

I'm pleased with the opportunity to talk to you about my field of photography. It's endlessly fascinating for me to observe and think about the presence of images in our lives. In fact, a good many contemporary photographers — including myself — spend a lot of time & energy responding to what I would call the image landscape that surrounds us, particularly those of us who live in urban areas. Here are a few examples of these images of images:

- On the left you see the work of Jeff Crisman who graduated from our M.F.A. program in 1982. Although he is presently our photo lab manager, he has maintained an active creative practice, including the development of an amazing archive of tattoo artists (and their subjects) from all over the U.S. The image on the right was taken by me in downtown Chicago, as part of an ongoing informal documentation of that all-pervasive image landscape I mentioned earlier.
- These next two images by Marissa Woloszczuk, who received her M.F.A. from UIC last year, are from her application portfolio — which was a witty series on the interaction of billboard images (or commercial images in public space) with people on the move in Philadelphia.
- And of course, you're all familiar with the giant images of glamorous folks pursuing their healthy lifestyles that surround us.
- Maybe not so familiar (unless you read Adbusters) with the artist-satirists who turn these ad campaigns around....

In thinking about the seminar series title: The Cutting Edge, I realized that that title - cutting edge - is uniquely appropriate to photography. I will certainly share with you some of the "cutting edge" or recent developments in the field; on the other hand, I want to point out another way to think about "cutting" in relation to photography. From its very origins (in the early 1800s) photography has meant the act of representing some aspect of the world by framing it - in other words, cutting or capturing a piece of the world within a two-dimensional space, generally a rectangle.

- these two playful images by Chicago photographer Ken Josephson make us conscious of these arbitrary framing choices. Actually the image on the right is a montage, with the square snapshot physically mounted within the oblong one....

This act of framing sounds fairly obvious and easy; but it can be problematic as well. I am sure that all of you have had the experience of taking pictures, or being taken, and having something appear in the frame which you hadn't intended, or having something missing which you wanted to include. We routinely cut or crop an image to focus or heighten the impact of certain areas, as in this example by Jane Wenger, a Chicago photographer who

studied both at the Illinois Institute of Design and UIC:

- here a roll of developed 35mm film has been printed as a contact sheet
- here one of the frames has been enlarged as a work print
- and here we see Jane Wenger's adjustments in terms of tone (she has burned in areas which were too light) and cropping angle, to arrive at a final print

On a more somber note, perhaps you have experienced having something deliberately removed....I know that I have been shocked or puzzled to encounter a family album where someone's face or figure has been cut or torn....Such deliberate acts of pictorial vandalism (expressing anger, malice, or political repression) are relatively rare. But what I wish to stress today is that **every photograph**, no matter how innocent the intentions of the photographer, reflects at least two things: (1) the character or limitations of the equipment being used, and (2) the point of view of the photographer. This means that from someone else's point of view, the representation may be a misrepresentation, a distortion. Well-known contemporary scholar Edward Said has put it in harsher terms: "the act of **representation**.." he says, "inevitably involves some degree of **violence**." (p. 4, Wedge)

Now that is a provocative way to talk about taking a photograph; but at the very least, I believe that the act of photographic representation involves some degree of **manipulation**, or to use a less loaded word, some degree of **interpretation**. Let's see whether you agree:

For example, I'd like you to look with me at four different groups of images from Guatemala, published over the last 15-20 years. You may be familiar with the Central American country of Guatemala, just south and east of Mexico; but if not, think about how different your impression of that country is from one group of images to the next. Think about what choices or strategies on the part of the photographer have influenced that shift in communication.

First, let me show you four images from a 1989 book called Guatemala Rainbow by an Italian photographer named Gianni Vecchiato. As the book's name implies,

- the photographer is smitten with the brilliant colors of traditional Mayan fabrics, and indeed the colors are breathtaking.
- For the most part the framing is very tight, showing us little beyond the patterns, with occasional glimpses of the human inhabitants: cherubic copper faces or the worn soles of bare feet.

There is very little text in the book, although in a brief dedication the photographer "thanks God for having shown me the way to the magical Mayan world," and cryptically acknowledges — without further explanation — that "much damage has been done to them and their ethical values."

Second, let me show you several images from the promotional fashion magazine published by a clothing business based in the Netherlands,

called Oilily. (they have a shop in Chicago, located at 900 N. Michigan in the Bloomingdale bldg.)

