody gets to

play who is capable of enthusiasm and isn’t afraid of sophistication. Enthusiasm and sophistication are values that I hold higher than expertise. They add up to a political ideal that I hope we share: cosmopolitanism, the gathering and interplay and melting of tribes. The point seems to me worth making, given the penchant of specializations, including art photography, to behave tribally.

By the way, sophistication and cosmopolitanism are not the same thing. There are dumb cosmopolitans. There can be no dumb sophisticates. (Dumb cosmopolitans in New York and other great cities at least have the decency to be good-looking. Dressing well is good ethics. Remember that when you go out the door in the morning you are becoming part of other people’s visual environment. Their lives are hard enough already. Show some compassion.)

Harry Callahan is a paragon of sophistication in photography and a perfect subject for a symposium on the subject because of the ways he kept re-inventing himself. Most modern photographers had a couple of great years and then repeated themselves for the rest of their lives—making images branded with their style. That’s not so with Callahan. The only thing uniform about the show across the hall is high quality. I don’t think anybody can top him in that respect. The disadvantage is that, without the visual equivalent of a logo, you don’t take hold in the public mind. I can’t think of another photographer on Callahan’s level who is less well known. Well, there’s that fairly famous shot of Eleanor in the water. But singling out any Callahan picture rather misses his point. I recently saw a show at Danziger in New York of the street

portraits, the women in the street.' There must have been about twenty of them—and I regretted that there weren't more. The more Callahans you see in a given series, the better each one gets. You may have to see a lot of them before you really see one. At first you think, was he lucky? No. He didn't need luck.

Any successful visual art takes account of two physiological operations: looking and seeing. Inferior pictures tend toward one or the other, or toward neither: they're mindless. Now, you can't look and see at the same time, any more than you can listen and hear at once. It is the difference between actively focusing your mind and passively laying it open. We toggle so fast in our brains between the two settings that they feel simultaneous, but they're not. For the purpose of a practical life—of not getting into car crashes, for example—you hardly need to be conscious of this. But there are weird people who burn with curiosity about how their minds work. These are artists and art-lovers, who enjoy developing their perceptual capacities to the highest possible degree, for no practical reason. It involves a measure of routine discomfort. Visual sophistication requires a skeptical attitude toward the apparent givenness of eyesight, even as we engage and revel in it.

Art photography is particularly alert to this special relation of the mind to visual reality. It aspires to clarify the relation between looking and seeing, between how the eye works and what it takes in. A good photograph does justice to both. It is a kind of handshake between the photographer, as a looking being, and the world that exists whether it is looked at or not. No other art does this so directly.

Of all other creative human activities, the one that comes closest to art photography, it seems to me, is gardening. In a photograph as in a garden, nature and culture meet on something like an equal footing. The garden-maker takes what nature presents and edits and composes it into a kind of picture, giving it form. The analogy seems obvious.

I recommend a great book called *Second Nature*, by Michael Pollan, which goes into the history of gardening—you know, the Italian, French, English, Moorish—and points out that America has invented two garden ideas that didn't exist before, both of which are insane. The first is the coast-to-coast front lawn: the universal unfenced front lawn, which by the way was championed by Frederick Law Olmsted, the genius of Central Park. Olmsted thought it would make us more democratic, and it probably has. It is a total subordination of non-human nature, and a lockstep obligation in the human sphere. If your grass gets too high, your neighbor starts giving you dirty looks.

The other American innovation, in garden ideology, is the wilderness—a natural setting with no people in it. This never occurred to anyone before us. You know, if someone leaves a shoe print there, it's corrupted. As if people aren't nature, too. It seems to me that if birds' nests and beehives are natural, then so are iPods and aircraft carriers.

American photography has had intimate relations with the ideal of the wilderness and the phenomenon of the front lawn. Isn't it interesting that our wilderness photographs tend to be the most tidy, formal, tight-assed, color-adjusted, and, you know, all-around

artificial work imaginable, and the ones of front lawns and of backyards—suburbia—tend to be the wildest and wooliest? In point of wildness, waterfalls and grizzly bears have nothing on William Eggleston. Wilderness photography, though perhaps very pretty, combs out the nature that really concerns us, first and last: human nature, which is most on display where control over other aspects of nature is most extreme.

Art photography is a tiny niche in photography as a whole. Photography has been, almost from its inception, an absolutely dominant force in culture. As an activity, photography is like writing. It's a universal medium with a zillion communicative uses. In relation to it, art photography is like poetry in relation to writing. Is photography itself an art? Of course it's not, as writing isn't an art. But writing by a great poet is an art and distinguishes itself as such, immediately. You know that you're reading something special and not a doctor's prescription or a shopping list. Some would say there's this difference: you can't make good writing by accident but anyone might take a good photograph. But only a true photographer can take the same kind of good photograph twice.

Like a poem, an artistically executed photograph is a formalized act. The form matters. Communicativeness is not eliminated even in the most abstract work, but even in the most realist it is tamped down toward equivalence to other qualities and capacities of the medium.

Harry Callahan gives amazing examples of that mastery, that tamping down. You see him doing it in everything. I think that part of the reason for his relative obscurity is his austere rigor in this virtue. He subordinates his own creative personality. He rides herd on himself as well as on what is happening before the camera, with terrific economy. If he was going to photograph things marked by plenitude, like street scenes that are sort of complicated, he was going to do it again, the same kind of set-up. He was going to wear the motif down, make it familiar, so that the interest of the complexity didn't swamp the integrity of the intention.

Until recently—until a big change that digitality is bringing about—sophistication in looking at photographs has been rare even among very smart people. Preparing for this lecture—or speech—I went back and reread the two books that I think every kid in every college course that touches on photography is given to read, Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and Susan Sontag's *On Photography*. The Barthes is a great piece of writing because he's a great writer. (The best French artist since World War II is ... a critic. That's France.) And Susan Sontag is certainly a fascinating writer, with a sure sense of timing when it came to ideas. But they share a stubbornly naive tendency to identify photographs with their subjects, which is like identifying gardening with botany. Obviously there's no photography without subjects, just as there's no gardening without chlorophyll. But intention and form count for more. They affect you, when you see a photograph, whether you're aware of it or not. I'm not talking about a failure to see, which everybody does, but a failure to take full account of seeing, which sophisticates do.



Dean Carla Stoffle addresses symposium participants and attendees, with Peter Schjeldahl in foreground at right.

Even when folks imagine, while looking at a snapshot of their Aunt Matilda, that it's Aunt Matilda they see, the photograph is in fact exactly and only what is seen. It is taking the digital revolution to confer a certain lumpen automatic sophistication on everyone. It used to be, you knew somebody was hip when they said, "The camera lies." Now that digital technology makes photographs infinitely manipulable, a blanket cynicism has settled in. The delicate disbelief that is sophistication is now common coin.

But photography has always been as manipulative as any other art, given a photographer's consciousness of choices. The number of decisions about a picture that a photographer makes may be relatively limited—as opposed to a painter's, which are essentially unlimited—but they are all the more potent for that reason. Barthes said that, presented with a photograph, "I can never deny that the thing has been there." What thing? Where? When? The only thing present is the photograph, and it is here, now. You can use it as a spur to nostalgia or erotic reverie or some other state of mind, of course. But that's your lookout—your outlook. Which, if you're Roland Barthes, is going to be plenty interesting, just perhaps not about photography as an art.

Susan Sontag condescends to photography from her eminence as a writer, or as a thinker enthroned in writing. Her book conveys to me that whatever photography is up to, it's something inferior to what Susan Sontag is up to. She is all over Diane Arbus with moral judgments, for instance, while taking no apparent notice of what an Arbus photograph is and does. (By the way, Arbus may be my personal favorite photographer, in a tie with Robert Frank. That's not a

canonical critical judgment; it's a measure of my personal uses for photography.) Sontag is capable of saying, "There is a large difference between the activity of the photographer, which is always willed, and the activity of a writer, which may not be." That's nuts.

Not to condescend to Susan Sontag, I'll close with a great, mean quote from her book that ought to terrorize us as the institutional party of art photography, and to give us something to talk about.

The leading role now played by museums in forming and clarifying the nature of photographic taste seems to mark a new stage from which photography cannot turn back. Accompanying its tendentious respect for the profoundly banal is the

museum's diffusion of a historicist view, one that inexorably promotes the entire history of photography. Small wonder that photography critics and photographers seem anxious. Underlying many of the recent defenses of photography is the fear that photography is already a senile art, littered by spurious or dead movements; that the only task left is curatorship and historiography. (While prices skyrocket for photographs old and new.) It is not surprising that this demoralization should be felt at the moment of photography's greatest acceptance, for the true extent of photography's triumph as art, and over art, has not really been understood.²

Not understood except by Susan Sontag, anyway. But hand it to her, she can hit a nerve. Do we party members have an answer?

What service to the world can an archival institution provide? In this case, I think it can maintain standards of sophistication from times when sophistication was difficult and rare. These will come in handy if and when digital technologies attain the purposeful concentration of art. For now, we're in a stage of being bright new toys. I don't doubt that baby-crib mobiles will soon come with tiny cameras so that babies can entertain themselves taking pictures. New toys have a way of being absolutely fascinating until they get suddenly boring. When that happens, not everyone will rush back to the darkroom. (Did anyone ever enjoy those chemicals?) But there will always be renewed surges of interest in what real photographic art is really like. Then people will have to come to us, because we have the stuff. ■

1 James Danziger Gallery, *Harry Callahan: Women Lost in Thought* (December 1, 2005–January 21, 2006).

2 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 144.



Field Notes from a Life: Harry Callahan's Landscape Photographs

Katherine Ware

KATHERINE WARE is Curator of Photographs at the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Alfred Stieglitz Center for Photography in the Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs. Her exhibitions include *Street Smarts: Photographs by William Klein*; *The Silver Garden*; *The Faceless Figure*; and *Elemental Landscapes: Photographs by Harry Callahan*. Ware is co-author of *Dreaming in Black and White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery*, published in conjunction with a 2006 PMA exhibition. Ware previously served as Assistant Curator in the Department of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum, where she organized the traveling exhibition *A Practical Dreamer: The Photographs of Man Ray* and *Vision in Motion: The Photographs of László Moholy-Nagy*, both with accompanying books. She is the author of the book *Elemental Landscapes: Photographs by Harry Callahan* (2001) and essays including "Chemist of Mysteries: The Life and Work of Man Ray" (in *Man Ray*, 2000).

In addition to urban views and his immediate family, Harry Callahan most often turned his camera to the landscape.¹ Initially inspired by the example of Ansel Adams, Callahan concentrated on the less dramatic terrain of his native Michigan and photographed such prosaic outdoor subjects as weeds, marshes, and untended fields throughout his career. In contrast with the bold forms, darkened facades, and bustling pedestrians of his Chicago pictures, the silvery, unpopulated thickets he captured in nature are distinctive in their lack of a central focal point and in their repetitiousness. While a few works reveal themselves with the conciseness of a Zen koan, many others unfold in sequences as Callahan explores the relationship of subtle differences that mark even uneventful moments.

Using the term *landscape* to refer to this magnificent body of work is a convenience rather than a truly accurate description. Despite its historic and semantic lack of grandeur, the category of "nature studies" might be a more appropriate term for Callahan's tendency to point his camera at the ground, framing a picture without spatial reference points or context. There are no people, no buildings, no sky in these intimate plantscapes—just unadulterated grass, ferns, trees.

In 1941, Callahan worked at the Chrysler Corporation and was a member of the Detroit Photo Guild. That year the club sponsored a workshop by California photographer Ansel Adams, who had distinguished himself in exhibitions on both coasts, perhaps most notably in 1936 at An American Place, Alfred Stieglitz's gallery in New York.² His

pictures of the landscape and vernacular architecture of his native California answered a growing call for American subjects in the arts, and a photograph such as his 1932 view of Half Dome in the Yosemite Valley was fresh terrain for art-world denizens

living in the Northeast. Callahan later characterized his relationship to the grander aspect of Adams's work as one of aesthetic opposition, in that Adams's reputation for dramatic indigenous landscapes freed Callahan to do something different.³ But during Adams's visit to Detroit, Callahan also undoubtedly saw a sampling of the more gemlike, observational nature studies shown at An American Place.

Several of the images Adams exhibited in New York, including *Pine Cone and Eucalyptus Leaves* and *Leaves, Mills College*, home in on subjects low to the ground, allowing them to fill the picture plane with a remarkably satisfying wealth of texture and line.⁴ Two photographs of wooden fences from the show are extraordinarily detailed, highly patterned studies of worn and utilitarian subjects, just the kind of treatment Callahan soon lavished on his own humble subjects. These were vividly presented in Adams's 8x10 contact prints, the clarity and richness of which Callahan particularly admired and, indeed, emulated.⁵ This method of working aligned Adams with his compatriots in the f/64 movement in the San Francisco Bay area, of which he was a founding member. The group espoused the use of a wide aperture and large negatives intended for printing full-frame on high-contrast paper; the resulting sharp-focus images often used the articulation of subject and form as a gateway to revealing essences.

One of Callahan's earliest successes, a true landscape, was made later the same year he met Adams. *Detroit* (fig. 1) shows weeds sprouting up from a drenched bog or pond, their stalks reflected

Weed against Sky. 1948/58.

18.1 x 17.7 cm.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

Figure 1. *Detroit*, 1941.

8.6 x 11.7 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 77.70.9.



in the water and echoed by a procession of utility poles. Callahan uses the picturesque device of reflection in a decidedly pedestrian scene, and the effect is an all-over patterning of the picture surface that he returns to consistently in the nature studies. However, he very quickly turns away from photographing vistas with a horizon line. In two photographs from the following year, each showing a single leaf centered on a mantle of snow, Callahan points the camera downward to study a deliberately selected area of ground (fig. 2). He maintains a central focal point, the leaf, but renders the nuances of the snow on which it rests with obsessive attention. This isolation of the subject from the general landscape was an approach that was to preoccupy Callahan for the full span of his career.

Developing his vision rapidly, Callahan soon abandoned even this nominal level of subject matter. In two studies from the mid-to-late 1940s, he again photographed grass-choked pools, but in close-up views that appear to be direct descendents of Adams's 1935 image *Grass and Water* from Tuolumne Meadows of Yosemite National Park. There is a delicacy and order to Adams's photograph that is noticeably absent from Callahan's patches of sludge, however, which instead exhibit the dense, activated surfaces of mid-century American painting.⁶ Pushing the limits of subject and composition even further is an astounding series of four found landscapes made in Chicago at the end of the 1940s. Lacking the dazzle of light or intensity of surface seen in the perhaps contemporaneous water studies, these barren plots are an extraordinary destination for the lens of a recent hobbyist. These small contact prints (4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches) are images of nothing, and there are four of them. No relationship or sequence reveals itself upon inspection; there is no progression, no event, no subject, just a feast of detail.

Certainly one of the most intriguing facets of Callahan's nature images is the adjacency suggested by these four pictures and his consistent interest in photographing imperceptibly successive instants. There are no decisive moments in these landscape pictures, there is simply this moment and that, apparently equally worthy of our attention. Each second of existence is ultimately different from another, however minutely, and sometimes it seems that Callahan was trying to capture this very thing, to record each of those moments rather than in privileging one over another. "The idea of change really fascinated me—to keep the camera in the exact spot and just put in another sheet of film to show the changes.... I felt very strongly about sequences," Callahan said in the early 1980s.⁷

For Callahan, the act of photographing was its own mode of discovery, self-exploration, and understanding the world. John Szarkowski refers to Callahan's "sense of compulsion, a need to know the world through photographing it," while the artist said, "I guess I'm always looking for clues."⁸ During his adult life, Callahan was not aligned with any organized religion or belief system, but it is clear from his words and his work that he developed a strong personal philosophy, partly stemming from his work ethic. His path to this goal was to keep looking, keep working, and to see what emerged, an approach not unlike that advocated by American educator John Dewey, whose philosophy of pragmatism focused on learning-by-doing.

Szarkowski invokes the example of Henry David Thoreau.⁹ Like an apprentice or a gentleman scientist, "from the very beginning his vision was shaped by a continual reexamination of his subjects," and throughout his career, Callahan photographed the world around him repeatedly, recording his observations and discoveries in these copious gelatin silver field notes.¹⁰

Along with the accumulation of information, Callahan also takes the tack of isolating it, creating a stark pair of images of weeds in Michigan around 1948 (see page 12). Remarkable in their extreme reductiveness, they appear almost like photograms of lines. In these pictures, Callahan turns away from description, texture, and amplitude to distill his subject down to the barest and most essential elements, an unprecedented combination of modesty and virtuosity. One of these appeared in a 1946 issue of *Minicam Photography*, his first published pictures, along with "highlights of sun on water."¹¹ These significantly predate his more extensive exploration of grasses in snow from Providence, Rhode Island, in the 1960s, which, while similar in technique, are composed in a less restrained, calligraphic manner.

These daring little epiphanies stand alone as individual masterworks, but they are also interesting as part of Callahan's ongoing web of interrelated visual inquiries. In relation to a series the artist made of seeds and vegetation arrayed on glass, like slides for a microscope, the 1948 weeds also have a faintly clinical quality, as if segregated from their native milieu for study and examination. In another example, Callahan returns to a silhouetted view of blades of grass a full decade later in Aix-en-Provence, France. These 1958 grasses have an agility that contrasts with the minimalism and stasis of the earlier two examples and, instead of being black forms against a white field, these are light-dazzled forms posing against a dark background. Callahan's tendency to revisit and rework an idea, leaving no creative avenue unexplored, is evident in the positive/negative orientation of these pairs. "I just had the feeling that I wanted to keep going back to the same ideas, knowing that they would be different, yet still the same," the artist said.¹²

In 1942, Callahan considered establishing himself in New York and, while there, showed his photographs to Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz, who did not provide any particular encouragement, had produced series of his own work in the 1920s and 1930s. One of these was created outdoors, as he turned his camera upward to capture a skyscape of clouds for his series *Equivalents*. With the exception of an early grouping, these generally had no fixed order, but were meant to correspond with the photographer's moods while together making up a kind of symphony of his emotional life. At the same time, Stieglitz was engaged in an extended examination he had begun in the 1910s of his lover, the artist Georgia O'Keeffe, with the idea that a portrait was ideally an accretion of images and that a single photograph could hardly encompass the complexity of its human subject.

Despite Callahan's stated affinity for Stieglitz's cloud series, the young artist also closely emulated the additive approach of the extended O'Keeffe portrait.¹³ Callahan had also seen Adams's 1940 *Surf Sequence*, a series of views recording the changing tide line in California, made from a stationary vantage point. The idea of seriality,

Figure 2. *Detroit*, 1942.

8.1 x 11 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 2004.27.8.



glimpsed by Callahan in the work of these two masters, became a vital part of his working process though it was he who moved through the landscape and chose the vantage points. While the habit of photographing subjects repeatedly was not limited to his nature studies, it is in these that he looks most intently, most relentlessly. However, it is clear that these images are not intended to correspond to personal states the artist wants us to share. They are his own exercises for understanding the world, diaristic distillations of intensely personal experience that suggest he is about to reveal something of import; the pictures remain ambiguous and inscrutable while proffering a hum of meaning for the attentive viewer. Perhaps a more useful general model is the tradition of Japanese landscape painting and printmaking, in which the cycles of nature are often closely linked with human life.

Callahan's nature studies do bear an affinity to some of these images, at least in superficial ways: his precise renderings of nature, austere compositions, elegance of line, and occasional anthropomorphism. In the seventeenth century, Japanese artists working in the genre of *kachoga* prints specialized in nature studies featuring birds, grasses, and flowers, displaying their virtuosity by working with combinations of standard elements. Cycles of images that depicted the seasons or weather were also popular and often showed activities such as the sowing and reaping of crops, reflecting man's connection to the earth and his place in the world order. Printmakers such as Hokusai and Hiroshige were accomplished in this area but were also interested in exploring richer expressions of pure landscape. Late in

his life, Hokusai went further to devote a series of prints primarily to landscape, greatly reducing the human presence but including in each a different view of Mt. Fuji. Though Callahan seems never to have expressed a connection with this art form, his concerns are aligned with its sensibility in many ways. The idea of repeatedly depicting the same subject—the portrayal of variations on a theme—became one of Callahan's primary modes of photography, consistently employed throughout his decades of work in the landscape. He is not

interested in a narrative or linear progression but seems to want to limn the precise aspects of a smaller time frame.

Callahan was somewhat radical in his concentration on the petite and quotidian landscape, and some of his compositions are drastically reductive. There are seldom any people to be found, allowing us to concentrate on the formal qualities of the picture. But even without the physical presence of man, these are pictures about man's ongoing relationship with nature, Callahan's, which he maintained from his earliest pictures around Detroit up until his last pictures in Ansley Park outside his Atlanta home. Callahan did sometimes make broad views of the outdoors, as in his 1970s views of Cape Cod, and he did, at times, include the human figure in these compositions, particularly his wife and daughter. But the human presence is tacitly provided by the invisible photographer behind the camera and by the viewer, who is contemplating the subject.

How are we to find meaning in these additive variations Callahan presents, this aggregate portrait of the landscapes he inhabited that is clearly of great personal significance and emotional resonance and yet is offered in a very straightforward, dry-eyed manner? "His goal was to make pure, perfect statements in which the subject itself revealed his meaning," James Alinder wrote of the artist.¹⁴ Purism seems particularly important in understanding these images, as Callahan was not interested in objectivity even though his pictures are presented in a direct, and often stark, manner. The nature studies offer a high degree of fidelity to the observable world but instead of being descriptive they seem to encompass not only the subject but also its poetry. Some of the nature study images are analytical, while others are tremendously sensuous (figs. 3, 4). Callahan's particular conjunction of description and expression no doubt also owes some debt to the strong example of European modernism of the 1920s–30s, discovered by American artists who traveled abroad but also eventually disseminated via journals, exhibitions, and war refugees.¹⁵ Andy Grundberg refers to the highly graphic quality of Callahan's compositions and his use of the technique of multiple exposure, but notes that "his pictures are egocentrically conceived. In many ways he is a diarist."¹⁶ This is Callahan's achievement in the nature studies, to create these breathtaking and highly personal images that also operate in the realm of universality as portraits of a world we share. ■

- 1 For a fuller examination of this subject, see Katherine Ware, *Elemental Landscapes: Photographs by Harry Callahan* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001). This essay is informed by the museum's collection of Callahan's photographs, particularly the group of one hundred landscape images selected in 1997 by Martha Mock and purchased with funds contributed by John J. Medveckis in honor of the 125th Anniversary of the Museum. My thanks to Peter Barberie and Kathleen Krattenmaker for their comments on this essay.
- 2 For a re-creation of this important exhibition, see Andrea Gray, *Ansel Adams: An American Place, 1936* (Tucson, Ariz.: Center for Creative Photography, 1982).
- 3 See Keith Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs: An Exhibition from the Hallmark Photographic Collection* (Kansas City, Mo.: Hallmark Cards, 1981), 55.
- 4 For images, see Gray, *Ansel Adams*, plates 10a, 10b, and 33.
- 5 Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs*, 51.
- 6 Callahan makes a connection between himself and the painter Jackson Pollock in his interview with Keith Davis in Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs*.
- 7 Minor White was one of the few contemporaries also working with sequences in photography; Callahan stated that he believed White may have gotten the idea from him when they met in 1945. See Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs*, 51.
- 8 John Szarkowski, *Callahan* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Aperture, 1976), 13; Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs*, 55.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 10 James Alinder in Anne Kennedy and Nicholas Callaway, eds., *Eleanor: Photographs by Harry Callahan* (Carmel, Calif., and New York, 1984), 11–12.
- 11 *Minicam Photography* 9, no. 6 (February 1946). Writing about his work with grasses and snow, Callahan said, "In 1943 I was photographing weeds in snow. I looked through the camera and I just saw the lines. That was a really exciting and beautiful thing to me." See Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs*, 54.
- 12 Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs*, 63.
- 13 "I had been photographing water and I was trying, unconsciously, I think, to do what Stieglitz had done with the sky." *Ibid.*, 54.
- 14 Alinder in Kennedy and Callaway, eds., *Eleanor*, 12.
- 15 Britt Salvesen writes about Ansel Adams and László Moholy-Nagy as disparate guideposts for Callahan's career, noting that, "broadly speaking... [it] appears to represent a synthesis of the romantic and formalist traditions." Britt Salvesen, *Harry Callahan: The Photographer at Work* (Tucson, Ariz.: Center for Creative Photography, 2005), 14.
- 16 Andy Grundberg, "Chicago, Moholy and After," *Art in America* 64, no. 5 (September/October 1976), 34–37.



Figure 3. *Georgia Mountains*. 1988.
15.2 x 15 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 2005.20.39.



Figure 4. *Georgia Mountains*. 1988.
15.3 x 15.3 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 2005.20.40.



Untitled, 1961. 21.7 x 32.4 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 77.70.11.

Harry Callahan, Street Photography and the Alienating City

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Several weeks ago, walking down Market Street in San Francisco, I passed a group of black shoeshine men, rigged up in elaborate and theatrical gear, with decorated worktables and chairs. Scrawled on a handmade sign, conspicuously positioned, was the sentence "any photo taken, one dollar each." Transforming themselves from a picturesque sight for touristic consumption to entrepreneurs of their own image seems an eminently sensible and implicitly political gesture. Notwithstanding American privacy laws that affirm the legality of photographing anything visible ("in plain view") in public space, people included, why shouldn't the objects of the camera's gaze be granted some recompense for aiding in the production of photographic trophies? In this regard, Susan Sontag's observations in *On Photography* remain distinctly apropos: "A photograph," she observes early on, "is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself, and one with ever more peremptory rights—to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on. Our very sense of situation is now articulated by the camera's interventions."¹ A little further, she alludes to another, darker aspect of the photographic act, although one more associated with documentary or reportage: "Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged (at least for as long as it takes to get a 'good' picture), to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing—including, when that is the interest, another person's pain or misfortune."²

This paper, which considers Harry Callahan's photographs of urban scenes and pedestrians taken in Detroit and Chicago in the 1940s to the 1960s, looks backward to photographers working before Callahan, to work by certain of his contemporaries, and forward to recent production. Generically, this kind of photography, whose origin is variously located in the first decades of the twentieth century—sometimes later—has come to be called "street photography," a category so capacious as to be essentially meaningless.³ I will return to this notion of street photography as a discrete genre a bit later, but my discussion is oriented less to issues of photographic aesthetics or connoisseurship than to the kinds of questions that arise when we consider photography—of any stripe—as a social practice. Given this perspective, and as my opening anecdote might suggest, I am interested in how and why the practice of photographing people unawares within the modern city emerged when it did, why it did, and how such photography might be read in terms that exceed the individual intentions or subjectivity of the photographer. Such an inquiry raises other issues, including how perceptions of the metropolis are themselves subject to historical, cultural, and political determinations. It further serves to make us aware of changing conceptions about photographic protocols, conventions, and practices.

Inasmuch as the modern metropolis, initially Paris, has been a photographic subject continuously since the 1840s, it would be theoretically possible to construct a history of the medium using only images of the urban environment. And while such a project—beginning with the daguerreotype and the calotype, continuing through the era of wet collodion, dry plate, stereographic imagery, and so on, and concluding with digital images—would include every photographic technology and almost



Abigail Solomon-Godeau in the Center's auditorium.

every camera developed since the medium's invention, it would also span a considerable range of photographic uses, contexts, and instrumentalities. Such a visual engagement with the metropolis was and is entirely overdetermined given the medium's historic implication with the transformative processes of industrialism, technology, and mass production. These have in various ways all contributed to the development of that condition we call the culture of modernity. In its artistic manifestations, however, we designate those works that employ the visual (or textual) expressions of modernity in innovative forms as modernist. The city as subject is as much a part of the development of modernism as it has been for modernist painting. In other words, a stereo card of crowds walking on Broadway or crossing the Pont Neuf is a document of the modern because the technology that created the picture and the desire to take (and, equally important, the desire to see or purchase) such a picture are themselves indices of the modern. But a photograph by Germaine Krull, to choose an example almost at random, is a typical example of the syntax of modernist photography to the degree that it manifests the abstracting possibilities of photographic vision, to the degree that it emphasizes the expanded possibilities of perception produced by camera technology. That said, the ways by which the city and its inhabitants have been photographically imaged are not only determined by the possibilities or limitations of the technology employed, not only shaped by the individual photographer's subjectivity and practical or expressive purpose, but equally by the nature, terms, and determinations operating upon a particular place and milieu in a particular time. For Charles Marville to have photographed Paris both before and after Haussmann transformed it, or for Thomas Annan to have photographed the Glasgow slums, it was necessary that official governmental entities desired such documentation in the first place, and this was, even in the 1870s, quite rare. For Atget to produce his massive record of Paris, it was necessary to have both a clientele for such imagery, as well as an existing discourse about the disappearance of "vieux Paris" in which in this particular instance, he himself participated.⁴ Like these earlier examples, the production of photographs manifesting the defamiliarization or estrangement of vision by the photographic avant-garde of the 1920s was not merely a consequence of the technical means to produce such a vision. In other words, the *Octopus* of Clarence White is a legacy of Pictorialism, even though it depends on the same bird's-eye view and camera optics as does Moholy-Nagy's *From the Radio Tower*; what each one looks like is the result of very different artistic goals.

If the daguerreotypists or stereographic producers of the first and second generation were content to exploit the technical ability of the camera to faithfully represent the visual facts of the built environment, the envelope was pushed, so to speak, when the task became not only more interpretive, but inclusive of the city's inhabitants. If we are to reject a purely technologically deterministic approach to the medium, that is to say, the assumption that technical improvements in photography permitted the taking of such pictures and indeed spawned them, we must then acknowledge those variously sociological, political, ideological, or even artistic motivations that contributed to their production. And once we have acknowledged

that, the concept of street photography as a discrete genre is already destabilized, for it requires a discursive shift for such practices—the representation of individuals without

their knowledge or consent—to become acceptable in the first place. Moreover, when such an enterprise was undertaken without a specific didactic, sociological, polemical intention (as is the case with certain John Thomson photographs used in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*), there is reason to ask what prompts the desire to represent anonymous subjects as they go about their business unaware of being photographed.⁵ What, we might ask, was and is the interest of such pictures? For interest, by which I also mean investment, does not come out of nowhere, but is itself implicated in a complex web of circumstance, ideology, and material determinations.

Obviously, photographic representation of the urban subject within the metropolis was scarcely possible before the advent of fast film, small hand-held cameras, and a significant change in the conventions of photographic practice, such that the photographer felt he or she (usually he) had the right, or the artistic or editorial freedom, to take (or capture) the human subject unawares so as to serve unwittingly as a representative of the photographer's "vision" of urban life. It is thus of some significance that when such photographs first become commonplace, the photographer established himself as categorically distinct and apart from those he photographed, insofar as he would seem to occupy a position analogous to that of the omniscient narrator in textual production.

To take one early, and less familiar example consider a book of photographs and texts by Ilya Ehrenburg, entitled *My Paris*, published in Moscow in 1933, although I think the photographs were taken in the late 1920s.⁶ Its cover depicts Ehrenburg himself, montaged against one of his photographs of Belleville, then as now one of the poorer parts of the city (fig. 1). Dwarfing the street, Ehrenburg stands holding his small Leica. It is a duplicitous instrument, one of the models that permitted the photographer to focus on an object while the lens appeared to be pointing away from it. Looking at the crudely reproduced pictures in the book, it is clear that Ehrenburg's Parisians—mostly old, a few very young, all poor—were unaware of being photographed. Even more suggestive, there are a number of photographs of *clochards* lying unconscious in the street or on park benches, a staple subject of both documentary and street photographers from the 1930s to the present. Although the book appears to be an "art book," it may well have meant to serve the needs of Stalinist propaganda: Ehrenburg, who did not return to Moscow until 1941, was a party faithful until his death in 1967.



Figure 1.

Cover of Ilya Ehrenburg's *My Paris*,
reissued in 2005 by Edition 7L, Paris.
Cover design by El Lissitzky.

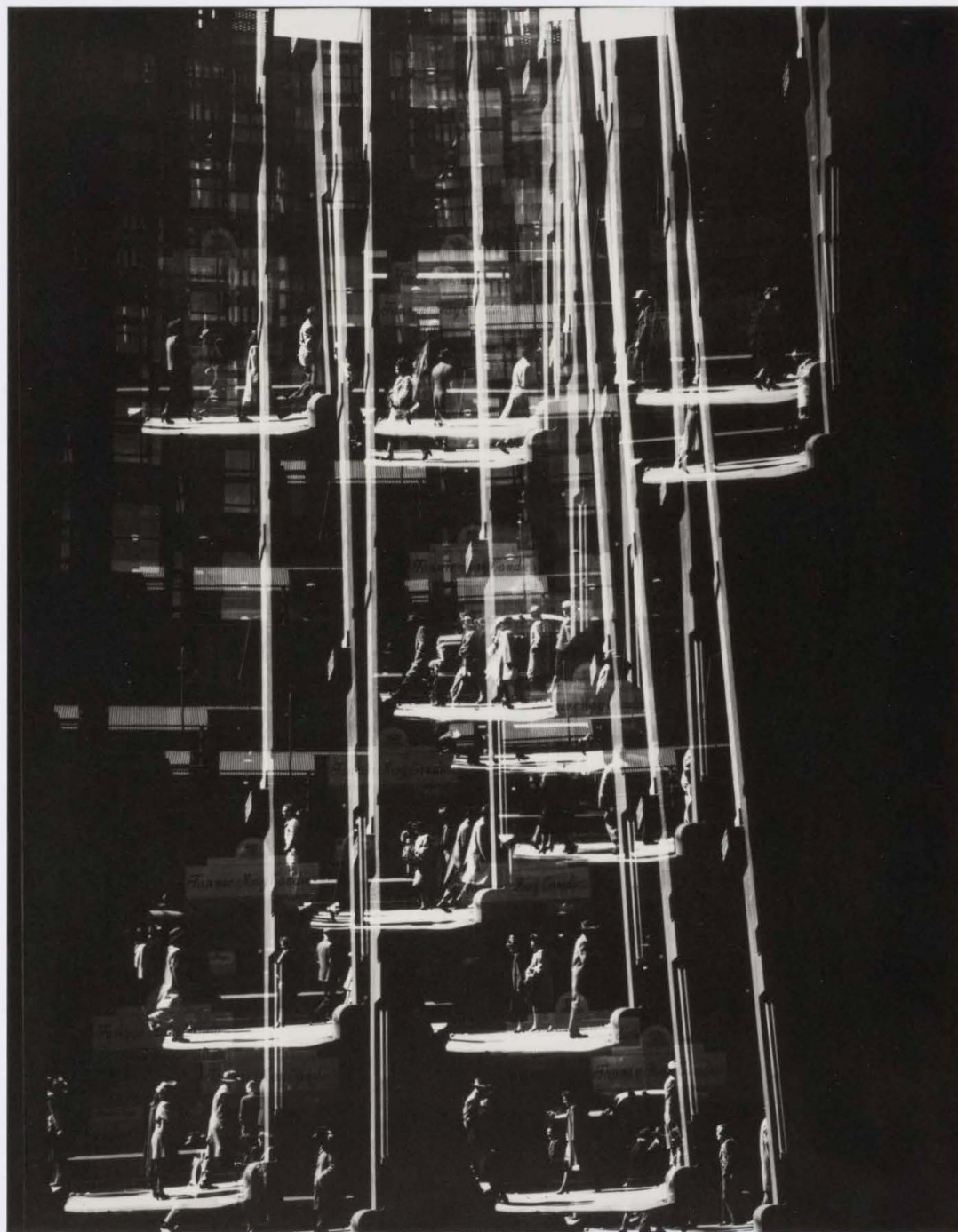


Figure 2. *Chicago*, 1948.

41.4 x 31.9 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.100.

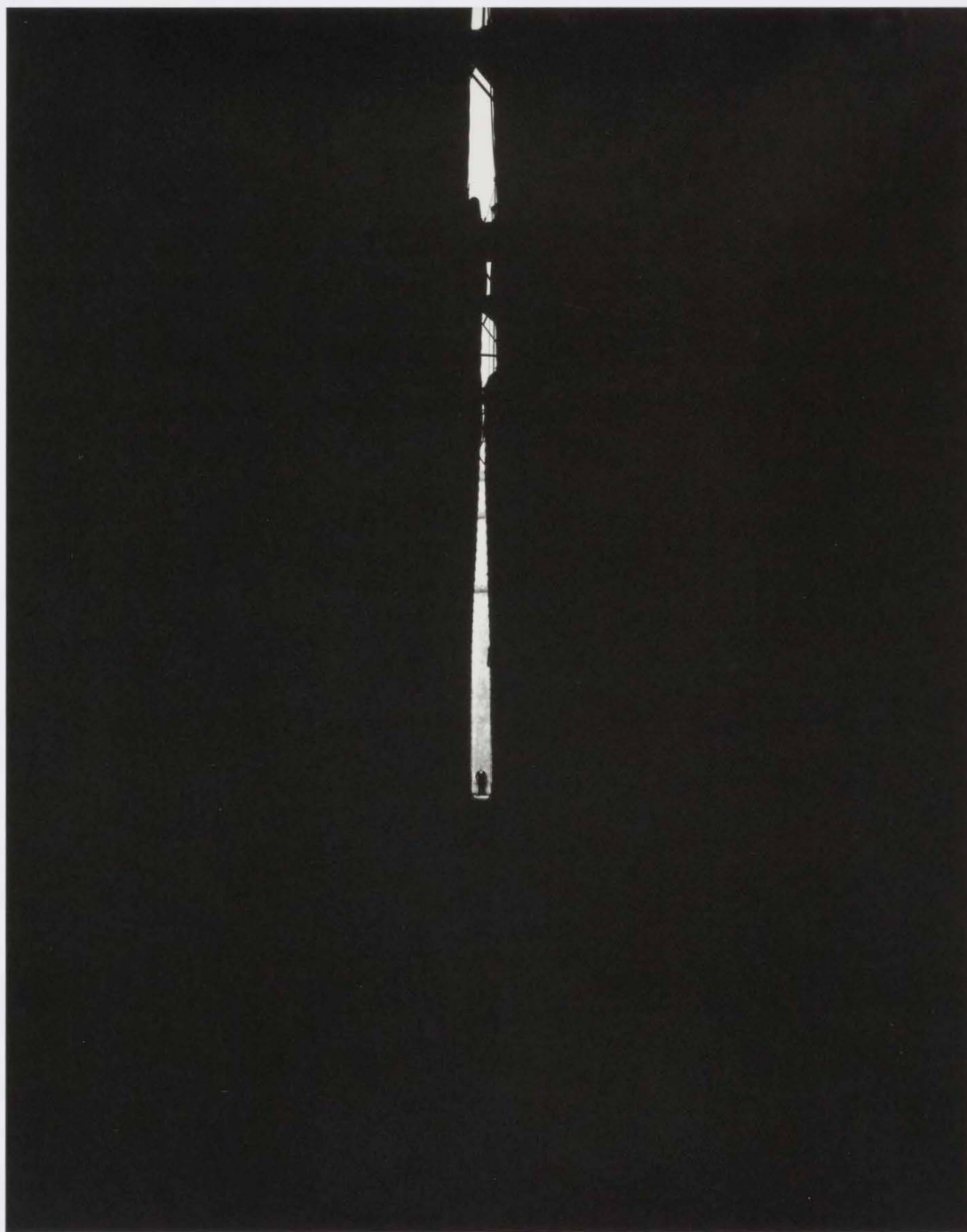


Figure 3. *Bob Fine*, ca. 1952.

24.5 x 19.5 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive/Purchase 77.70.12.

Not only does Ehrenburg represent himself using the trick camera, the first chapter of the book is entitled "The Lateral Viewfinder," and in it one finds his *éloge* to the act of clandestine photography:

A writer knows that to see people, he must remain unseen. The world changes when you stare straight at it: cowards become heroes, and heroes become puppets. This second world can be studied in the shop window of any provincial photographer. But the writer knows the arts of both cunning and pretence. He enters life under another's name. When he's looking at cars or at daisies, Comrade Pavlov or snub-nosed Valentina, they don't realize that he's looking at them.

But what's one to do with a camera? A camera is clumsy and crude. It meddles insolently in other people's affairs. The lens scatters a crowd like the barrel of a gun.

Ours is a guileful age ... For many months I roamed Paris with a little camera. People would sometimes wonder: why was I taking pictures of a fence or a road? They didn't know that I was taking pictures of them. Now and then, those in front of me would turn away or smarted themselves up: they thought they were being photographed. But I was photographing others: those to the side. I wasn't looking their way, but they were my subjects. It's an exceptionally cunning device. It bears the affectionate name, Leica. The Leica has a lateral viewfinder. It's constructed like a periscope. I was photographing at 90 degrees.⁷

Ehrenburg's description of both his activity and his camera manifests many if not all the characteristics, assumptions, and rationales of so-called street photography. Cameras like Ehrenburg's that seemed to be focused elsewhere were used by Paul Strand in his photographs of New Yorkers, by Walker Evans for certain of his own New York pictures, and by Helen Levitt and many others. In her 1974 *Photography and Society* (first English edition published in 1980), Gisèle Freund refers as well to the Ermanox, "the first light-weight, compact camera [which] permitted photographers to venture indoors for candid pictures with the addition of a new lens.... Soon, the "secret" photograph which caught public figures unawares at work or play would become the trademark of many newspapers."⁸ Although the development of the technology for such cameras was fueled by the needs of photojournalists working for mass-cultural publications, we should note the alacrity with which art photographers seized on these cameras for the purposes of making "personal" work.