- • Why have they chosen to photograph their product in a Guatemalan setting? I think the answer is complex. Their colorful knits are similar to, perhaps inspired by Guatemalan fabrics; but I would also speculate that the slender European models are posed in Guatemala in part to create a vivid contrast between First and Third
- • Worlds — the models' chic is accentuated against the backdrop of peeling walls and shy awkward natives. On the other hand, the images and text speak of Guatemala like a fairy tale, as a beautiful, "almost mythical" country.

Here, as elsewhere throughout our society, advertising takes advantage of what art theorists would call the semiotic (or connotative) power of images. The consumer is encouraged to associate Oilily outfits with an ambience of enchantment. They lend her the "natural" appeal of these "primitive" people.

The third group of images I want to show you is from a 1987 book by photo-journalist Jean-Marie Simon called Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny. The title alerts us immediately to a world very different from Guatemala Rainbow, as does the gesture and severe expression in the

- • cover photograph — even though it is filled with women in "rainbow" costume. Simon's book presents us with contradiction and conflict. Using a wide angle lens, she captures a variety of people within the frame. They represent various backgrounds in terms of race, status, or class; but they do not form a picturesque backdrop as in the Oilily photographs. Rather their lives are contextualized within an oppressive system of military power, which is manifest visually as well as through detailed captions. On the right we see a cadet at what is known as Guatemala's "West Point," explaining different huipil patterns. I think you can sense the uneasy relationship between the world of colorful native costume and the Guatemalan army. We also learn from Simon's text that many Indian women have abandoned their traditional dress "to avoid regional identification by urban government forces."
- • on the left we see more of the complex and cruel dynamic of Guatemala's political/social conflicts: an eleven-year-old is mascot at the military barracks in Acul, Quiché. His parents were killed by the army. On the right, Coca-Cola workers are eating lunch in the plant's cafeteria in Guatemala City; on the wall behind them are eight photos of Coca-Cola union leaders slain by government forces between 1978 and 1980.

Jean-Marie Simon first went to Guatemala on assignment for the human rights organization Amnesty International. Marilyn Anderson, who created the fourth group of Guatemalan photos I'm going to show you, went to Guatemala because of her fascination with indigenous weaving.

- Although she travelled to the highlands to document traditional textile production, she and her husband could not ignore the tragic consequences of repression that they encountered. Their book, Granddaughters of Corn, might seem to be reductive, defining all the women in relationship to the land and its principal crop.
- The portraits are direct and mostly frontal, with minimal environmental context in the picture frame — very different stylistically from Simon's candid shots. However, ultimately the book becomes a memorial to all the women known to have disappeared in Guatemala, between January 1983 and August 1986, as well as a tribute to the living women they met as weavers. Along the bottom of each page is a strip listing names and dates of the disappeared women (a poignant strategy, reminiscent of the Vietnam Wall in Washington D.C.)

Of the four groups I have shown you, which are the authentic pictures of Guatemala? Of course there is no right answer to this question. Each group was taken with different intent: to entertain, to sell, to inform politically (and to express outrage), to honor and memorialize. I think you understand the complexity of reality. What I wish to emphasize is the complexity of representation — the infinite number of ways that images may be constructed. There is no “natural” or one-to-one connection between a subject and its representation.

- black slides

With these examples I have stressed the photographer's point of view (belief system, attitude, ideology). Now I want to talk about different technical & pictorial strategies. Using this term strategies, I refer to the various choices or processes regarding camera controls, lenses, film, light, etc. which determine or enhance one's point of view. We can't assume that a photographic image will automatically be accurate or true, even if we approach the subject with neutral or objective intent, because content is inevitably influenced by technique.

For example:

(1)

length of exposure (shutter speed, the time that the camera shutter remains open) may lead to a radical shift of tone, or even erasure of moving elements in the scene. In other words, the film will not “see” what the eye sees.

- Chicago photographer Ken Josephson (whose work often probes the illusory edge between reality and representation) has made a simple but remarkable image (titled “Polapans”) that illustrates the pictorial shift resulting from varying shutter speeds. Which is the correct or accurate record of a light bulb? On the right is an even more

dramatic example of variation (radical information loss) as a result of shutter speed. This is one of the first photographs ever made (actually it's a daguerrotype); and it was taken by Frenchman Louis Daguerre in 1838: Because the emulsion surface of his light-sensitive plate was very slow (compared to what we are used to now) the exposure required several minutes. During that time the streets were thronged with pedestrians and vehicles; but they didn't stay in one place long enough to be recorded on the plate. Only the motionless elements (trees, buildings, etc.), and a single gentleman who had stopped to have his shoes shined, were recorded!