In some instances, notably with Evans and Henri Cartier-Bresson, the subterfuge was produced by the camera being hidden. Its smallness was perfectly suited for the "photographic pounce" as Cartier-Bresson described it: "I had just discovered the Leica. It became the extension of my eye, and I have never been separated from it since I found it. I prowled the streets all day, feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce, determined to "trap" life—to preserve life in the act of living. Above all I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes."⁹ One can readily find later and similar statements made by photographers and by critics, whether as description or panegyric.

While such statements invoke constantly the predatory, possessive, and aggressive aspects of the photographic act, rarely—if ever—have photographers acknowledged any ethical discomfort or indeed ethical self-consciousness about their activity. This suggests that by the 1930s, and even more so in the 50s and 60s, the visual appropriation of the urban subject in large European and American cities had become culturally permissible. Just as the law permits the representation of subjects without their knowledge or permission because it occurs in public (thereby affirming the absolute difference between the public and private spheres), so too does this photographic practice imply the absolute distinction between the photographer and his subject, the observing I/eye of the photographer as radically disjunct from what he photographs. Just as the role of omniscient narrator "disappears" the author as a particular individual, so too is the unperceived photographer occluded from the nature or content of his imagery. Despite the enormous amount of piffle in the photographic literature about the affirmation of the photographic subject's humanity, or even more dubiously, the photographers' empathetic identification with their subjects, the visual evidence would suggest otherwise.

As is already evident in *My Paris*—where the communist Ehrenburg surveys the marginal, poor, and hapless residents of the City of Light—photographs of blind people regularly appear in the work of canonical photographers of the urban subject. The photographer sees, the subject does not; this is merely an exaggeration of the social

relations implicit in this putative genre. Similarly, the penchant for photographing unconscious subjects, sleeping or drunk, is not unrelated to this power differential between the photographer who actively looks and shoots and that of the subject incapable of even returning the look.¹⁰ Such subjects obviate any need for discretion or secrecy, and, even more emphatically than others, they secure and affirm the presiding world view of the photographer—his or (very rarely) her “vision” of the urban landscape and its denizens.”

I use the masculine pronoun intentionally because with relatively few exceptions (I can think only of Helen Levitt, Esther Bubey, Lisette Model, and in certain rare cases, Berenice Abbott) so-called street photography is produced by men. In the work of Lisette Model, for instance, it is significant that most of her subjects are fully aware of being photographed, although there are exceptions. I have discussed this phenomenon elsewhere, but here it is sufficient merely to indicate that it is far more difficult for women to occupy the kind of subject position that is implicit in this kind of photographic practice. Interestingly, however, in much of the street photography considered to be exemplary of the form (and does not depict crowds) it appears that women are more frequently photographed than men. Garry Winogrand's *Women Are Beautiful*, a book version of a serial project, is perhaps the *locus classicus* of this gender preference, but it seems often to be the case with older photographers such as Louis Faurer, Leon Levinstein, Ben Shahn, and, as I will soon discuss, in Callahan's street work as well. This is, of course, an anecdotal observation, but in any event, I would hasten to add that I do not think this is because of some presumed heterosexual compulsion or “natural” attraction between photographer and subject. Rather, I would suggest that the visual capture of female subjects, like that of unconscious drunks or children, speaks to a covert, that is to say, disavowed perception of the appropriative or aggressive attributes of this kind of photographic practice. More crudely, one might say that a female subject, should she become aware of being unwittingly photographed, is less likely to punch the photographer in the face.

Turning now to Callahan's street photographs, begun in 1941 during wartime with the purchase of a 35-millimeter single reflex camera and continuing with the subsequent work of 1950–52 and the early 1960s, we should make some effort to reinsert the political and social context that is so conspicuously absent from most commentary and criticism. In this respect, it seems obvious that the absence of any consideration of historic context parallels the same absence in Callahan's production itself. Formalist artmaking typically prompts formalist commentary, as the Callahan literature amply demonstrates when it is not primarily hagiographic. But even the most abstract or apparently “autonomous” cultural production is marked by its historical situation: the apparent absence of reference to social and political realities in Callahan's work does not mean that it transcends or escapes its embeddedness in its historical, political, and ideological environment. Absent the kind of sociopolitical reference that one finds, for example, in Robert Frank's *The Americans*, how does one locate such reference in Callahan's work?¹² Such a project requires that we consider the manifest content of the work—its motifs, themes,

and preoccupations—in terms of its unarticulated perceptions or those latent meanings that testify to its own particular historical moment. By which I mean not just those meanings arising in his response to the physical and material appearance of a city and its residents, but the larger circumstances and discursive frameworks that inform the artist's perception of these in the first place.

In other words, no matter how hermetic or insular or even abstract Callahan's work may appear as imagery, it was nonetheless the product of a white American man living and working during and after the cataclysm of World War II, and subsequently in the context of the Cold War, a period characterized by anti-communist hysteria (which had an impact on many individual photographers as well as former Popular Front entities such as the Photo League), a period of stifling conformity, social conservatism, and paranoia (albeit legitimate) about the atomic and hydrogen bombs and the ongoing arms race. Moreover, Callahan was not living an isolated existence in the boondocks but was an active participant in the milieu of art schools, the photography world and its networks, and the concomitant efflorescence of the picture press and photojournalism, all of which constituted the immediate social, cultural, artistic, and intellectual environment in which he functioned.

Furthermore, and with respect to the subject in question, the photographic representation of contemporary urban life, there is reason to consider as well not just Callahan's obvious precedents and influences such as Walker Evans, but equally, the means by which other photographers working from the 1930s through the 1950s—Ben Shahn, Sid Grossman, Leon Levinstein, Louis Faurer, Louis Stettner, and many others—had established a sort of visual lexicon of the contemporary American city, whether or not these productions were specifically known by Callahan.¹³

Initially, such an approach might seem inappropriate or counter-intuitive given that Callahan's work appears so resistant to any contextualizing analysis. Pictures made in Venice, for example, in 1957, look not radically different from those made in Chicago in the 1940s. It might thus seem that a self-consciously formalist and painstakingly developed artistic style trumps all signs of historical specificity. Nevertheless, an interrogation of certain visual tropes within the work may tell us something about precisely those larger social, cultural, psychic, and indeed political environmental realities that the work itself would appear obdurately to refuse.

Here it is apposite to note that many of Callahan's photographs featuring city dwellers focus on one or two individuals rather than depicting the collective bustle of crowds or social groupings. This is the case whether the photographs were made in Detroit, Chicago, or in Providence, Rhode Island. These bodies of work can be contrasted with much of the urban photography of the same period. In the work of Shahn et al., the city exists far more as a social space in which human density, with or without social interaction, is apparent, as is the sense of animation, energy, and actual or potential incident. This suggests that Callahan's vision of the metropolis requires the suppression of those aspects of the city that are communal, interactive, and productive of social space and social relations.

Figure 4. *Detroit*, 1942.
Image: 5.4 x 8.1 cm; mount (lightweight cream card): 20.6 x 25.6 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.132.



Figure 5. *Chicago*, 1950.
19.8 x 29.5 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.27.

Figure 6. *Chicago*, 1950.
37.9 x 46.2 cm.
Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.





Figure 7. *Detroit*, 1942.

5.3 x 8.2 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.135.

Moreover, Callahan also often presents the city without inhabitants, as in those pictures representing the blank facades of apartment buildings, whose rectangular geometries formally reiterate the picture plane. In some instances, these photographs of the built environment are jazzed up with superimpositions or multiple exposures, transforming them into quasi abstractions (fig. 2).¹⁴ More often, however, Callahan's representation of urban space, with its highly dramatic contrasts of black and white and its oppressive dark masses from which the passerby is distinguished by shafts of light, operates as a kind of stage upon which solitary individuals, more or less dwarfed by their surroundings, exist in a no-man's-land of existential isolation, much discussed in the sociological literature of the time (fig. 3). This particular image of the city has, of course, historical precedents in American photography (for example, Paul Strand's 1915 *Wall Street*), and it may well be the case that the predominant image of the city in twentieth-century American art photography tends toward the dystopic rather than the euphoric, testifying to the general perception in American culture that cities are a dubious and unnatural phenomenon.

Be that as it may, Callahan's works of this period present the city in two ways: as tableau-like expressions of an overwhelming but ungraspable built environment, or in alternative "architectural" formalist terms that deny human presence. When, however, the subject is a human one, as in his series of pictures of women pedestrians (figs. 4–8), there is a strange tension apparent between physical closeness and psychological distance, in which the in-your-face spatial proximity of the photographed women is contradicted both by the radical framing as well as by the total lack of psychological access. This, as I have earlier implied, comes with the territory. Although the close-up of a face is not itself a guarantee of the illusion of intimacy, it is in the very nature of covert and clandestine views of the unaware subject that human relatedness or any form of personal exchange is effectively stymied, because, literally, there is no relationship either within or without of the image.

Returning again to the depiction of street and city in the postwar years, it seems to be the case that even in work by photographers who were more socially or politically engaged than ever was Callahan, urban life is no less anomic in its mood, the cities photographed no less alienating. Although it is a commonplace in writing about the photography of the 1950s to contrast it with the leftist projects of the 1930s (for instance, work associated with the Photo League or later with the FSA), it is by no means clear that the political orientation of the photographer determines how the city and its occupants are imaged. In fact, the street photography of this earlier period does not necessarily declare its political engagement; this is the case certainly with Paul Strand and Ben Shahn.¹⁵ Thus while the group psychology described in David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1949) is understood to describe postwar symptoms of alienation, the evidence of street photography as early as the 1930s appears not radically different from that of the 1950s, although, as I have indicated, Callahan's has its own specificity.

In all of these instances, and as I have argued, what seems to be at stake is a certain subject position for the photographer. I refer here, of course, to the art photographer, who in this context is producing not landscape, nude, still life, or abstraction—the staple subjects of art which, by definition, declare their status as art. Here, instead of duly consecrated “artistic” motifs, the photographer poaches, so to speak, on the territory of the photojournalist, the documentarian, the magazine photographer. Thus, the necessity is to distinguish his work from these other more commercial or instrumentalized usages. In appropriating the mantle of the writer, as Ehrenburg defined his own photographic activity, it is imperative that the observing consciousness be categorically distinct from what is observed, a convention that remains fully in place in contemporary variants of this practice. How then to separate the operations and conventions of artistic street photography in general from the specific nature and determinations of a particular practitioner—in this case, Callahan?

In this regard, it is necessary to consider the work as an entity, horizontally and synchronically, which is to say that in order to better situate Callahan’s work of the 1940s and 1950s, we need to factor in his simultaneous production of landscapes, and especially the photographs of his wife, Eleanor. In other words, the opposition between Callahan’s vision of the city—alienated, inhospitable, antisocial, and oppressive—and his depiction of women subjects begins to reveal the oppositional structure of domestic or “natural” space versus public space: spouse versus stranger; elemental, sexualized body versus objectified alien body. Photographs that superimpose Eleanor’s body on a landscape, or associate it with water and vegetation—the “natural”—testify to an atavistic vision, one that not only conflates woman and nature, but implies the menace of all those aspects of the public, social, and the urban from which ultimately the subject hopes to take retreat. It would seem that these oppositions provide the matrix in which Callahan’s work unfolds, and it is perhaps here that we may identify the inscription of its historical and cultural moment.

Similar anxieties seem to hover beneath many aspects of 1950s photography, including Steichen’s 1955 blockbuster exhibition *The Family of Man*, which is structured so as to “elementalize” and essentialize all cultures and societies under the rubric “Man” or “Mankind.” But what I want to emphasize is that to the degree that one is in the world, so too is the world—in its horrors and fears no less than its pleasures and beauties—implanted within oneself as well. In this sense, Callahan’s urban subjects must be considered in the broadest purchase so that “nature,” wife and children, and abstraction become privileged subjects because they are perceived as an antidote to the collective, the mass, the social, the polyglot, and the heterogeneous. The “haven in a heartless world”: this aestheticizing and essentializing celebration of the putatively timeless and eternal (nature, motherhood, the female body, abstract forms, etc.) is very much in keeping with the quietistic and individualistic ideologies of 1950s America. In other words, Callahan’s urban subjects are collectively the ambivalently perceived “other” to the reassuring representations of nature, nude, and formal delectation that together constitute the refuge from the real.

A final point, by way of conclusion, has to do with the perennial popularity of street photography for art photographers, whose latest “stars” include Beat Streuli and Philip-Lorca diCorcia. *Autres fois/autres mœurs*, other times/other customs. Larger, much, much larger than any street photographers of the 1950s, all in color, and shaped by new technologies, including hidden strobe lights through which diCorcia’s pedestrians pass, these pictures nonetheless depend on the unquestioned presumption that individuals in public may be captured with impunity. The “art” of the photographer in these recent examples, now as then, is thought to be lodged in those formal choices, those serendipitous combinations of form and composition that make an image of people in a photograph infinitely more fascinating than the actual, visceral experience of observing them in real life. Still, the subject/object relations acknowledged and critically commented upon in the shoeshine men’s sign on Market Street remind us that notwithstanding any aesthetic alibi, and indeed, notwithstanding an individual’s personal politics, the art of photographic appropriation is never innocent, is never an act of neutral bystanding. It cannot but manifest its mooring in relations of power and mastery that are variously articulated within the image itself. Such forms of photographic practices are, by definition, never an act of community or collectivity, of inclusion or identification. They reflect a relation to the social world that is, at best, the unengaged but endlessly curious stance of the flâneur. But the flânerie of the nineteenth century, defined by men like Baudelaire, has developed in certain ways. Rather than the indifferently interested gaze of the man in the crowd, it can be now identified with the insatiability of both voyeurism and consumerism, the mastering but alienated gaze of the photographer at the subject as object. ■

- 1 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 11.
- 2 Ibid., 12.
- 3 See Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz, *Bystander: A History of Street Photography*, first paperback edition, with a new afterword on street photography since the 1970s (Boston: Little, Brown, 2001).
- 4 See Marie de Thezy and Roxane Debuison, *Charles Marville 1816–1879* (Paris: Hazan, 1994); *Thomas Annan: Photographs of the Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow, 1868–1877* (New York: Dover, 1977); and Molly Nesbit, *Eugène Atget: intérieurs parisiens: un album du Musée Carnavalet* (Paris: Éditions au Carré and Paris-Musées, 1992).
- 5 Henry Mayhew and William Tuckniss, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861).
- 6 I am indebted to the photography historian Mary Panzer for reference to this book. See Ilya Ehrenburg, B. F. Malkin, photomontage and design by El Lissitzky; translated from the Russian by Oliver Ready, *My Paris*, reprint of first edition (1933) (Paris: Edition 7L, 2005).
- 7 Ehrenburg, *My Paris*, n.p.
- 8 Gisèle Freud, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David A. Godine, 1980), 119.
- 9 Cited in Sontag, *On Photography*, 118.
- 10 See in this regard the now-classic essay of Martha Rosler, "The Bowerly in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems" in *Three Works* (Halifax: the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 1983).
- 11 I discussed this phenomenon in the essay "Reconstructing Documentary" in Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on the Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
- 12 Robert Frank, *The Americans: Photographs*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: Crossman, 1969).
- 13 See Bob Shamis, Max Kozloff, and Leon Levinstein, *Leon Levinstein: The Moment of Exposure* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995); Anne Wilkes Tucker, Louis Faurer, Lisa Hostetler, and Kathleen V. Jameson, *Louis Faurer* (London: Merrell Publishers and Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2002); Edith Tonelli, Louis Faurer, and John Cossage, *Louis Faurer: Photographs from Philadelphia and New York, 1937–1973* (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland Art Gallery, 1981); the following publications by Louis Stettner: *Early Joys: Photographs from 1947–1972* (New York: J. Ifland, 1987), *Louis Stettner's New York, 1950s–1990s* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1996), and *Louis Stettner: American Photographer, Paris* (Aachen: Suermond-Ludwig-Museum, 1997); Ben Shahn, *The Photographic Eye of Ben Shahn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); Ben Shahn and Margaret R. Weiss, *Ben Shahn, Photographer: An Album from the Thirties* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973); and Louis Faurer and Stuart Alexander, *Louis Faurer: [photographies]*, *Photopoche 51* (Paris: Centre National de la Photographie, 1992).
- 14 Certain of Callahan's epigones, such as Ray Metzger, took as their point of departure this aspect of Callahan's work, such that the city becomes the basis of a highly abstracted and emphatically un-social vision.
- 15 See in this respect Helen Gee's memoir of this period in art photography, *Photography of the Fifties: An American Perspective* (Tucson, Ariz.: Center for Creative Photography, 1980).

Figure 8. *Chicago*. 1949. 13.8 x 20.8 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 2004.27.27.





Harry Callahan: There Are Two Sides to Every Picture

David Travis

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If you ever attended a Garry Winogrand lecture you more than likely heard the photographer's standard reply to questions about what his photographs meant. Even if his comeback may have sounded like a smart aleck's dodge, it was a genuine philosophical position, full of useful truths. Whenever the question came up, the outspoken street photographer would immediately respond: "The picture's not my problem, it's yours." That was it, no discussion. Next question please. This rejoinder never failed to leave some people exasperated and some secretly gleeful.

Surely, though, he was right. After all, once a photograph is printed, published, posted on a website, e-mailed, hung in a gallery, or uncovered in an attic, it becomes something that belongs to its viewers, who are left to deal with it whether anything is known about the photographer or not.

In this regard, we can understand the photograph as kind of continental divide between two major watersheds, or, more philosophically, between two epistemic communities. The watershed that most people know best is the place in which the photograph comes into use: as a memento of personal affection, an image of evidence or reportage, an illustration, or simply an object of delectation. The other watershed is the place in which the photograph comes into being. It is not usually populated by viewers, critics, editors, curators, professors, collectors, historians, ideologues, symposium attendees, or internet surfers but rather by those few people who create images.

When viewers or critics ask artists what their pictures mean, they are usually asking for help in interpreting them. But, of course, they are asking someone who created the picture as an initial

interpretation of something else, such as a perceived fact or a personal sensation.

So viewers and critics are often asking the artist what it is like to be on the other side of the picture, that is, what goes on in his or her mind that leads to the conception and creation of the picture. This question of meaning—of interpretation or intention—is difficult for most photographers to answer with anything other than "The picture speaks for itself," or to paraphrase John Szarkowski writing about Callahan: "The way the subject became a picture is its meaning." And then there is still the clever answer that Winogrand had devised for the occasion. It was an especially hard question for Harry Callahan, who was not a smart aleck and by his own admission not a verbal person.

It is hardly an understatement to say Callahan was reticent about speaking of the meaning of his photographs. In 1946, near the beginning of his career when he was thirty-four, a 402-word statement of his was printed in *Minicam* magazine. It was not until eighteen years later in 1964, when Callahan was fifty-two, that his next major statement was published; this time the photographer mustered 520 words. In between, there were stray comments and a 1957 television interview with Aaron Siskind that is all but forgotten. That same year, there were also several new sentences among quotations from the *Minicam* piece in a *Modern Photography* article. He might have averaged more than twenty-five words per year in print, but not much more.

In 1972, a string of interviews began. This was just as a photography market was emerging and the aesthetic potential of the medium was enjoying wider public attention. These are the interviews from which we draw most of our notions about how Callahan thought and worked. And they are invaluable. By this time, however, the master was sixty years old. So we hear him speaking about

his career but already knowing how things came out. There is precious little to know from the time he was actually making his great early or mid-career photographs.

And even when we read those interviews, it is hard to find much that directly addresses the question of meaning in his photographs. But the record is not totally blank. Callahan had at least one steadfast notion: he constantly equated the taking of photographs to his attempts to understand his own life. His first published statement from 1946 says as much:

Photography is an adventure just as life is an adventure. If man wishes to express himself photographically, he must understand ... his relationship to life. I am interested in relating the problems that affect me to some set of values that I am trying to discover and establish as being my life. I want to discover and establish them through photography. This is strictly my affair and does not explain these pictures by any means. Anyone else not having the desire to take them would realize that I must have felt this was purely personal. This reason, whether it be good or bad, is the only reason I can give for these photographs.²

These are the words of a photographer who is dealing not with an amateur's pastime but with a serious compulsion. Like many other artists in the first part of their careers, Callahan pursues his art in an attempt to satisfy a craving to discover both the world around him and the self within. From Callahan's later statements, it appears that his earlier exploration of the world in front of his camera was not a game of blindman's buff. He says in one interview that in searching for subjects he was also looking for ideas about picture making.³ And this is something he did through his entire career.

Targeting a picture-making idea in advance is also likely the best way for a photography professor to conduct a class. It may, of course, lead the student to a mechanical illustration of some premise, but it can also lead to stimulating results. Beginning with a thesis or premise related to making photographs was a pedagogical method that was developed and refined at the Institute of Design. But the school's visual exercises were just that and not intended to seek any higher meaning.

If we go back in Callahan's career just a few months before his first published statement, we find another statement thinly disguised as a search for the meaning of life, one that is pleasantly innocent and touchingly naive. In an application for a photography fellowship at the Museum of Modern Art Callahan writes in life affirming terms:

My project could only be to photograph as I felt and desired: to regulate a pleasant form of living; to get up in the morning—free, to feel the trees, the grass, the water, sky or buildings, people—everything that affects us; and to photograph that which I saw and have always felt. This, I know, is not a definite project because life itself is not definite, but it could be the part of a lifetime project to help keep photography alive for me and with the hope that it would be alive for someone else.⁴

Now, anyone sitting on a review panel today would reject such a proposal outright (it was, in fact, rejected by MOMA in favor of one by Helen Levitt). But, this program is essentially what Callahan did in his long career with unwavering faithfulness, not as a manifesto but as a habit.

This attitude, being so imprecise and profoundly unrealistic, would not seem the right tool for a professional photographer or teacher. No one was more doubtful than Callahan himself. Thus, it is not difficult for us to imagine the heightened level of anxiety he must have felt in having so little to say about his work when the famous and loquacious László Moholy-Nagy interviewed him for the teaching job at the Institute of Design in the spring of 1946. As Callahan later recalled, Moholy asked:

'Why did you do that?' and I looked real dumb. And he said 'Oh, I only asked—I don't think it matters if it's only for a wish.'⁵

The answer Moholy provided for the insecure photographer must have been a huge relief; Callahan remembers it in his uncomplicated vocabulary as "terrific." Moholy must have sensed in Callahan an artistic talent willing to see what he could make of the world when facing it with a camera. And this may remind Winogrand lecture veterans of another of his infamous answers, this one countering a similar question: "Why did you take a picture of that?" Answer: "To see what it would look like photographed." Again, Winogrand's response seemed like a trick answer and it produced the same smattering of exasperation and glee. But again, his answer does have philosophical merit as an epistemological statement about using a medium that allows one to examine judgments that one is forced to make from visual appearances alone.

Callahan's last published interview was printed in 1999, a few months after his death. The actual interview, with John Paul Caponigro, had taken place two years earlier. And even though it occurred a full half century after that first statement written for MOMA, Callahan maintains his simple faith in his own quiet, personal approach. The interview was conducted after Callahan had suffered a stroke, resulting, understandably, in even fewer words. Here he responds to a question about one of his most substantial and sustained series, the photographs of his wife, Eleanor. He said:

She was innocent and I was innocent. I just try to photograph what I like. I thought she was beautiful. I intuitively photographed her. All my photography is innocent.⁶

There is a calm, reassuring certainty to his statement. When one is young, certainties are not always calm nor do they guard artists from generating polemical thought patterns. When they occur in old age, after decades of life experience, perhaps even a lifetime of looking for meaning, they have the sheen of wisdom around them, and consequently we want to believe it all the more. If Callahan was laconically eloquent in addressing the value of his work during the time his first great photographs were made and utterly silent throughout his career



Figure 1. *Eleanor, Chicago*. 1953.
13.9 x 17.8 cm.
Harry Callahan Archive 79.110.6.

Figure 2. *Chicago*. 1950.

19.8 x 29.5 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.27.



about what he thought he actually discovered about life, it does not mean we are left merely with his photographs as our problem.

The fact that photographers do not determine the value of their work by how others will sort it into subject matters was brought vividly to my attention by John Coplans in the midst of a roaring cocktail party in his New York loft. We were looking at a photograph of his that happened to contain a dog. He looked at me intently and said: "Travis, the worst thing that can happen to someone like me is that some curator will come along and put my photograph in an exhibition about dogs."

Whether sorted or not, we are left with the vexing question of what any of Callahan's photographs mean for us and meant for him. We can either spin out our own meanings for them or do something just as stimulating and daring by crossing over to the other side of the pictures where the original imagining and daydreaming took place. To do this we need to hear the photographer himself and not his interpreters. For Callahan that means finding as many of his few words as we can. Because they are simple but deeply sincere, they may seem naive at first. We must, however, listen to them seriously because he has more than proven himself as an artist. Since there are so few, we need to bolster them with parallel experiences with creativity, even our own, especially our own. And we need to inform ourselves of attitudes of other creators who are superbly able to express themselves verbally. Our inquiry will be more germane to Callahan's work if we focus on those who helped to create the critical climate of the time, especially just as or before the photographer was forming his own basic ideas about this work, which would have been 1941 and several years after.

Let us start with the only other idea in Callahan's 1946 article.

The photographs that excite me are photographs that say something in a new manner: not for the sake of being different, but ones that are different because the individual is different and the individual expresses himself.

It seems a straightforward statement, characteristic of the attitude of many artists of the time. Let us, however, examine what the idea actually suggests. That very same year, the poet Wallace Stevens wrote the following in the *Yale Literary Magazine*. He was responding to the question "What do you believe to be the major problem or problems facing the young writer in America today?" He replied:

The role of the poet may be fixed by contrasting it to that of the politician. The poet absorbs the general life: the public life. The politician is absorbed by it. The poet is individual. The politician is general. It is the personal in the poet that is the origin of his poetry. If this is true respecting the relation of the poet to the public life and respecting the origin of his poetry, it follows that the first phase of his problem is himself.⁷

Stevens continues:

This does not mean that he is a private figure. On the other hand, it does mean that he must not allow himself to be absorbed as the politician is absorbed. He must remain individual. As an individual he must remain free. The politician expects everyone to be absorbed as he himself is absorbed. This expectation is part of the sabotage of the individual. The second phase of the poet's problem, then, is to maintain his freedom, the only condition in which he can hope to produce significant poetry.⁸

This idea had some longevity as a similar thought was expressed in the early 1960s by W. H. Auden:

Poets are, by the nature of their interests and the nature of artistic fabrication, singularly ill equipped to understand politics or economics. Their natural interest is in singular individuals and personal relations, while politics and economics are concerned with large numbers of people, hence with the human average... and with impersonal, to a great extent involuntary, relations.⁹

Callahan's own steadfast determination throughout his career to be a free individual confronting life is congruent to what these two great poets believed. And even if he is a bit more emotionally distant, it is not hard to imagine Callahan acting as a kind of a poet.¹⁰ In actually being great poets, Stevens and Auden are perhaps more encompassing and convincing in their words than Callahan. They throw their nets wider and deeper in describing the notion that the major quest for an artist is self knowledge and identity: as a consequence how one discovers one's own relationship to life and its confluence with nature is of ultimate concern.

Part of Wallace Stevens's poem *The Idea of Order at Key West* speaks to this subject, the artist and her identity:

It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing.
She measured to the hour its solitude.
She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,
As we beheld her striding there alone,
Knew that there never was a world for her
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.

Seeking oneself in this post-Freudian period was an activity increasingly more common for many photographers. Minor White's writing, teaching, and editing of *Aperture*, as well as the popular book *Discover Yourself through Photography* by Ralph Hattersley, illustrates the trend.¹¹ Even in journalistic work, this pursuit finds a similarly introspective voice. For instance, one of the best statements in this regard

comes in a single sentence Robert Frank wrote in 1958: "It is the instantaneous reaction to oneself that produces a photograph."¹²

Stevens and Auden also supply us with at least one explanation for the cool, disengaged, and apolitical character of Callahan's work. In one of the later interviews, the photographer recalled that, early on, he had an urge to help change the world for the better. But he understood himself well enough to know he would not turn out to be the kind of photographer that Henri Cartier-Bresson or W. Eugene Smith became.¹³ Nor could he master or sustain a dark, expressive *weltschmerz* mood the way Robert Frank could. His outlook was basically optimistic, even if he could not resist using dark shadows as a graphic backdrop for his photographs of pedestrians in Chicago's Loop. Furthermore, Callahan was shy, nonconfrontational, and comfortable staying home. He had no anarchistic tendencies and was not out to ridicule our bourgeois democracy. Those are perhaps reasons enough that he did not feel compelled to engage in political issues of his time as a photographer. Ideas about life and society came to him in a different way. His fixation was discovering what his own being was. It doesn't matter if this was a common search for identity or a sophisticated ontological quest, as it left little room for any occupation that required his talents and consciousness to be at the service of others.

Auden makes another valuable observation about being a poet of this type in the modern age and in a Western culture in which "the distinction between the sacred and the profane is not socially recognized."¹⁴ He writes:

In such cultures, the poet has an amateur status and his poetry is neither public nor esoteric but intimate. That is to say, he writes neither as a citizen nor as a member of a group of professional adepts, but as a single person to be read by other single persons.¹⁵

This notion—that one might have a small audience, even an audience of a single person, or no audience at all—is something that had crossed Callahan's mind early on. In 1977, speaking about his first idealistic ambitions in Detroit and those of his friend and fellow camera club member Todd Webb, Callahan reminisced:

...we were going to be like Van Gogh and never be recognized and just do this great stuff.¹⁶

Well, if we proceed chronologically, seeking Callahan's major published statements about his work, we are now forced to jump over a few scattered remarks in the 1950s and the television interview, jump straight over eighteen years to his 1964 statement. When we do this, we should recognize that we are also jumping over eighteen years of some of his best photography. His second major statement is actually pretty well hidden. One finds it with some difficulty on the page after plate 41 in the unpaginated deluxe monograph simply titled *Photographs, Harry Callahan*. Here Callahan does try to describe his experience as a creator of images and hints at how photographs

come into being or at least on what his mind is fixed upon when he is photographing. He wrote:

It's the subject matter that counts, I'm interested in revealing the subject in a new way to intensify it. A photo is able to capture a moment that people can't always see. Wanting to see more makes you grow as a person and growing makes you want to show more of life around you.... I do believe strongly in photography and hope by following it intuitively that when the photographs are looked at they will touch the spirit in people.¹⁷

It is probably true that most people think photographs are about that which was captured in front of the camera. Certainly, this was true in the nineteenth century, when photography's first viewers marveled at its exacting rendition—a mirror with a memory, the medium was sometimes called. Adding to this understanding a bit later was an attention to the medium itself as an essential element in understanding how a photograph was conceived and made. But in truth, that was mostly a concern of photographers and critics, as is the later notion that the meanings of photographs are predicated on ideas about the use and role of pictures. Most of the general population still links the photographic subject, as well as its meaning, to what appears in front of the camera, which some artists call the nominal subject and others refer to as the true subject. This is why Callahan always re-turned to ideas of how a medium like photography could "reveal the subject in a new way to intensify it."

Wallace Stevens, who was fixated on subject matter as a reality, states:

One is always writing about two things at the same time in poetry and it is this that produces the tension characteristic of poetry. One is the true subject and the other is the poetry of the subject. The difficulty of sticking to the true subject, when it is the poetry of the subject that is paramount in one's mind, it need only be mentioned to be understood.¹⁸

In almost any of his works, one can easily imagine Callahan thinking simultaneously about the subject and the photography of the subject. Trying to get the photography of the subject right in this way changes one's perception of the possibilities of the subject. And it is the power over such possibilities that Stevens defined as the imagination.

In a 1977 interview conducted in Tucson a year following a major retrospective at MOMA, Callahan seems to be commenting on perceiving the possibilities of things and situations:

Photography's wonderful because you can start with one idea but get lost on something else, and that's where the big thing happens. It's in the drifting off that you find something unique.¹⁹

It was perhaps unnecessary for Callahan to say why he felt the need to drift off, because he probably did so for the same reasons that most artists, poets, and musicians do: to encounter and explore the unknown.

Stevens acknowledged another reason when he wrote:

As a man becomes familiar with his own poetry, it becomes as obsolete for himself as for anyone else. From this it follows that one of the motives in writing is renewal.⁴⁰

To that outlook Auden adds something intriguing about growing and evolving as a poet:

Having spent twenty years learning to be himself, he finds that he must now start learning not to be himself.... Discovering oneself is a passive process because the self is already there. Time and attention are all that it takes. But changing oneself means changing in one direction rather than another, and towards one goal rather than another. The goal may be unknown but movement is impossible without a hypothesis as to where it lies. It is at this point, therefore, that a poet often begins to take an interest in theories of poetry and even to develop one of his own.⁴¹

Callahan, however, stuck to talking about ideas concerned with making pictures, and if he took a deeper interest in any theories about photography, he kept his thoughts to himself.

Let's examine Callahan's curious phrase "drifting off," which I see as following one's curiosity, daydreaming, or placing questions before answers. It is a technique, both fickle and irrational, that nevertheless is intended to test one's imaginative ability. "Drifting off" is perhaps the best way to face the possibilities of things and see if one can gain a power over them. In this unpredictable enterprise, if one finds the right sensation in the sound of words and their rhythms, one creates a poem. If one finds the right sensation in a vision of light and moment, one creates a photograph. Keeping this "drifting off" fresh, so it could act as a renewing stimulus, is perhaps the reason Callahan felt it necessary to try out so many ideas and series, as well as so many photographic formats and techniques. It was a way to "churn myself up," as Callahan once said.⁴² But unlike assignments at the Institute of Design, these so-called experiments were not undertaken for their own sake or to improve his technical dexterity. When he thought about his current and past work in a 1983 interview, he came back again to his steadfast goal of personal growth, saying:

I had little interest in experiments. They were not my way. I was doing photography to find something—which is different.⁴³

When Callahan said that wanting to see more makes one grow as a person, we sense that for him the act of seeing had become not just a passive contemplation or amusement but rather an active personal and experiential event. This way of thinking conjoins the growth of his

consciousness with the reality of the outside world. How one's being is or is not connected to the world outside of one's own consciousness is, of course, an idea that may be as antique as philosophy itself. In photography, however, this notion had a profound role in how photographs came into being only a decade before the beginning of Callahan's career. This transcendental mind-set was heralded most conspicuously in Alfred Stieglitz's late career in the 1930s, especially in the photographs he called *Equivalents*. Although the younger generation around Walker Evans opposed it, the attitude survived and flourished in the work of Minor White, who searched various belief systems, and of Ralph Hattersley, who used psychology to substantiate metaphysical, even religious, approaches to photography. In a much less emphatic mode and in a somewhat disguised form, it lingers in Callahan's photographs. But this was an era dominated by the growing presence of documentary photography, photojournalism, and an appreciation of what appeared to be objective vision. Even though curators and critics have often slotted Callahan into that lineage, if one listens carefully to what the photographer said about his own work in all the various interviews, he escapes such categorization in the end.

When we read his 1979 interview, we see that religious ideas had long ago been dismissed and did not seem to dominate Callahan's approach to the world. He says:

My mother was rather religious, and I grew up believing in Christian humanity. I thought I should help mankind in some way. I had a friend, an Italian count, who had grown up in Paris and who was somewhat sophisticated. He talked me out of religion, and I wanted something to fill that space. When I look back I realize that I benefited from him somehow. When photography came along, I thought I would benefit from it, too. This is the way your life receives direction, through this kind of search to fulfill need.⁴⁴

One is tempted to say that we know Callahan better because photography stepped in when religious ideas were no longer meaningful to him. But in the 1999 interview, the photographer gives us a different clue:

I was religious ... My friends talked me out of it. I have a religious outlook because of my early days.⁴⁵

And perhaps his residual "religious outlook" is what helps separate Callahan's work from the multitude of photographers who either on their own or through his instruction at the Institute of Design began their careers in a stimulating but formalistic way devoid of much metaphysical conviction.

Let's now listen again to part of Callahan's first statement made fifty years before his last published interview:

I am interested in relating the problems that affect me to some set of values that I am trying to discover and establish as being my life. I want to discover and establish them through

photography. This is strictly my affair and does not explain these pictures by any means.²⁶

But, of course, it does, once we recognize there are two sides to every picture.

So let us now return to our paradigm of the photograph being a divide between two epistemic communities. One can imagine an argument from the viewer's side of the picture that when the picture comes into being it does so because the photographer already has a purpose or a use in mind for it that the viewer sees as his or her own. This is as if the photographer were just a facilitator and not the creator. This view can link us, on one hand, to that early description of photography being the "pencil of nature," and, on the other hand, to the postmodernist notion that a work of art does not require an author.

I am not going to argue whether the photographer is a discoverer and not a creator or whether the viewer is the true possessor of the picture. My inquiry is into the state of affairs on the creator's side of the picture at the time Callahan was pondering what kind of photographer he would be. As an amateur free of professional demands and then guided after 1941 by the example of Ansel Adams, Arthur Siegel, and later on Alfred Stieglitz, Callahan seems to be pondering the idea that works of art conceived of and made without practical purpose or specific meaning could still hold significant value. It was a kind of revelation for him. In 1993, at the age of 81, he reminisced:

Ansel talked with reverence about classical music and Stieglitz. So, I started collecting classical records and reading all I could about Stieglitz. I was powerfully moved by the music and what I learned about Stieglitz and his following. This was my first real introduction to fine art. I was inspired by Stieglitz's photographs and writing and eventually went to New York to see him. It was a slightly difficult experience but very worthwhile.²⁷

But perhaps it is not quite meaninglessness that characterizes the work of art in Callahan's mind as much as the medium not having to conform to some notion of utility. Of course, this was hardly a new idea. In an imaginary Dublin of 1916 we read James Joyce's celebration of art's uselessness through the voice of Stephen Dedalus, who as a young artist is also forming his own aesthetic theories.

The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographic or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing.²⁸

Wallace Stevens said something similar twenty years later in a 1936 lecture at Harvard University:

When we find in poetry that which gives us a momentary existence on an exquisite plane, is it necessary to ask the meaning of the poem? If the poem had a meaning and if its explanation destroyed the illusion, should we have gained or lost? ²⁹

Before the exquisite plane soars too far off into some metaphysical realm, it may be refreshing, for a brief moment, to visit our ideas on another discipline, one famous for its severe rationalism: mathematics.

In 1940, at the end of a productive career, G. H. Hardy wrote a booklet titled *A Mathematician's Apology* in which he stated that his kind of mathematics (he was a number theorist) "must be justified as art, if it can be justified at all."³⁰ Speaking from the creator's side of the equation, he addressed the question of utility. And surprisingly, in a field that most of the world sees as the one great universal and useful language of science, we discover a surprising parallel to the ideas that Callahan was then about to absorb as a photographer.

The 'real' mathematics of the 'real' mathematicians, the mathematics of Fermat and Euler and Gauss and Abel and Riemann, is almost wholly 'useless' ... It is not possible to justify the life of any genuine professional mathematician on the ground of the 'utility' of his work.³¹

I believe that mathematical reality lies outside us, that our function is to discover or observe it, and that the theorems which we prove, and which we describe grandiloquently as our 'creations' are simply our notes of our observations.³²

For me this Platonic statement about the uselessness of mathematical creation or observation aptly describes Callahan's activity as a photographer, that is, an artist who makes photographs to test his power over the possibility of things, almost as if he were looking for or believing in ideal forms. This testing and inquiry results in a discovery not always of Callahan's deeper self, but an observation of his curiosity, that is, his imagination. And his photographs are, both for him and for us, the evidence of that imagination at work. If any of Callahan's resulting photographs were useful to anyone else on the other side of the picture, it was purely a fortuitous result. Thus, it is good for anyone on the viewer's side of the picture, equation, or poem to keep in mind that if we discern a useful appendix to such creations, it is still not the reason that many of the photographs, theorems, or verses were brought into being, not in the case of Callahan, or in the case of G. H. Hardy, Wallace Stevens, or W. H. Auden.

It seems to me that John Coplans, whether lit up or sober, could speak with authority from either side of the picture, as Wallace Stevens could speak from either side of a poem. If certain artists, poets, musicians, and photographers (perhaps excepting our beloved Harry)



Figure 3. *Cattails against Sky*. 1948.

Images approx. 5.8 x 5.6 cm each.

Harry Callahan Archive 79.29.11.

are able to do this in depth, it should be an encouragement to any one of us too comfortably residing on just one side of the work of art to get up and move. Viewers, critics, and curators visiting the creator's side of the picture need to ask not only how photographs were made, but also why they came into being. We need to learn to listen to those who attempt to tell us about those indescribable moments of "drifting off," when ideas can chance upon the wonderment of a new visual form. We also need to leave the security of our own expertise and risk a visit to the other side. Such a journey can, at least, give us all a clue why an enormous talent like Harry Callahan could be satisfied with a photograph and feel it had meaning even if it were just taken as a wish. ■

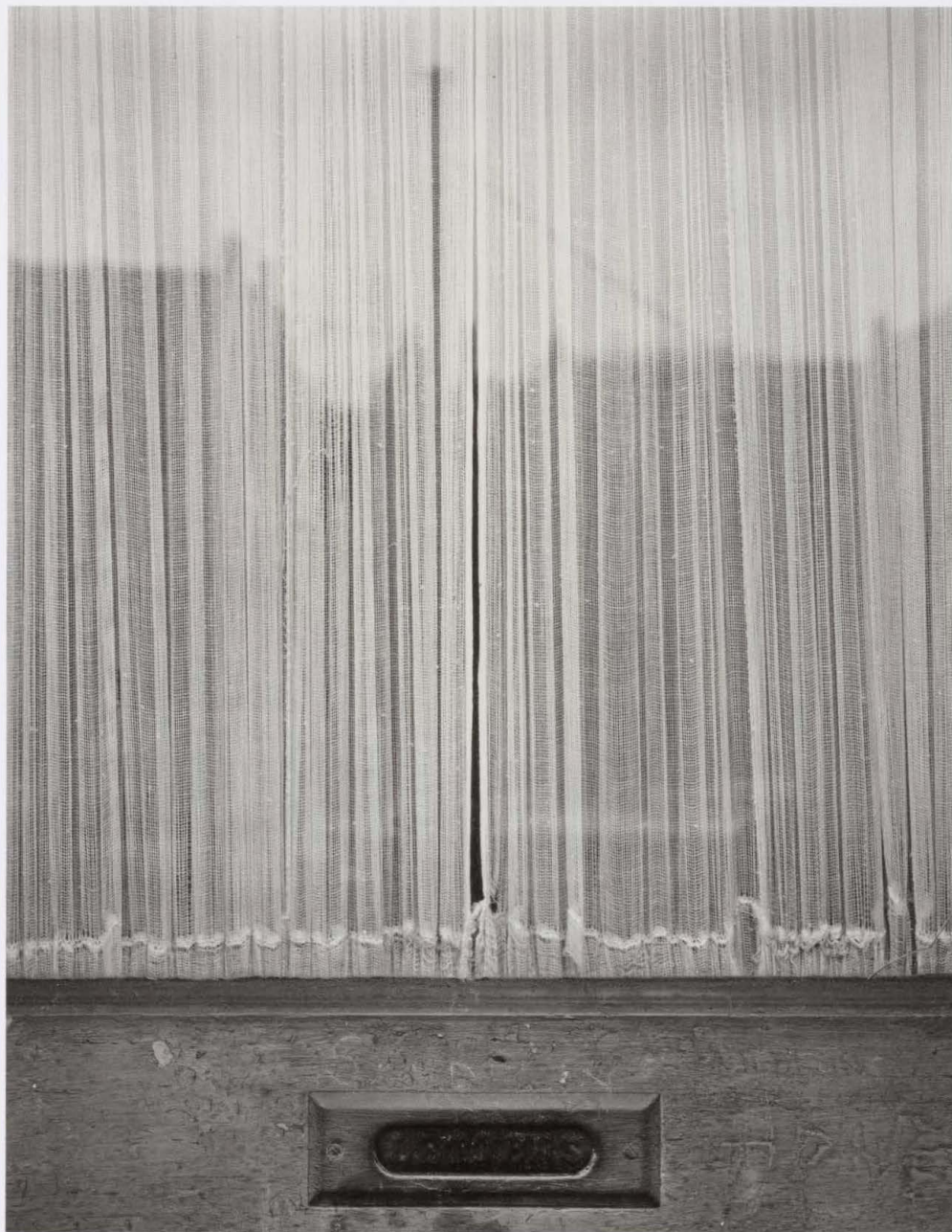
- 1 John Szarkowski, *Callahan* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 15. The text reads: "Callahan reminds us that the subject is not something given but something earned, not a starting point but the stopping place. It is the meaning of the picture."
- 2 Harry Callahan, "An Adventure in Photography," *Minicam Photography* 9, no. 6 (February 1946), 28–29.
- 3 "Interview with Harry M. Callahan, Tucson, February 22 and March 2, 1977," by Harold Jones and Terence Pitts, videotapes, Harry Callahan Archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson. Edited transcriptions have been published in Keith F. Davis, *Harry Callahan Photographs: An Exhibition from the Hallmark Photographic Collection*, exh. cat. (Kansas City, Mo.: Hallmark Cards, 1981) and as "A Life in Photography" in Carlos Collonet, *Harry Callahan*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació la Caixa, 2000).
- 4 Harry Callahan application for a photography fellowship at the Museum of Modern Art, in Szarkowski, *Callahan*, 15.
- 5 Harry Callahan, "Harry Callahan, 1912–1999: An Interview with John Paul Caponigro," *Camera Arts*, 3, no. 3 (June–July 1999), 12.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 7 Wallace Stevens, "Response to an Enquiry" in *Yale Literary Magazine* (Spring 1946), in *Wallace Stevens. Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 814.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 W. H. Auden, "The Poet and the City," in *The Dyer's Hand* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 84.
- 10 *On My Eyes*, published by the poet Jonathan Williams in 1960, pairs poetry by Larry Eigner with photographs by Callahan. Sherman Paul, a literary critic, wrote the introduction to the Museum of Modern Art's first Callahan publication, in 1967.
- 11 Ralph Hattersley, *Discover Yourself through Photography: A Creative Workbook for Amateur and Professional* (New York: Association Press, 1971).
- 12 Robert Frank, "A Statement," *U.S. Camera 1958* (New York: U.S. Camera Publishing Co., 1957), 115.

- 13 Jain Kelly, ed. *Nude Theory* (New York: Lustrum Press, 1979), 29.
- 14 W. H. Auden, *Making, Knowing, and Judging: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 11 June 1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 54.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 "Interview with Harry Callahan, Tucson."
- 17 Harry Callahan, statement in *Photographs: Harry Callahan* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: El Mochuelo Gallery, 1964), unpag., in Szarkowski, *Callahan*.
- 18 Wallace Stevens, "The Irrational Element in Poetry," a lecture delivered at Harvard University, December 8, 1936, in Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 785.
- 19 "Interview with Harry Callahan, Tucson."
- 20 Stevens, "The Irrational Element in Poetry."
- 21 Auden, *Making, Knowing, and Judging*, 52.
- 22 "Imprint," interview with Aaron Siskind, 1957 for WTTW Chicago. Videotape from a film in the collection of the Chicago Historical Society is in the Department of Photography, the Art Institute of Chicago.
- 23 Harry Callahan, *Harry Callahan and His Students: A Study of Influence* (Atlanta: Georgia State University Art Gallery, January 1983).
- 24 Kelly, ed. *Nude Theory*, 29.
- 25 Callahan, "Harry Callahan, 1912–1999: An Interview with John Paul Caponigro," 8.
- 26 Callahan, "An Adventure in Photography," 28–29.
- 27 Harry Callahan, "Editor's Note," in Harry Callahan, ed., *Ansel Adams in Color* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 7.
- 28 James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Everyman's Library, 1991), 256–57. This book first appeared in 1916.
- 29 Stevens, "The Irrational Element in Poetry," 786.
- 30 G. H. Hardy, *A Mathematician's Apology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 139.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 119–18.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 123–24.

Figure 4. [Chicago], ca. 1949.

24.2 x 19.2 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.77.





Lynne Harrison. *Harry Callahan*, 1966.

12.6 x 13.7 cm.

Gift of the Artist 77.48.3.

© Lynne Harrison.

Talking with Harry

Introduction: Douglas R. Nickel

Presenter: Harold Jones

DOUGLAS R. NICKEL was the director of the Center for Creative Photography from 2003 to 2007. He is now a professor at Brown University.

HAROLD JONES is Professor Emeritus of the School of Art Photography Program at the University of Arizona. He has been a curator at the George Eastman House; first director of LIGHT Gallery, New York; first director of the Center for Creative Photography; and first coordinator of the Photography Program, School of Art, University of Arizona. He is a continuing student of photography.

DN As an institution that collects, preserves, interprets, and presents the archives of major photographers, the Center for Creative Photography was founded upon a premise that is, we might say, singularly monographic. The relative strengths and weaknesses of the monographic approach in art-historical scholarship can be debated, of course. But on the plus side, talking about the life and work of individual practitioners has several built-in advantages. As individuals ourselves, we can readily relate to the life of another in a way that we don't always relate to socioeconomic or theoretical abstractions. This identification provides an effective way into the work of an individual and even into those very same abstractions, as clearly biography and theory are not inherently mutually exclusive approaches. This symposium affords us the opportunity to hear about Harry Callahan from both perspectives: as the subject of intellectual analysis and as a real person known to other real persons—several of whom are in the room. Putting the two together, discovering how our analysis and generalizations might be confirmed or denied by primary sources and first-hand witnesses is what makes original research so exciting. But I think it goes without saying that this is, at best, an operation of historical salvage. And we can never escape the regret of not having Harry in the room with us today to respond to our questions and assumptions himself. In response to that collective desire to recover what we may from the horse's mouth, it's with great pleasure that I introduce to you now my friend and colleague, Professor Harold Jones. Harold, as most of you know, was the founding director of the Center in 1975 and knew Harry and his family even

before coming here through his pioneering efforts at New York's LIGHT Gallery, and evidently through a motel room in Rochester, New York (see Linda Connor anecdote,

pages 54–55). The Center's inaugural show in May of 1975 featured the work of our first five archive photographers, including of course, Harry, who came out to Tucson for the opening. Harold went on from the Center to launch the studio photography program at the University of Arizona, and after teaching in it for more than a quarter century, he retired and I am happy to say came back to the Center, where he has been instrumental in helping Amy Rule and Britt Salvesen organize materials in the archive for this Callahan show and book and where he continues to mastermind our newly revitalized oral history project called Voices of Photography. To demonstrate just how invaluable the creation of oral history and photography can be, Harold will now present footage from what we might think of as the Rosetta Stone of Callahan interviews, as he'll explain in a program he has titled "Talking with Harry."



Harold Jones in the Center auditorium introducing footage of his 1977 interview of Callahan.

HJ When the Center started, in order to make it an institution that had what I call proximity devices sort of built into it, we tried to think of things that an institution that studied the life of photographers should have. And I thought one thing that was really important would be to have a visual, oral history. So the first time we did the tapes, I had to borrow a videotape, half-inch reel-to-reel deck to videotape Minor White in a workshop where we had people who came expecting to work with Ansel Adams. Minor had them in a room taking off their shoes, walking around the room blinking their eyes, imagining they were a camera. That's up in the archives on half-inch reel-to-reel.¹ There are about nine hundred and fifty to a thousand videotapes now because every lecture that's ever been given at the Center is on videotape. At the beginning, we did individual interviews with almost everyone who came through the Center. The one you're going to see today is a thirty-minute version of eight hours of interviews with Harry in February 1977.² The other person in the interview with me is Terry Pitts, who was the Center's registrar at the time. I found it kind of inconvenient to lug around this half-inch reel-to-reel tape recorder and the camera, and also I knew nothing about video, but I knew we had to have this oral history and there was no one to do it. We didn't have any money to do it. I taught myself to do video, so it's pretty clumsy. I had to figure something else to do. We found on campus a room that was doing math lectures and videotaping them so the students could play them back later. There was a camera in the back with a camera person and a camera in the ceiling for photographing down for the math teacher when they would do their formulas. It was perfect for our purposes, although the University wasn't quite sure about this at the beginning. But we spoke to them a few times and convinced them of the earnestness of our cause and that we would pay for the tape. And that's one of the beginnings of the Center's oral history, which now, thanks to Doug Nickel, Britt Salvesen, and Amy Rule, we're revitalizing.

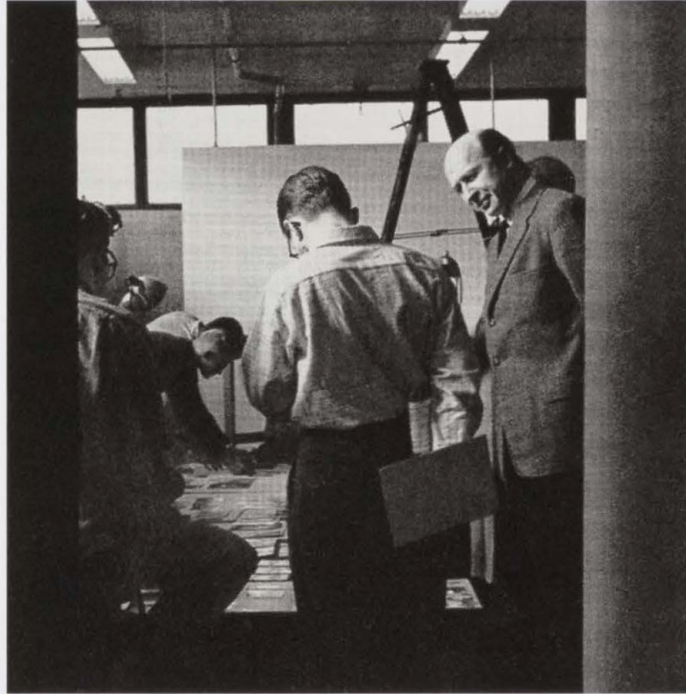
I'm amazed that I'm here today, thirty years later, to show you this tape, to tell you the truth. So, I guess how we started out, small and modestly at the beginning with the Center, seems to have turned out very well, don't you think? This is in thanks and in tribute to the staff of the Center, who really are very dedicated people, helping all of you meet the photographer who put the word *creative* in the words on the front of this building. 📷

¹ Tape 75:008 is available for viewing in the CCP library.

² "Interview with Harry M. Callahan, Tucson, February 22 and March 2, 1977," by Harold Jones and Terence Pitts, videotapes, Harry Callahan Archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson. The portion presented at the Callahan symposium, tapes 77:001–008, is available for viewing in the CCP library.

The Center auditorium during "Talking with Harry" presentation.





Harry Callahan with students.
Institute of Design fall 1957 course catalogue.
Collection of Joseph P. Sterling.

Callahan as a Teacher: His Legacy Viewed by His Students

BS Harry Callahan began teaching in 1946 when he joined the faculty of the Institute of Design in Chicago. This program, founded by László Moholy-Nagy, proved to be a congenial environment for Callahan, who, beginning in the early and mid-1940s, had pursued Bauhaus-type experiments independently and with Arthur Siegel in Detroit. Callahan helped shape an incredibly important photography program at the ID, based on a foundation course and culminating in a thesis project. In 1961, he accepted an invitation to establish a program at the Rhode Island School of Design. Callahan had quietly established a reputation in the field and his presence at RISD attracted a variety of talented students. Like many artists, he had mixed feelings about teaching, sometimes doubting his abilities, but nonetheless giving generously to his students. Today, I'm welcoming four former Callahan students.

KJ Something came to me recently: Dirty Harry and Harry Callahan had a lot in common—they both did a lot of shooting.

My first contact with Callahan was through publications. I was a student of Minor White's, and he would show us copies of *Aperture*. I saw a few of Callahan's works there and in a publication from the American Society of Magazine Photographers. I really admired him very much. Minor White told me there was a scholarship available at the Institute of Design. I applied for it, and then I learned Callahan was there along with Siskind. I didn't get the scholarship, but I went anyhow. I had the GI bill, which helped pay the tuition. Harry had just returned from the Graham Foundation grant when he spent a year in France and other parts of Europe. He was a very warm and nice person, along with Siskind, and I was pleased to be there. They made me feel very welcome.

MODERATOR Britt Salvesen

PANELISTS Linda Connor, Jim Dow, Kenneth Josephson, Ray K. Metzker

LINDA CONNOR studied with Harry Callahan at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she earned a BFA in 1967. She went on to earn an MS in photography at the Institute of Design in 1969. Connor is widely exhibited and has been a professor in the Photography Department of the San Francisco Art Institute since 1969.

JIM DOW studied with Harry Callahan from 1965 through 1968 at the Rhode Island School of Design, where he earned a BFA in graphic design and an MFA in photography. He has exhibited widely and has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Dow teaches photography, the history of photography, and contemporary art for Tufts University at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and has also taught at Harvard and Princeton Universities.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON studied photography with Harry Callahan at the Institute of Design, where he received an MS degree in 1960. Josephson was an instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for more than thirty-five years before retiring in 1997. During his career, he was awarded a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation as well as two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1983), the Art Institute of Chicago (1999), and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2001).

RAY K. METZKER studied photography under Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind at the Institute of Design, where he received an MS degree in 1957. Metzker's work has been collected by more than sixty museums worldwide.

BRITT SALVESEN is Curator and Interim Director at the Center for Creative Photography. She is the author and curator of *Harry Callahan: The Photographer at Work* (2006).

LC Like Ken, I knew a bit of Harry's work before I went to RISD. My high school art teacher had suggested RISD, and Callahan as an instructor. I'd also seen his few pictures in *The Family of Man*, which was the only photo book I owned. Because RISD required a foundation course the first year, I was very frustrated that I couldn't start doing photography more seriously. But when I finally got a beginning class, Harry was teaching it. I was very precocious in my desire to spend my life being a photographer. Not that I'd done very much of it, but I just felt that this is what I would be doing. And even though I was a miserable technician and botching up all these assignments, he gave me a sense that I had faith in picking that path. And I just love him forever for that.

RM My beginning's a little different. I had just come out of the service, and per chance, I met a faculty member of the Institute of Design. I had a background in photo and I wanted to have a chance to explore it further without going to work for a commercial photographer. So, this faculty member said, "You're interested in photography? You want more? You've got to go to the Institute of Design. There is a wonderful faculty there: Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind." And I'm going, "Oh, yeah?" But I soon made contact with the school and went for an initial interview. Harry was in his usual dress of a tweed jacket and open shirt, not saying too much, letting Aaron do most of the talking. They came to the conclusion that I should submit a portfolio. When I came the second time, they looked at it and ended up saying, "We'd like you to come in the fall." It turned out I was the only matriculating graduate student. At that time, the Institute of Design had just moved from the near north of Chicago. When I saw the department for that initial meeting, they were just putting it together. They didn't have the windows blacked out, and the darkrooms were just barely set up. The department at that time was very small—possibly six to eight photo majors. In the beginning, Harry would call the shots on some things and he'd say, "Well, I think what we want to do is have you take a course, sit in with Aaron." At one of our first meetings, he said, "I know you can make pictures. You have a background in photography. But I think it's really important that you do the foundation problems." We met every other week, at which time I would have completed the problem he had given me and then there'd be conversation. He'd say, "Now I think maybe you should try this," and so forth. My relationship with Harry was purely a conversational one, in that he was not an academic, he didn't have the approach that one would find in most institutions. He was casual and chatty, and a lot of things unfolded as we went along.

JD I'm going to appropriate a Benjamin Disraeli quote that Edward Said used as the epigram to *Orientalism*: "The East is a career." I'd like to readopt it. Photography is a career. The combined mass of Guggenheim and National Endowment Fellowships and other prestigious and meretricious bursaries for practice, research, and publishing; the enormous range of accomplishments and curatorial activities; scholarly investigations; monographs and anthologies, sponsored, edited, and in print; critical articles and reviews generated; exhibitions mounted, traveled, and archived; editions collected, donated, and exhibited. Students taught and mentored and graduated and on and on and on. This room fairly creaks under the wealth of the great and the good. And, to use a phrase that may bring a shudder to many of us, it elicits, at least from where I sit, shock and awe. In reverse order, awe, because this is truly an extraordinary gathering to celebrate, honor, and evaluate an extraordinary human being, Harry Callahan. I'm privileged to participate and I treat my invitation with such a degree of seriousness that I scurried back to my hotel room after the keynote address to type out these lines in response to the velvet imperative to truly examine the issues that were articulated with such disjointed clarity by my honorable colleague [Peter Schjeldahl], the representative from North Dakota and Chelsea. But after all is said and done, and I mean that in a complimentary way, the real thousand-pound elephant sitting in this room is shock. Shock at what has evolved in only forty years. Shock that we have all been able to do what we have done, relatively unencumbered by the difficulties and challenges and pitfalls that Eleanor and Harry faced in their own lifetimes. Shock that the field, art photography, that was once the territory of persona non grata from the grail of the fine arts, now has a first-class seat at tables of such disparate hosts as the Getty Foundation, Princeton University, Andrea Rosen Gallery, and Yaddo to name a few. What happened? Well, part of that, of course, is Pax Americana. Part of it is a cheap alternative to apex pricing. Part of it is the decline of the textual in the favor of the visual, and part of it is

that photography has been, at least prior to dependable video, the most accessible next-door pulse of the artistic imperative. And most importantly, Harry Callahan and people like him, including myself and my colleagues all about me, have labored to make that available to a plethora of undergraduates for the better of two or maybe now almost three generations. I'm reminded of a conversation I had with the Dean of Liberal Arts at the university where I work. She was and is a respected professor of English and I am a lecturer in visual and critical studies. We were discussing the swelling imbalance between the number of students taking expository writing and literature courses and those wanting to do studio art. When I offered the notion that the visual has now gained primacy over the textual, she, to her credit, agreed—but stonewalled because of loyalty to long-employed lecturers in introductory English. She refused to lay them off to employ art instructors. None of this was anticipated by Eleanor and Harry Callahan. In fact, most of us came to study with Callahan at a time when the field offered little, indeed no clear opportunities. We were certain that we would find a place in the world, but we were unclear as to what it was. Almost universally unsuited for much, we gathered around Eleanor and Harry as role models that were only vaguely defined at least in practical terms. We knew that whatever we were first directed toward—business, design, greeting cards, medical school, politics—just wasn't on at the moment. And yet we were strangely confident that the economy would hold and give us sanctuary in some fashion. That it did so is no credit to ourselves, and I have to wonder had it not, just how many of us in the august hall would be here today having done what we have done. I have absolutely no idea.

BS I'd like some or all of you to comment on your area of concentration when you were a student: how did you arrive at it, how did you achieve it, and what was Callahan's role in that process?

KJ I went to undergraduate school at RIT in Rochester, New York. And I had started working with multiple exposure, which was rather frowned upon there. But then I found out that Harry had done extensive work with multiple images. That was another reason I chose to go to the Institute of Design.

It's hard to separate Harry from Aaron. Harry would indicate a strong image that I might show. And then Aaron would explain what Harry meant. I finally decided to do my thesis on an exploration of the multiple image. Once in a while I assisted Aaron, and one year I taught the foundation course with Linda as my assistant. The first assignment dealt with learning about the materials and light. So I explained how to make a photogram. The students came into the darkroom, and one student balled up a piece of paper and just crushed it. And then he set it on fire, which provided the light, which exposed the paper. And then he put it out in the developer. The rest of the students weren't too happy about it. But it was a wonderful, spontaneous approach. And the result was very interesting. It had a texture to it because it had been crumpled. It was charred and introduced some color, and it was irregular. And it was extremely successful. That's the kind of student we had.

JD When I was finishing up my undergraduate work, I asked Harry what I should do next and he said, "Oh, just go study with Aaron." So that's what I did. We had the regular assignments that first year, which I tried to get out of as quickly as I could. They didn't suit me very well. And then, slowly I began to develop not a style, but a kind of approach to photography. It began to be a little bit clear my final year at RISD. I can look back and see some glimmer of clarity. At the time, I was probably lost in the woods. But I have to give Harry tremendous credit for whatever half-baked thing I came up with to have the patience to address the pictures seriously and to really look at them. Obviously he didn't always like them, but he put up with them and when you did have one that was halfway successful, he let you know that—and not necessarily very articulately. He tended to be, at least from my perspective, kind of shy and awkward. I don't remember him ever lecturing us. It was much more individual. We'd often meet in the photo lab instead of a regular classroom and you'd have a pile of work and he would go through it. I'd get almost more out of him tapping at things and pointing at parts of the picture than anything he could have described. But he'd tell you technical things, if it was printed with too much contrast or there's not enough detail or you didn't get the focus right or something. But if he liked something, he would tap at it or point at it. And often call it *nifty*.

KJ That's right, nifty.

LC Nifty. That's pretty nifty, that. Now we'd say "that works," but I don't think he used that phrase. The other phrase that he used quite often was "dumb picture." And it wasn't like it was a stupid picture. In recent years, I've been thinking about his use of that phrase. And what I like to think about it now is that he meant you cannot speak about the qualities that are in this picture: they are beyond language. For me, being a nonverbal person, [one of the ways Callahan influenced my teaching] was that I was working with somebody who I knew was really smart. But he wasn't academic: he couldn't always verbally tell you what he was about. But you

could see it in his work, you could see it in his desire to look at pictures. And that was the most inspirational. He was always good-spirited about it even though you felt he was a little uncomfortable being in the academic world, you always felt that he was happy that you were working in this field that he loved so dearly.

RM To add to his vocabulary, there was another word that I can recall. And that was *goofy*. "That's really goofy." And that was a compliment. I can remember one undergraduate student, and Callahan would say, "He comes up with the goofiest pictures." And I wanted to help him out. Harry said, "Leave him alone, just let him go on making his goofy pictures, because there's promise in that." When I came to the school, I was primarily oriented to photojournalism, and at that time, my heroes all were over at *Life* or *Look* magazine. And when it came time, toward the end of the first year, to propose a thesis project, I was most influenced by Eugene Smith. The school was located on 33rd Street, surrounded pretty much by a ghetto. I proposed doing a project where I would go in and photograph the conditions there. And Aaron, who was usually the one who would advise on the thesis projects, steered me away from that. There was no encouragement whatsoever. So at that point, I was somewhat at a loss to decide what to do. And then it struck me that whatever I did, I wanted to be able to explore with different cameras. I wanted to look at architecture, to photograph people, to photograph at night. I was all over the place in that sense. And the only way I could give it some form was to work in the Chicago Loop. Unfortunately for me, toward the end of my first year there, when I would be free to go on and pursue the thesis project, Harry got the Graham Foundation grant and that meant he was going to be away for the next year. So I was pretty much on my own and went out and just explored the Loop, just responding to it in different ways. Then when Harry came back a year later, I showed him the work and that more or less became my project.

BS Did you have in mind some of his pictures of that area though you weren't interacting with him at the time?

RM No. Certainly a lot of my pictures relate to Harry's. But I have to say that I hadn't seen very many of his photographs. And I don't know that I'd seen any of his photographs of the Loop. The picture of the trees in Lincoln Park was reproduced by that time frequently. So I had seen that, and I think I'd seen some pictures of Eleanor. But I didn't know those pictures.

JD This makes me think of a story. The second year I was a grad student, Harry had a kind of fire sale to raise some money to travel. And he had this deal. You could go up and look through his boxes. He would sell photographs at a very reasonable price to students. And person after person would come back and say, "You know the picture of the tree? You know the picture of this? Well, there are forty—or seventy—of them." That was my first exposure to rigor. That was my first exposure to curve balls thrown at the head, that this is the field you're playing in. And I think all of us got that exposure in different ways. It was probably the most important lesson I've ever learned.

I've always thought of Harry as being one of the ultimate Socratic people. My dad was a lawyer and his notion of life was that you always examine the opposite and learn from that, and in fact, perhaps become the opposite. Harry's method was exactly the same. He was always interested in the things he didn't do. He was always interested in people who were different from him. But that was a time when art education was basically learn from the master and become him or her. And if you learn the lines well enough, you too can join the club. The club was basically a boys' club, but it was a very definite club. And Harry did not behave that way. He and Malcolm Greer were the first people I was exposed to in my education who were like that, who actually said, "Go find your own voice, go find your own path, and we will do what we can to help you. We will challenge you." And in my case I happened to meet Walker Evans purely by chance. I realized after six weeks in gradu-

ate school, that's what I wanted to do. Stand in front of buildings and make pictures of them. And that's what I've been doing for thirty years, for better or worse. Harry was always, always supportive of that, even when it was the antithesis of what he was interested in. That resonates both from everybody's discussion of their experience with Harry, but also for all of us for the way we relate to our students. That's the idea that continues to live in honoring Harry—do not create little Jims, or little Lindas or whatever. First of all, you're not going to create. You're just going to assist.

BS What do you think he got out of teaching?

JD I think it fed his Socratic nature. He hired two teachers during the time that I was there, Richard Lebowitz and Bert Beaver, who were very different from him, and whose backgrounds and interests were very different from Harry's. He hired them specifically for that reason. The problem was that all of us showed up and there was Dad, you know, metaphorically, and we wanted to be like Dad. It was a very heady brew and difficult to fight. And Harry fought it all the time. He pushed us away but he also complained if you took pictures like him. He said, "Why would want to do that? That's goofy. It's definitely not nifty."

LC: One of the reasons Harry fit in well within the art school environment is that it gave him an income—not a high one by any means, but a steady income. And he was expected to continue being an artist. He certainly was a successful commercial photographer, but I don't think that would have allowed him the expression and activity [he needed]. Even the days he was teaching, you'd often see him in the morning downtown or with his camera on his way to school. He was very active in photography on a daily basis. It was quite impressive.

KJ That's what people would talk about at school, about how prolific he was and how active he was every day. And the word that went around among the graduate students was if you had a hot, unique idea, you better do it right away because Harry'll do it before you. Harry was mainly responsible for designing the foundation program and the undergraduate program. He approached it in such an intelligent way. He would decide what knowledge about equipment and materials was necessary for people to work creatively with the medium. So much of what went on at ID was a close examination of the materials. And out of that came a lot of creative uses. For instance, the images of weeds against the sky. He understood the range of photographic materials and how to create this blankness as a background. It almost looks like it was photographed in a studio, but you have a good feeling that it was out of doors. Or that image of Eleanor in the ballroom, where she's just a tiny, elegant figure, and created this enormous space that really was an illusion. If it wasn't there, he used that. I think in the exhibition you've seen the information about how he used a 90-millimeter lens on an eight-by-ten camera and just allowed most of it to be unexposed. That is very creative thinking about using the equipment to create an image he wanted. Most of Aaron Siskind's work was extremely abstract. Most of the time, you couldn't really identify what the subject matter was. I think he very wisely worked that way because it gave him so much freedom to print any way he wanted to. Because unless you have flesh tone or cement or something like that, you're not bound to reproduce it as it is in reality.

LC My last year at RISD, Jim and Emmet and a whole bunch of us took a trip up to Eastman House, where Harold [Jones] was a junior curator. And I learned from Harold that he hadn't met Harry before that trip. Harold came over to the motel where we were all settling and we were in Harry's room. And there was some drinking going on.

RM No.

LC Yes.

RM I'm shocked.

LC Yes, and so it was getting on in the process of that, and Harold had this desperate question that finally he was able to bring out. He asked Harry how to be a great photographer. Harry thought for a minute, and he wasn't being flip. This is the scary part. He said, "You just have to be like Beethoven."

JD Deaf?

LC That was it, tough challenge. Deaf or not, you just have to go on.

RM My experience with Harry was, as I say, on a one-to-one basis. We couldn't predict what we'd end up talking about. But I want to make a strong point: Harry was awash in wonderment. He would have this kind of wondering aspect about the birth of Barbara or the idea that here he was, he was teaching. You know? He'd gotten this job. He hadn't finished college; he'd probably say he was lucky. He would talk about art, and he would talk about music. I think that was a period when Beethoven was very important to him. He'd talk about meeting Steichen and being included in shows and so on. And then, of course, about making pictures. It was just the most wonderful thing that could have happened to him, and that's what he said. Kate Ware said that Harry lavished attention on something. Well I want to add one more. It was often he lavished love. I heard him come through with that on two different occasions. Once I was looking in on a sophomore class, and I guess it was going a little flat. He was at a loss of what to say and he ended up saying, "You know, if you want to make

pictures, you got to love what you're doing." [Another time] a student came in and made excuses as to why he didn't have something done or why there weren't more pictures or so on. And Harry just

looked at him and said, "I don't care about that crap." And he used that word. *crap*. And he said, "You know, if you want to make pictures, you got to love making pictures. If you don't have love for it, you don't have a chance." And it was so passionate and so clear as he addressed that student. And you know, you walk out and it's like you've just been through a hurricane or something. It was so startling. The conviction behind that was something you couldn't forget.

JD I became very interested in working in the manner of Walker Evans during the two years I was in graduate school. Harry gave me a really hard time. He kept saying, "Why, in a culture that values originality, do you want to literally go put your tripod in the marks of somebody?" which I have to admit I actually did. The questioning could get pretty in your face, literally three inches away from your face with you backed up against the refrigerator. And he got another of these grants, I can't remember which one it was, but he was going to go away for what turned out to be my final semester, so we were going to have this kind of closure class, because for those of us that were graduating, Harry was going to be gone. And suddenly he gets this phone call from Minor White, who had wanted to do this class together with his students and us. And Harry just couldn't say no. And he said to us really apologetically, "Listen, this is just the way it goes. I can't say no. We're going to have this class and the way it's going to work is Minor White is going to come down with his students and you're going to put your pictures up and he's going to look at them and talk to you and then the reverse is going to happen." Well, it turns out I was the first person. And Harry was clearly very uncomfortable with this whole set-up and he downed a couple of beers and he was sitting there and I knew him well enough that I could read the body language. He just thought this was not a great thing. So I put my pictures up, pictures of buildings, and Minor White looks at them and says, "Looks like you took them all at the same time of day." And I said, "Well yeah, actually I did." And he said, "If you were my student, I'd give you a lighting assignment so you'd understand the way light works." Harry got up out of his chair like a knife had been stuck in his back. He runs across the room. He grabs me around the shoulders. And he turns over to Minor White sort of holding me like this and he says, "He's not your student, and I wouldn't."

BS He was on your side after all.



Kenneth Josephson, Linda Connor,
Ray K. Metzker, and Jim Dow.

Wayne Miller. *Harry Callahan*, ca. 1948.

24 x 16.8 cm.

Wayne Miller Archive.

© Wayne Miller.



KJ While I was a student, we would have these gatherings at Aaron Siskind's place. And people would be coming through town like Arnold Newman or Clarence John Laughlin and Fred Sommer, you know, and so the education went beyond the school during these gatherings. One time, Art Sinsabaugh was very upset about something, probably a woman. And he went out to Aaron's kitchen and was smashing everything that was breakable and someone came out to Aaron and told him what was happening, and Aaron said "Oh, that's Art." And another time at Harry's, Fred Sommer was showing some of his work and Fred was very particular about anyone touching his work or mishandling it. So he was showing his work about the length of this table. He put the print on the wall, and people couldn't get around. There was some kind of blockage. And that was fine with him. There was a friend of Harry's who acted like he was intoxicated all the time. His name was Hugo Weber. And Hugo wanted to get a closer look at the print. Fred wouldn't bring it any closer, so he lunged across the table. And Harry grabbed Hugo and pulled him back and explained that Fred just doesn't want anything like that.

Harry was very kind to me in many ways. I remember one time I had an idea about a documentary film that I had to do within probably two or three days. It was a building that was going to be demolished, and I knew the schedule. And there was one camera at ID that I could use, but then I wanted another angle shot. I didn't know where to get another camera, so I called Harry up and he said well, I got this 16mm Bolex, you can have it. And you know, to give an expensive piece of equipment like that to a student, he took a big chance. He was very generous.

JD I got a review once that called me dumb in the honorific sense of the word, which was really pretty wonderful. And I think Harry used to look at me and just say, "Why do you always want to stand in the same place?" In a funny way, he asked me the same question that Minor White asked. I wouldn't call it a disagreement, I would call it a questioning. The arguments with Harry were about pushing you toward what you wanted to do—not

what he wanted to do. Even though on the face of it, it might seem, because of his strength of his passion for what he believed in, that he was actually trying to argue you into doing a certain thing. That's not what was going on at all. He was trying to argue you into doing what you wanted to do—making you discover it.

LC I remember Harry once saying he felt it was a good year when he got five pictures. I thought that that was an insane thing, that he could work every day and only get five pictures. Now I understand. At the time, I didn't.

JD This goes back to Harry's Socratic nature. He totally respected people who had only done five pictures in a year, if indeed the investigation merited that. You know, there's a lot of discussion now about painting in photography and the relationship between painting and photography and a lot of it doesn't make a whole lot of sense. In Harry's case, he did not work as a painter. He worked as a studio artist, which at the time meant you did assignments. You did projects. You didn't go to your studio everyday. Harry's studio might have been a street in Chicago. It might have literally been his studio, it might have been the ballroom where they lived, but it was in essence a studio art process as opposed to what I think most of us, when we came to photography, thought of as a much different thing that was oriented toward projects or assignments or stories.

RM If I can ask a question of particularly Jim, who was at RISD, how did Harry handle the meetings of the graduate students? How many students were in a group in a year?

JD I think the largest that we ever got was maybe twelve: both years would meet together so it was around twelve people.

RM And I heard that you would often meet at his house?

JD Always at his house.

RM Always? And how was that session conducted? How did it work?

JD Harry was an extremely social and sociable person, which I think people often don't quite get. He loved the company of other people on limited terms. He didn't have big parties or anything. But he was curious about people what made them tick. And the one difficulty was he couldn't say, "Would you go home now? It's late." So some people stayed really, really late. Beyond when they should have stayed. The sessions would go, you know, two or three hours and that was more than enough to cover the business at hand.

BS Would you bring pictures?

JD We brought pictures. Harry didn't lecture, but he got Dick Lebowitz to put together slideshows and then Harry would comment, which was fabulous. He would say "Oh, that's ridiculous," or whatever. It was a wonderful kind of dialogue, so in that sense, we did have formal interchanges, but for the most part it was looking at pictures and talking. He was also interested in talking about an issue. He'd say, "What do you think about this?" And we had ten or twelve people who had quite different life experiences. We weren't diverse in any sense ethnically or racially, but we were somewhat diverse in terms of social class and life experience. And that was something Harry really respected and was very interested in. ■

Edward Said, *Orientalism*
(New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).



Eleanor. Chicago. 1948.

11.3 x 8.2 cm

Harry Callahan Archive 76.31.69.

What It All Means

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KD It's a challenge to describe what Callahan did, and an even greater challenge to explain what it meant. Ultimately, I think those kinds of explanations may not be possible. They're the product of a very specific life. And that's the theme I would like each of our honored guests here to talk about.

"Photography is an adventure just like life is an adventure. If man wishes to express himself photographically, he must understand surely to some extent his relationship to life." "Harry Callahan was, as we know, a man of few words. Yet the words he used really mattered. He was also a man with a rather clear relationship to ideas. He was fascinated by the biggest and most encompassing ideas rather than strictly speaking in the mere quantity or intricacy of ideas. In this respect he was—and this is a distinction made by philosopher Isaiah Berlin—a hedgehog rather than a fox. He believed completely in the integration of thinking and doing, ideas and experience. And it is in this way that, as in art and life, we're so tightly woven together. Photography was central to Callahan's life in an utterly personal and all-encompassing way. And

yet, at the same time, in a way that corresponds with an honored, philosophical tradition. One notable example of that tradition, a peculiarly American example, may be seen in the sage of Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson. While Emerson was a complex thinker, he's famous for a celebration of self-reliance, a personal and intuitive relationship to matters of the spirit and an embrace, even a celebration of reality, the world, what he called nature. A powerful theme in Emerson's work is visuality, the integrity and the importance of seeing clearly. Emerson's most oft-quoted passage (all the quotes here are from *Nature*, published in 1836), is explicitly about the transcendent power or the idea of vision—the erasing of personal limitations in an all-encompassing act of perception. We all know this quote: "Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing. I see all, the currents of the universal being circulate through me. I am part or parcel of God." We may be a little uncomfortable with the altitude of Emerson's rhetoric

here, but his concern with the importance of seeing and of seeing freshly the common things around him is quite consistent in the rest of this and many other essays. Elsewhere in *Nature*, he writes, "the invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous and the common. What is a day? What is a year? What is summer, what is a child? What is sleep? To our blindness, these things seem unaffecting. We make fables to hide the baldness of the fact and conform it as we say to the higher law of the mind. But when the fact is seen under the light of an idea, the gaudy fable fades and shrivels. We behold the real, higher law. To the wise, therefore, a fact is pure poetry in the most beautiful of fables. The wisdom of this kind of vision results in a genuinely new understanding of the world." Again, Emerson: "The unity of nature, the unity in variety meets us everywhere. All the endless variety of things make an identical impression. A leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment in time is related

MODERATOR: Keith F. Davis

PANELISTS: Eleanor Callahan, Barbara Callahan Hollinger, Edith and Emmet Gowin, Peter MacGill

ELEANOR CALLAHAN and **BARBARA CALLAHAN HOLLINGER** are Harry Callahan's widow and daughter.

KEITH F. DAVIS—Fine Art Programs Director, Hallmark Cards, Inc., and Curator of Photography at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, in Kansas City, Mo.—worked closely with Callahan to curate two major traveling exhibitions of the artist's work: *Harry Callahan: Photographs* (1981) and *Harry Callahan: New Color* (1988). He has assisted with Callahan projects undertaken by institutions including the Fundación la Caixa, Madrid, and the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.

EMMET GOWIN is Professor of Photography in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University. He has exhibited widely and is a recipient of a Guggenheim (1974) and two NEA Fellowships (1977 and 1979). Gowin was Callahan's graduate student from 1965 to 1967 at the Rhode Island School of Design. He is married to **EDITH GOWIN**.

PETER MACGILL, Director of Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York, began working with Harry Callahan in 1973 while at LIGHT Gallery. MacGill worked with Callahan on virtually all of his exhibitions, publications, and print-publishing projects for the last twenty years of his life. Pace/MacGill Gallery also represents Robert Frank, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Chuck Close, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Misrach, and Garry Winogrand, among others.

to the whole and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm and faithfully renders the likeness of the world." From this understanding of the unity of things, we may come to a deeper, richer understanding of ourselves, of the integrity of the self and of our place in the world. Again, this new understanding comes or clearly can come from a deliberately inventive act of perception. Emerson again, "Nature is made to conspire with the spirit to emancipate us. Certain mechanical changes, a small alteration in our local position apprises us of a dualism. We are strangely affected by seeing the shore from a moving ship, from a balloon or through the tints of an unusual sky. The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air.... And a camera obscura, the Butcher's Cart, the figure of one of our own family amuse us. So a portrait of a well-known face gratifies us. Turn the eyes upside down by looking at the landscapes through your legs and how agreeable is the picture? In these cases, by mechanical means, is suggested the difference between observer and the spectacle—between man and nature. Hence arises a pleasure mixed with awe; I may say a low degree of the sublime is felt from the fact, probably, that man is hereby apprised that, whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable." This stability is the self, or at least the still point pivot in the dynamic mixture of energies that we call the self. There is a crucial reciprocity between the still point, the subjective unity, and the world. Emerson again: "The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty is solved by the redemption of the soul.... The reason why the world lacks unity and lies broken and in heaps is because man is disunited with himself." The wholeness of the world, the integrity of the self are a sense of place and identity, all these for Emerson are implicitly tied up in the act of perception, or of seeing. Callahan knew this deeply and passionately. His life was one of perception of making the world and himself new, vital, and whole through the joyful work of seeing.

PM Harry and I were friends, though he was truly the boss. I met Harry in 1973, and things were very different then. It's nice to be back at the Center and see so many of our friends from that time because we were all fighting a fight, whether it was from the support side or the making side, to get people to pay attention to photography. And you heard Harry in the interview saying he was just nuts about photography. Well that meant he spent his life doing it. And this room is filled with people who have spent their lives doing it, thinking about it, writing about it, publishing it, and showing it. It is a great contrast to what's going on in the art world today. Yesterday, Michael Kimmelman reviewed the Whitney Biennial in the *New York Times* and said there are plenty of people rooting for this latest Biennial, hoping it recalibrates the image of the art world as something other than youth besotted and money obsessed.² He went on to say, in relationship to the last Whitney Biennial, that in retrospect the show dovetailed with a gathering tsunami of newly rich, clueless collectors infatuated with bright, neatly made, vision-free art—some of it groovily retro chic. I don't think Harry was into this. In New York, a lot of time is spent talking about these issues and there are a lot of people making art, talking about art to sell. Harry was simply not about that dialogue, that discourse. He made pictures because he had to. He made pictures because he wanted to. I don't think anybody could have stood in his way. Eleanor and Barbara can talk about this, of him leaving the house in the morning to go out and make pictures. It was the fulfillment of an inner drive. He was all charged up about it and spent his life making photographs. He wanted people to understand the depth and breadth of what he'd done.

Shortly after Harry died, Barbara and I went down to his studio to look, to bring order perhaps, and to try to make sense out of it. The studio was a very simple apartment down the hall from where he and Eleanor lived, and it was filled with boxes. It was filled with posters chronicling his exhibitions. Harry took great delight in seeing his pictures enlarged so big. And as we went through the boxes, we began to see that Harry had

utilized a rudimentary organizational system that sometimes worked and sometimes didn't. Among the boxes was one with a big Post-it note on it in his post-stroke handwriting that said "Peter, next show." And in it were a bunch of pictures he had made shortly before his stroke, pictures that he was thinking about coupling with pictures that had nothing to do with others in the box. Harry could no longer make pictures; he could no longer print pictures, but he put pictures in a box so we could look at them together, put a show together.

In the corner of his studio was a big light table upon which he would set transparencies and upon which he had made pictures, like *Ivy Tentacles on Glass*. At the end it had objects that he had collected from around the world that he loved looking at. There was a Leitz projector, which cost a fortune, but it was the only piece of equipment Harry would use to look at his color transparencies beginning in the late 1970s. It was sharper than anything else. And you could hear him in the beginning of the interview with Harold and Terry³ talking about what was driving him—he was nuts about the camera. To the end, he was nuts about equipment.

The year 1978 was big for Harry. Sally Stein had discovered a mountain of his color pictures here at the Center. In the process of organizing and exhibition here in 1979⁴, Harry discovered a bunch of pictures that he felt very strongly about, but he also discovered that if he could let somebody else make dye-transfer prints, he could be happy. He could make pictures and have somebody else print them and, as long as he approved of them, he was happy to make more photographs. This was a very liberating moment for Harry. We found a color lab in Hamburg, Germany, that employed a laser scanner to make beautiful dye-transfer prints for Harry. I had actually taken his work over there and spent insufferable weeks in a dye-transfer lab making prints for Harry and bringing them back for his approval.

The editing process was very interesting, too. Keith Davis was involved with it on a couple of occasions. We would take thousands of transparencies, put them into hundred-and-forty-slide carousels and go through them



Eleanor and Barbara, Chicago, 1954.

17.2 x 16.8 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 79.49.1.

and stop and if somebody said "that's a good one," or Harry would go, "oh, that's a goofy one." If we didn't like something Harry had chosen it very quickly became clear why it was important. Around 1978 Harry determined that he wanted to do nothing but color work. That changed, but he spent about ten years making nothing but color pictures.

In about 1980, Nicholas Callaway approached Harry about the idea of doing an exhibition and book of the Eleanor photographs, and he went up to Providence

with pictures of trees with white backgrounds, trees with black backgrounds, over a fifty-year period. Multiple-exposure trees, close-ups of trees, long views of trees, etc.: Martha, and later Kate Ware, put together an exhibition and beautiful catalogue of that work.⁵ So this is one of the things that later in Harry's life made him very happy: people were beginning to understand something about the depth of his work. Sarah Greenough employed a similar curatorial approach when putting together her

KD Eleanor, you knew Harry for a fair period of time.

EC Sixty-three years. There are very few people who have lived together for sixty-three years. You want me to tell you more about Harry?

PM How was it living with him for sixty-three years?

EC All I can say, friends, is that we got married in 1934. We met on a blind date. A friend of ours [Dick Matheny] had a picture of him and said, "You see this person? You want to see who gave me this?" I said "Yes." So I made a date with my cousin across the street. And he said, "I'll bring Harry from Royal Oak." When I saw him, when we met, we just clicked, and that was the beginning of the sixty-three years. Harry was also already in his photography, which was his complete life. I found that out very, very soon. And that's all right. He wanted to go to school, so as Peter said, he started college at Michigan State and he didn't like that. He got into his second year and said, "I don't want to go to school anymore. I want to get married." So he quit. He just quit college. That was all he wanted to do was come home, get married, and photograph. So he came home and we got married on Thanksgiving Day. For our honeymoon, we went to the stockyard. And as I say, Harry just lived photography and I just never said boo. Anything he wanted, he could have. I mean I was working so that was fine. He was busy as anything, and one day, I was cooking dinner and he said, "Oh, Eleanor, come here. There's just a real nice light here, right with this window and everything." So I turned off the stove and went in and he wanted a nude

and discovered in the basement of the house boxes of early prints that Harry had made. It was a real revelation for everybody who saw them because we didn't know that the original print of Eleanor in the water was four by four inches. We didn't know that some of the telephone wires were on eleven-by-fourteen-inch paper instead of eight-by-ten-inch paper. We did an exhibition of these pictures at the gallery and it was a revelation for people to see how Harry had originally interpreted his negatives. Weston Naef, from the Getty Museum, came in and made a selection of pictures for the Getty's collection. It was the first time they had collected work by a living artist, so that meant a lot to Harry. Then Harry also came up with the idea that somebody should think about or collect his work by subject. For instance, Naef suggested the weeds and trees. When we went back to look at the boxes of the weeds and trees pictures, we found hundreds of pictures. For every picture that we knew, we would find forty good ones that related to it, that somehow showed how Harry worked in and around a subject. Weston never presented this wonderful idea, but Martha Charoudi at the Philadelphia Museum of Art did. She came down to Atlanta and found us with about eight hundred pictures for her to look at, starting

exhibition at the National Gallery. It grew, though, and became far broader because it was retrospective in its scope.⁶ Lastly, Harry received the National Medal of Honor from President Clinton in 1996 and I think it was the first time any of us had seen Harry in awe of anything or anybody other than photography itself. Harry had, to that point, probably enjoyed one of the great careers in photography, had great books, great exhibitions. But all of a sudden the idea that there was such depth and breadth in his work was becoming part of what people were thinking about. So the hermetic place that Harry had occupied was blown apart and the world began to understand who this great guy was.

Above left: Keith Davis, Peter MacGill, Eleanor Callahan, Barbara Hollinger Callahan, Edith and Emmet Gowin.

Right: Peter MacGill and Eleanor Callahan.

Opposite: Wedding announcement with picture of Eleanor Callahan, née Knapp, 1934. Estate of Harry M. Callahan.





in there. And those never bothered me at all because I knew that anything that he photographed would be fine, and there would be nothing wrong with it. And so he photographed right and left, and he liked to travel. We traveled a great deal, all over—I think the only country in the world that we didn't see was India. We got as far as my sister's house in New York and I, of all unfortunate things, had to turn around and get sick. I got so deathly sick that the doctor said "No way are you going to go to India." So that just squashed that. And that's the last country that we had never been to, but any other country, Japan, China, Denmark, and Alaska and all—every place.

And like Peter said, in 1973 they struck up a very, very close [relationship], almost married to each other. And from that period on, Callahan-MacGill was one word to me. If Harry wanted anything he would call Peter on the phone and he'd say, "Peter, what do you think about this or that?" He just turned to him, you know, for everything.

I never stopped Harry in anything at all photographic. I mean I don't care what it was because I knew that everything that he was doing was going to be a serious thing and most likely would be profitable and bring us a lot of help.

Unfortunately, he was a little short-lived—in 1999 he passed away, and it was about 1997 that he had a stroke. He was working down in his darkroom, down the hall, the one in that studio room. He'd made it into a darkroom. He'd make anything into a darkroom, the kitchen, whatever it was. He never had a fancy darkroom. Never had a stainless steel one, but he had the best work that came out of that. Anyway, his studio was at one of end of the hall and our living quarters at the other. And he came down to the door and I heard this noise and I thought what? Who's that? And I had company but I went in there and there was Harry. He had a stroke down in the studio. When he was printing, when he was working he had the stroke. Two years later, he passed away with pneumonia and cancer of the lungs. I just miss him terribly, and I have nothing to regret.

KD: Thank you, Eleanor. Barbara?

BH: I don't have much to say after that other than the fact that Eleanor's right. The photography, I don't know if anybody can even begin to say how much it was his life. Every single morning maybe except Christmas, he either went to work at the school or he went out to photograph. And when he couldn't photograph, he was printing. It was just a work ethic that maybe came out of that Midwestern background—you worked every single day, every minute. I think when we went out West, he got angry with me. I was eight or nine years old and he said, "What are you doing lying in the back? You should be looking, you should be seeing. You have no right to sleep when you could be looking at all these different things." Everything revolved around photography. To put it in some sort of perspective, it cost him more to be a photographer than it did to get the money to live on until the seventies. People don't realize that. You do that just because you love to do it. Then LIGHT gallery came and it changed things. He used to get a little angry that people complained that he didn't talk enough. And he said, "Well, why aren't they yelling at a writer who comes by and isn't showing you enough visuals?" He felt that being a visual person is just as important as being a verbal person. They're just different kinds of people. He said, "You know, there were only a few people who can do both, and I feel like my visual expression is so much stronger."

Eleanor facilitated it in every way, shape, or form. The famous story I remember is when the plumbing broke. Something really disastrous happened and Eleanor had no idea what to do and she screams for Harry, and he said, "Would you want me to quit photography?" So Eleanor then gets on the phone and finds a plumber. This guy was one single track—and in today's day and age you would say he was ADD about it, you know, over-focused in that one field. That's the way our life worked.



Edith and Emmet Gowin.

EDITH G: I'll begin where Eleanor began. Emmet and I were married in 1964, in Danville, Virginia. I was a country girl, had never been to college; I met a preacher's son and fell in love. We moved to Richmond, Virginia. Emmet was studying graphic design, painting, and a little bit of photography. By his senior year, he had found a book by this photographer and brought it home to our apartment and said "Look, these photographs are incredible by this photographer, Harry Callahan. I want to go and study with him." I thought he was going to be a commercial photographer. Why did we have to go and study with this man, who didn't have to do with commercial photography? But we moved to the North. I had never been north of Richmond, and that all by itself was a big adventure. I was the secretary in the development office at Rhode Island School of Design. Every day when I walked to work around nine o'clock and came back at five in the afternoon, I would see Harry either going to photograph or coming back home from photographing. We never struck up a deep conversation. I had begun to know a little bit about him and admired him so much I didn't want to talk about something I didn't know about, photography. So we just would say, "How are you today, and how's the weather," and so forth.

I guess it was Emmet's second year in graduate school that he got his notice for induction into the Vietnam War. Needless to say I was very concerned, and one day I saw Harry walking down the street and I had felt that he would understand my feelings. I had no one else to talk with about this. And we stopped and I told him that I was very concerned about Emmet going to the war. He

was precious. He gave me a hug and said that he wanted to talk with Emmet about it. And a few days later, Emmet said he had talked with him and said, "You know, your wife loves you very much." And Eleanor was so gracious. She would invite the graduate students and their wives for dinner every couple of months. You were so kind to do this for us, Eleanor. It was so wonderful. And so the inspiration that I got as a woman, a young woman, I got from you, Eleanor, and I will be grateful forever.

EMMET G: Keith had asked me if I could sort of wrap it up somehow. And I don't want to wrap it up. I mean there should be questions and so forth, but I grabbed the sheet of notes that I made at the time that the National Gallery had the big show of Harry's work.⁷ A few of us—Jim Dow and maybe Linda Connor—were invited to come and talk then. And I find this piece of paper and I'm putting Harry clearly in the front and center of my mind again. I thought, what was I thinking? But the more I thought about these little stories, I've got to tell them again. There are two stories from natural history that have nothing to do with Harry Callahan. But strangely, they're important. Now you probably have heard this, that a child, before the age of twelve, the learning goes into a particular part of the brain that isn't used in the same way later on in life. In fact, languages learned before the age of twelve are stored in a place that isn't interrupted and is not used by the thinking process later on in life. We didn't use to know things like this and I'm not so sure that we totally know this now. But just the fact that you can think such a thing is slightly miraculous. Old people who have tried to learn a foreign language know that you're using a closet that's never been good for anything. About the same time I was thinking about this, I saw one of these nature films by Joan and Alan Root about the African hornbill, this great bird with this fabulous, long, curved beak. This shouldn't have anything to do with Harry but there's something—what happens in this bird's life is so miraculous. The female will build a nest inside a hollow opening in a tree, then she'll close herself into it, leaving just a little piece for her beak to fit out. And inside the tree, in

her nest, she will lay one egg a day for several days in a row. One egg, and then another, then another, and then another and she'll sit on the eggs and her husband bird feeds her through the little slit in the tree. She sticks her beak out and he sticks his beak in and they make this little exchange. The incubation period goes by and one of the eggs will hatch and a day later, the second egg will hatch and a day later, the third egg will hatch just exactly the way they were laid. As the birds reach the fledgling stage, the mother, who's already evacuated the nest to start the feeding process, will very carefully take the excrement and other sort of juicy bits that have been left inside the nest and with saliva and so forth, fill in this little opening in front of the tree so they're protected. And then the parents busy themselves with rearing these birds. The day will come, the first bird born will break out of the shell-like membrane and free himself and will very clumsily get out of the tree and the other two birds that are still left inside the tree panic and start filling in the opening again. This is unbelievable. Where is this information coming from? So they'll close in this little opening again. And don't you know it, a day later, the second bird breaks out. The third bird left all by himself inside the tree will fill in the opening, protecting itself one more night and then the third day, it gets the urge, the message that it's now time to go. Just bear those stories in mind.

I'm always struck by my own difficulties in putting into words what I feel and what I've experienced. It's really difficult. That said, you know, I had a strong conviction that Harry Callahan was the one person that I should study with. And I'm turning personal for a minute because it's the best way to tell this. One of my best painting teachers had been a friend of Jan Müller, who was one of the Abstract Expressionist painters with Hans Hofmann. They both knew Robert Frank really well and my painting teacher sent me to see Robert Frank. This was about 1963, just before we were getting ready to get married. And I was just finishing design school and I was very apologetic to bother Robert Frank. But I can still remember the smell of the food cooking and the wood shavings on the floor

where Mary Frank had been cutting wood. And very strange paintings on the wall. We only spoke about five minutes and I showed him maybe ten pictures. He went through them just about as fast as Harry had gone through them. Walker Evans said to me later, "People don't realize how fast you can see." We got to the end of that and he said, "Well, you really don't have that many choices. You can come to New York and make fashion photographs. It's not so bad; it's a little bit like going to the bank. Or you could study with Harry Callahan." And he kind of left a little space in the air there for a minute to see if I was going to say anything and I actually was kind of holding close to my heart that I had already decided at that point, if I said I've already decided that I would have really felt doubly that I'd wasted his time. But I left that little air there and he saw me hesitating and he said, "He's the only real artist who teaches."

After the stroke, Harry was in Philadelphia for the National Gallery show,⁸ and somebody very excited about the whole experience and thrilled to meet Eleanor and thrilled to meet Harry came running over and said with exuberance, "Mr. Callahan, in this picture here just behind you, are you using negative and positive space to say something to the viewer?" It was a little academic, but Harry in his little slowed-down voice said, "I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not that kind of guy." He wasn't. It's that simple. Continuing on with sort of a recall of Harry's voice, the last conversation we had was in the Callahans' apartment in Atlanta. One of our sons was living at Atlanta then and Harry was always so fantastic with us in just every way. We're paying our respects and we sit down and it was sort of a toss up, were we going to listen to music or would we try to talk, and he said "Let's try to talk." We began to reminisce and he remembered somebody from Chicago. And you could see his mind would go off somewhere and then it would

come back and then go off a little bit. And he said, "How did you know him?" And I said, "Oh, I met him once. He didn't make me very comfortable." He said, "You know, he was so, so, so smart, but he never figured out what he wanted to do with his life." It's not the best thing to be so emotional about these things, but they come back with a surprising force.

You get to a certain age in your life and you look back and you realize that none of us really have lived the life that we intended to live. By that I mean a series of chance occurrences just seem to interrupt. Part of what this celebration is about is that something interrupted Harry's life. And that interruption into his life interrupts our lives. I've often had two central thoughts about Callahan's reluctance to speak. It wasn't that he didn't have anything to say. He often said what he had to say like a hand grenade. His sense was that it wasn't necessary for him to be able to say what he had done. After all, he'd already done it. It was a finished thing



Wayne Miller. *Harry Callahan*, ca. 1948.

19.2 x 24.2 cm.

Wayne Miller Archive.

© Wayne Miller.

and for the future. That struck me as a deeply religious attitude. I know the question of religion has been tabled a few times during this conference. But on the deepest grounds I believe that there is reason to believe that it isn't a question of religion per se, some kind of a practice, but the religious attitude that has respect for peacefulness, for tolerance, for compassion. In 1963 Sherman Paul wrote in the text from the Museum of Modern Art monograph—something about Harry's work redressing the frightening overemphasized masculinity in our age.⁹ That seemed to me to be true. At the same time, it was so remote from my own experience of those pictures. I'll never un-male myself and I'll never un-gender myself, but I perceive those pictures as genuine efforts to make peace between the sexes—a kind of invention of peace. Some of you might know that writing by Lawrence Weschler about the invention of peace, where he chronicles the life of Johannes Vermeer and how his work grew out of a period of the Thirty Years' War. And it's a strange background to Vermeer to think of those paintings as being an island or a moment of peacefulness surrounded by strife and conflict. I think it's somehow appropriate to Callahan's work, just as I think the stories from natural history are somehow appropriate to Callahan's work.

I'm going to end by telling you just some of my favorite things that Harry told me. "I wonder if you'll ever learn to print. There's no difference between us except I've made more bad pictures than you have. Of course I've made a few more good ones, too." Out of nowhere that came out. Between those two years I was with Callahan, I had taken the model of these pictures, this dark, sixties light, these blackened shadows and these women's faces and you know, I could totally identify with Harry's work on at least this one principal: that a woman had given order to my own life. So that would be a natural grounds for respecting all women. So over that summer, I can't guess how many rolls of film I'd made. But I was trying to emulate Harry's very vivid example. And at the end of that summer, I had the five hundred little five-by-seven prints printed just the way Harry would have done it. And he saw me on

the street one day and he said, "Come by the house and show me what you've been doing this summer." And he sat there as patient as a saint, looked at all five hundred, put the lid back on the box and said, "I wish I'd made them all." And then he said, "You think about this, because there is a time when you can do this; now is not the time I can do this. I could have done it another time, but not now."

Jim Dow told us this great story about the students who stayed too late. Well, guilty—I always stayed too late. I don't know that Eleanor can remember this, but one night he was telling me about Frederick Sommer, who would eventually become a real close friend. Just like if Harry was my right hand, then Frederick was my left, and it must have been one or two in the morning and we were creeping around there talking about calling Frederick and Eleanor's voice comes down the stairway from upstairs like the voice of God and the thunder. And she says, "Harry, it's two in the morning, don't you dare." And Harry, who was very happy with himself, said, "Eleanor, it's only midnight in Arizona." So I had this habit, I would stay too late and finally one night, he just couldn't take it anymore and he was looking at me and I'm looking at him, and he'd say something like, "You don't understand why I like to drink, do you?" And I'd say "No, Harry, I don't understand that." And some time would pass and he'd say, "I don't know what you're waiting for. But it's not here." ■

- 1 Harry Callahan. "An Adventure in Photography," *Minicam Photography* 9, no. 6 (February 1946): 28–29.
- 2 Michael Kimmelman. "Biennial 2006: Short on Pretty. Long on Collaboration," *New York Times*, March 3, 2006, weekend edition.
- 3 "Interview with Harry M. Callahan, Tucson, February 22 and March 2, 1977," by Harold Jones and Terence Pitts, videotapes, Harry Callahan Archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson.
- 4 *Harry Callahan: Photographs in Color: The Years 1946–1978* (1979) was the first survey exhibition of the artist's color work. Curated by Sally Stein and Terence Pitts, it traveled to Akron Art Institute, Ohio; Hudson River Museum, Yonkers; Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe; and Port Washington Public Library, Port Washington, N.Y. It was accompanied by a catalogue of the same name. The fifty-five photographs made for the exhibition became part of CCP's collections.
- 5 *Elemental Landscapes: Photographs by Harry Callahan* (2001), organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- 6 *Harry Callahan* (1996), organized by the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., traveled to the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Detroit Institute of Arts; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.
- 7 *Harry Callahan*, National Gallery.
- 8 *Elemental Landscapes*, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- 9 Sherman Paul, *Harry Callahan* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967).

Eleanor, New York, 1945.

21.3 x 16.7 cm.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.



Recent Acquisitions

Amy Rule and Britt Salvesen



Exhibition curator Edward Steichen; Museum of Modern Art director René d'Harnancourt; architect Paul Rudolph, the designer of the exhibition; and MOMA public relations officer Elizabeth Shaw discuss the selection of photographs for *The Family of Man* in a rented loft on 52nd Street in New York, ca. 1954.

WAYNE MILLER

In 2005, the fiftieth anniversary of the Museum of Modern Art's *Family of Man* exhibition, the Center acquired an archive rich in documentation of this photographic landmark. The Wayne Miller Archive resonates with several other major archives at the Center.

Miller, born in Chicago in 1918, attended the Art Center School in Los Angeles in 1941–42 before serving under Captain Edward Steichen in the U.S. Navy Combat Photo Unit from 1942 to 1946. In 1953 Miller was hired by Steichen, who had become curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art. Together, they assembled a massive installation of photographs for *The Family of Man*. This selection of 500 photographs by 273 photographers from around the world opened in New York in 1955, and was celebrated by the public and debated by Cold War politicians and photo critics. A press release from the Museum of Modern Art set a humanitarian tone by referring to "this great parade of human emotions and feelings ... characterized by dignity and hope wherever they were found by photographers all over the world." The exhibition traveled to more than 30 countries

and was seen by more than 7.5 million people. When it opened to record crowds in Moscow, the newspaper headline read "Iron Curtain is Breached."

Miller's archive contains architect Paul Rudolph's floor plan for the exhibition as well as installation photographs and extensive files of newspaper reviews and commentary. Many notable names appear in the materials; among them, Carl Sandburg, brother-in-law of Steichen and author of exhibition texts; Ezra Stoller,

photographer of twenty-four mounted enlarged installation shots; Shirley Burden, photographer of a presentation album of gallery views; and Grace Mayer, assistant to Steichen at MOMA who penned numerous notes and letters to the design team and the many photographers.

After being discharged from service in World War II Miller moved back to Chicago in 1946, working as a freelance photographer and publishing his work in magazines such as *Colliers*, *Life*, *Fortune*, *Ebony*, *Sepia*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Copies of these rare publications are now preserved in the archive. Miller taught photography at the Institute of Design, where he met Harry Callahan and other photographers. During this period, Miller received two consecutive Guggenheim Fellowships in 1946 and 1947 to fund his intensive study of African Americans who had moved to the industrial North. Work prints and book layout materials from Miller's photoessay projects are also included in the Miller Archive. In his introduction to the *Family of Man* catalogue, Steichen defined photography as "a dynamic process of giving form to ideas." In the Center's archives, that dynamic process is both preserved and sustained.

MILTON ROGOVIN

The photographer Milton Rogovin has been likened to the great social documentary photographers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine. After refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952, Rogovin—optometrist, political activist, and photographer—was dubbed “Buffalo’s Number One Communist.” His political voice silenced, he picked up his camera in 1958 and began to capture images that communicated his deep desire for a more just and equal society. In 2006, the Center received approximately 340 Rogovin prints from eleven donors and the Rogovin family. These works form the beginning of the Rogovin Collection at the Center, which will house more extensive holdings of works by the photographer than any other institution. An exhibition of the ninety-six-year-old photographer’s works was on view at the Center in Tucson from August 18 to October 1, 2006. Rogovin’s work speaks of the humanity of working people, the poor, and society’s “forgotten ones.”



HELEN GEE

In May 2005, the Center announced the completion of the Helen Gee Archive. Gee, who passed away in 2004 at the age of eighty-five, managed New York’s Limelight gallery, widely regarded as one of the first fine-art photography galleries in the country. Gee also worked as an independent art agent, curator, and lecturer. Papers from the Gee estate will join materials first gifted to the Center in 1984.

The Helen Gee Archive consists of papers and records documenting the history of the Limelight and Gee’s association with major figures in twentieth-century photography. These include correspondence with artists, “daybooks,” printed materials, legal documents, publications, photographs, and audiotapes related to the personal and business activities of Helen, her husband the painter Yun Gee (1906–1963), and their family. The records of Limelight feature correspondence and office files relating largely to exhibitions at the gallery. The collection also contains records of Gee’s activities as an independent art agent after the closing of Limelight and extensive files of draft and final manuscripts and research files prepared by Gee for her three major publications—*Limelight: A Greenwich Village Photography Gallery* and *Coffeehouse in the Fifties* (1997), *Photography in the Fifties* (1980), and *Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (1979).

Left Milton Rogovin. Untitled, 1973, from the series *Lower West Side*. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jon Vein 2005.45.21. © Milton Rogovin.

Above Arthur Lavine. Helen Gee on the way to the opening of Limelight, May 13, 1954. Helen Gee Archive. © Arthur Lavine.



LIGHT GALLERY

When **LIGHT** Gallery opened in New York in 1971, the market for contemporary photography barely existed. Founded by attorney, entrepreneur, and patron of the arts Tennyson Schad, **LIGHT** was an early supporter of many photographers who were to become known as masters of the medium, including Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, and Frederick Sommer. **LIGHT**'s first director was Harold Jones, who was fresh from the University of New Mexico and the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House. Jones later served as the first director of the Center for Creative Photography.

The records of **LIGHT** Gallery, donated to the Center by Tennyson Schad's widow, Fern Schad, are an essential source for researching the growth of the photography market at the end of the twentieth century. Tennyson Schad kept a candid diary of daily events in the gallery. He and Fern, who helped manage the gallery, saved invoices, announcements, clippings, shipping receipts, and the vast correspondence involved in doing business with artists, museums, other galleries, collectors, and critics. Installation views and snapshots reveal the personalities and events taking place in the gallery over its sixteen-year history and add visual details to the documentation in the business files.

In addition to Jones, the directors of **LIGHT** Gallery included individuals who went on to establish their own influential galleries—Larry Miller, Peter MacGill, Robert Mann—and others such as Sally Stein, who became a noted photo historian. **LIGHT**'s original location was 1018 Madison Avenue. It later moved to 724 Fifth Avenue and for less than one year (1980–81) operated a satellite gallery in Los Angeles. **LIGHT** finally closed its doors in 1987. During the years it was in business, the gallery represented a large roster of artists including Tom Barrow, Barbara Crane, Eikoh Hosoh, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Bea Nettles. It published portfolios including Garry Winogrand's *Women Are Beautiful*, and a group of Farm Security Administration dye transfer prints, books, and the famous *History of Photography Calendar*.

ALMA LAVENSON

Alma Lavenson (1897–1989) was an important member of the group of Bay Area photographers whose sharp-focus work was shown as Group f/64 in the 1930s. Through the generous gift of her sons, Albert Wahrhaftig and Paul Wahrhaftig, more than 650 of Lavenson's exhibition quality vintage photographs, her negatives, stereophotography, work prints, exhibition files, publications, and personal papers have joined the prints and papers of other f/64 photographers (Ansel Adams, Sonya Noskowiak, Willard Van Dyke, Edward Weston) at the Center. The Center now serves as the premier locus for research into f/64 and the climate of photography on the West Coast in the 1930s.

Lavenson was a 1919 graduate of the University of California, a book collector, and at first, an amateur photographer. Through subscriptions to the photographic magazines of her era such as *Camera Craft*, she gained technical information and familiarity with the work of her contemporaries. In 1927 her photograph *The Light Beyond* appeared on the cover of the December issue of *Photo-Era Magazine* and began her impressive record of exhibition and publication. Influenced and inspired by Imogen Cunningham and by Edward Weston's gentle criticism of her pictorial approach, Lavenson soon incorporated the attributes of sharp-focus, "straight" photography. Her work typically focused on industrial, natural, and Southwestern themes. It was shown in solo exhibitions at the de Young Museum in San Francisco and at the Brooklyn Museum.

Over many years Lavenson developed a large body of work depicting the historic mining towns of the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. Despite her best efforts, this work was never published. A small portion of it was exhibited in 1948 at her second solo exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Her meticulously organized negatives and prints for the balance of the project form a significant part of her archive.

Lavenson continued to consider photography an avocation throughout her life, never seeking monetary gain or promotion. During the 1970s and 1980s, curators searching for women photographers rediscovered her work. With this new interest in her accomplishments and vision, Lavenson returned to photography and participated in preparing her first monograph, *Alma Lavenson: Photographs*, by Susan Ehrens (University of Mexico Press, 1994). At the age of eighty-nine, Lavenson commented, "I've retired from everything except my interest in life and what I can still do in photography."



Opposite From a contact sheet showing Harold Jones, Frances Murray, Tennyson Schad, André Kertész, John Szarkowski, and others at birthday party for Kertész, LIGHT Gallery, 1973. LIGHT Gallery Archive.

Above Alma Lavenson. *Carquinez Bridge*, 1933. Gift of Albert Wahrhaftig and Paul Wahrhaftig 2006.46.5 © Alma Lavenson Associates.

Right Rosalind Solomon. *Haircut, Chacas, Ancash, Peru*, 1995; printed 2004. Rosalind Solomon Archive 2007.7.1.93 © 1995 Rosalind Solomon.



ROSALIND SOLOMON

Rosalind Solomon decided to become a photographer in 1968, at age thirty-eight, after traveling in Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia, and went on to study with celebrated photography teacher Lisette Model in the early 1970s. In 1986, Solomon was given a one-person exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, titled *Ritual*. At the time, exhibition curator Peter Galassi wrote, "For Solomon, the extravagant public theatre of ritual is an expression of private feelings and struggles, which she invites—or compels—the viewer to share. Her ability to do so depends on the keenness of her perceptions and the relentless clarity and detail with which she records them."

The Rosalind Solomon Archive comprises more than 800 exhibition photographs; videotapes; original negatives; transparencies; and extensive personal papers, including correspondence, research files, business records, scrapbooks, and other documentation chronicling her nearly forty year career in photography. The archive was selected to contain works from every major project, starting with her images of dolls and people in Alabama in the 1970s and including the complete, monumental *Chapalingas* project.

Acquisition of this archive of a living photographer emphasizes the Center's commitment to a program of collaboration with actively working artists. We seek to represent the elusive creative process in the finished works, drafts, sketches, writings, ephemera, and other materials composing a complete archive. Solomon's archive is particularly rich in this regard, including evidence of her thoughtful and inspired scheme for organizing her library of images of humanity and its artifacts from across the world.

Solomon was the recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation award in 1979 for her work in Brazil and Peru, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for 1989, and grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies from 1981 to 1984, which supported a project to photograph in India. She has had residencies at Blue Mountain Center, the MacDowell Colony, and Yaddo. Monographic exhibitions of her work have traveled to Photographische Sammlung in Cologne, Germany; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; the Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Chalon-sur-Saône, France; and the Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru.

Recent Publications by CCP Scholars

The following list, compiled by Amy Rule, highlights recent publications that have resulted from scholars' research at the Center for Creative Photography.

Adams, Ansel. *Sierra Nevada, The John Muir Trail*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006. With new introduction by William A. Turnage.

Andrews, Lew. "Jacob Burckhardt, Clive Bell and the 'Equivalents' of Alfred Stieglitz." *History of Photography* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 247–53.

Flamiano, Dolores. "From Empathy to Eugenics: *Life's* Appropriation of Hansel Mieth's Birth Control Clinic Photographs." Presented to the American Journalism Historians Association Annual Conference (October 6, 2005), San Antonio, Tex.

———. "Meaning, Memory and Misogyny: *Life* Photographer Hansel Mieth's Monkey Portrait." *Afterimage* (September–October 2005): 22–30.

———. "Too Human for *Life*: Hansel Mieth's Photographs of Heart Mountain Internment Camp." *Visual Communication Quarterly* 11, nos. 3–4 (Summer–Autumn 2004): 4–17.

Dryansky, Larisa. *Ilse Bing: Photography through the Looking Glass*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 2006.

Dunaway, Finis. *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Ferrer, Elizabeth. *Lola Alvarez Bravo*. New York: Aperture, and Tucson: Center for Creative Photography, 2006.

Hershberger, Andrew. "Krauss's Foucault and the Foundations of a Postmodern History of Photography." *History of Photography* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 55–67.

Haas, Karen E., and Rebecca A. Senf. *Ansel Adams in the Lane Collection*. Boston: MFA Publications, 2005.

Holz, Keith. *Modern German Art for Thirties Paris, Prague, and London*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Levi-Strauss, David. "'Words Not Spent Today Buy Smaller Images Tomorrow': Conversations with Frederick Sommer." *Aperture* 184 (Fall 2006): 64–73.

Lowe, Sarah M. *Tina Modotti and Edward Weston: The Mexico Years*. London: Merrell, 2004.

MacDonald, Fraser. "Paul Strand and the Atlanticist Cold War." *History of Photography* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 357–374.

McCabe, Constance, editor. *Coatings on Photographs: Materials, Techniques, and Conservation*. Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2005.

Padgett, Martin. *Indian Country: Travels in the American Southwest, 1840–1935*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

Perrin, L. N. *Frederick Sommer: Photography, Drawing, and Collage*. London: Fraggionato Fine Art, 2006.

Ribbat, Christoph. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, oder: wie ich lernte, über Fotografie zu schreiben, ohne Roland Barthes zu zitieren [Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, or: How I Learned to Write about Photography without Quoting Roland Barthes]" *Kunstforum International* 172 (September–October 2004): 38–43.

———, editor. *Taking Up Space: New Approaches to American History*. Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004.

Spaulding, Jonathan et al. *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*. Edited by Amy Scott. San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 2006.

Street, Richard Steven. *Photographing Farmworkers in California*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Vettel-Becker, Patricia. *Shooting from the Hip: Photography, Masculinity, and Postwar America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Photographer unknown. Callahan selecting student work to be shown in
Young Photographers: Students of Harry Callahan, Hall mark Gallery,
New York, 1969. Harry Callahan Archive.



Archives and Collections

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Gerald Ackerman

Ansel Adams

Adams Publishing Rights Trust

Casey Allen

Lola Alvarez Bravo

Paul Anderson

Lucy Ashjian

Richard Avedon

Kurt Baasch

Robert Balcomb

Thomas Barrow

Herbert Bayer

Anson Beman

Bender / Nordby

Ferenc Berko

Ruth Bernhard

Big Bend Photo Club

Ilse Bing

Ernest Bloch

A. Aubrey Bodine

Josef Breitenbach

Dean Brown

Francis Bruguiere

Wynn Bullock

Louis Bunin

Caddes / Flora Weston

Harry Callahan

Paul Caponigro

CCP Archive

Walter Chappell

Carl Chiarenza

Clatworthy Colorvues

Van Deren Coke

Margaret Cohn

A.D. Coleman

Howard Conant

Gregory Conniff

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Creative Eye Gallery

Edward Curtis

Louise Dahl-Wolfe

Judy Dater

Faurest Davis

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Andreas Feininger

Robbert Flick

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Christel Gang

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Helen Gee / Limelight Gallery

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Barry Goldwater

George A. Grant

Sidney Grossman

John Gutmann

Johan Hagemeyer

Charles Harbutt

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Mark Kauffman

Yasuo Kuniyoshi

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LIGHT Gallery / Schad

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Danny Lyon

Ben Maddow

Magnum

Neil E. Matthew

Ben Maxey

Richard McGraw

McGraw Colorgraph

Maynard McFarlane

Hansel Mieth / Otto Hagel

Wayne Miller

Barbara Morgan

Charles Morris

John G. Morris

Wright Morris

William Mortensen

Mortensen / Dunham

Nagatani / Tracey

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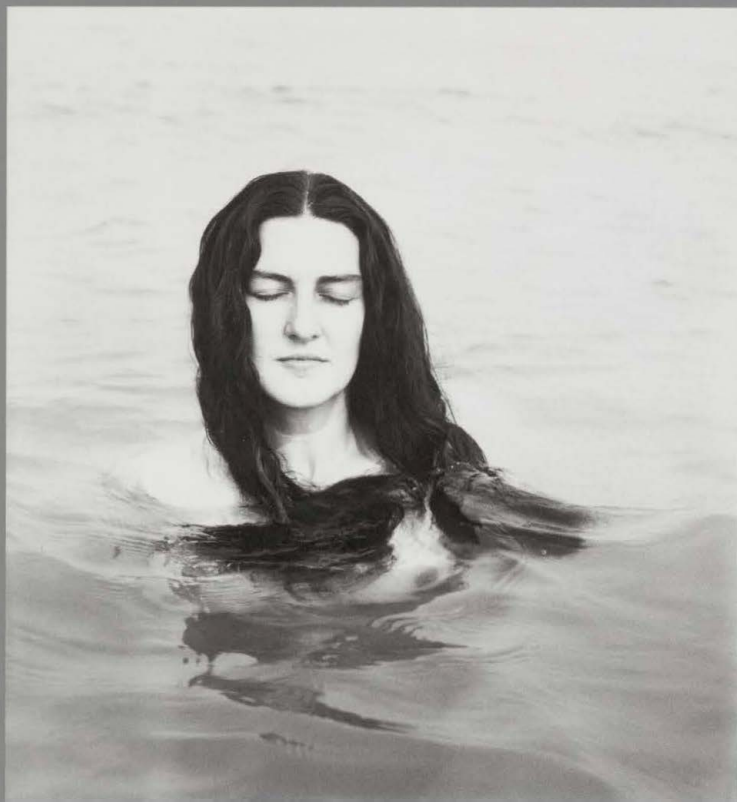
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Eleanor, Chicago, 1949. 12.6 x 11.3 cm.

Harry Callahan Archive 94.1.1.

Mike Mandel, baseball photographer trading cards:
Harry Callahan, 1975.
 9 x 6.5 cm. Harry Callahan Archive.
 © Mike Mandel.



Height: 5'9½"
 Weight: 170
 Born: Detroit, Michigan
 Home: Providence, R.I.
 Throws: Right
 Bats: Both
 FC: Quite a few
 FD: 0-76
 FP:
 FF: Plus-X, Tri-X
 FPh: I love photo-
 graphy.



Harry Callahan

To make a statement would be against
 my nature.

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