In fact the length of exposure necessary during the early years of photography made it the object of satirical comment: A French journal (Le Charivari) in 1839 wrote:

“You want to make a portrait of your wife. You fix her head in a temporary iron collar to get the indispensable immobility....You point the lens of the camera at her face, and when you take the portrait it doesn't represent your wife; it is her parrot, her watering pot, or worse.”

(2)

Lighting conditions — as well as the processing of film & /paper to increase or decrease tone and contrast — will radically modify the information that is registered in a photograph:

- • let me show you two more Ken Josephson photographs which illustrate this very dramatically: The one on the right is titled Chicago (can you guess what it is? a brown paper bag...); The one on the left is titled Honolulu (equally cryptic — I never would have guessed, since it doesn't fit my stereotype or expectations of the place). Here Josephson has physically montaged two sets of photographs of the same subject, shot under different exposure conditions: the pair underneath have been “exposed for the highlights,” they remain silhouetted; and the pair on top, revealing the features of each individual, have been “exposed for the shadows.” Which is correct? It depends on what information the photographer wishes to convey.

- In terms of response to light and printing techniques, I also want to show you the distinctive work of two distinguished 20th century photographers Harry Callahan and Roy DeCarava. In both cases, detail or information which could have been captured by a camera is sacrificed, but I think with stunning results.

- • Harry Callahan's high contrast prints are minimal, like a Japanese haiku

- • Roy DeCarava's images are equally elegant and spare, but they have a richer tonal range – for instance, capturing the texture of the puddled street on the left, or the subtlety of wet footprints leading from the bathtub in the print on the right.

- • Also these DeCarava's images are balanced at the darker end of

the spectrum, which makes the white mannequin's hand in the picture on the left all the more striking. Of course, both of these men produced a huge volume of work over the course of their careers, so I don't mean to oversimplify their styles

(3)

The third pictorial strategy that I want to show you concerns choice of lens length and lens aperture (which refers to lens opening size); both of these elements affect depth of field (or how much of the picture is in focus) as well as foreground/background and shape relationships. One of the most original and inventive photographers experimenting with this variable is Joseph Jachna, a member of our School of A & D faculty at UIC. I'm going to show you three sets of his images that dramatically illustrate these possibilities:

- • the first two were taken in Door County, WI in 1970, using a 17mm (fisheye) lens on a 35mm Pentax body. This extreme wide angle lens has almost total depth of field (everything is in focus from about 3" to infinity). Jachna also reports that with such a wide angle of vision it was almost impossible to keep his fingers out of the frame, — so he decided to put them in, which, he says, "may have been the most important gesture of my photographic career." (in 1974 he was chosen as one of Time Life Photography Year's "new discoveries," and went on to receive both NEA and Guggenheim awards).
- • in the mid-70s Jachna travelled with his family and the same Pentax camera to Iceland, but this time shooting the landscape with a normal 50mm lens, focussed at infinity. The resulting limited depth of field yielded totally different images, even when he was employing the same elements — a hand and a mirror. Of course, equipment was not the only variable. For example, Jachna feels that his work was definitely informed by his reading of brooding and superstitious Icelandic sagas.
- • finally I want to show you some very recent work: Jachna's experimentation with masking his lens - can you guess what he has used?. This is an example of manipulation which internally modifies the frame; he covers the lens with a word or letter, thereby adding to — or subtracting from — a portion of the scene.

Up to this point I've talked about photographic representation in which the subject is modified through technical choices made by the photographer — equipment, camera controls, aperture (the size of the lens opening), shutter speed (the amount of time the lens is open or receiving light), angle, framing, etc. And I hope I've demonstrated to you that the information transmitted — and therefore the meaning of the photograph — can be profoundly influenced by these seemingly minor decisions.

Likewise through the Guatemala photographs, I've discussed point of view as referencing the political perspective or philosophy of the photographer. This assumes that the truth is visible and can be shown pictorially.

But this assumption needs to be examined? We have already seen that supplementary information may be necessary to communicate what has happened — as in Marilyn Anderson's Granddaughters of Corn, where the seemingly serene and straightforward portraits of Guatemalan women are undercut by page after page of testimony and names, a stream of horror.

Let me show you three additional examples of contemporary artists who are dedicated to evoking or revealing the story beyond the visible, behind the scenes, beyond a single point in time or space:

Joel Sternfeld in his series On this Site: Landscape in Memoriam plays on the irony of terrible events which occur in benign settings. His book introduces what's missing through a title and brief description on a page opposite the photograph: .

- • “Central Park, looking toward the Plaza Hotel,” (1994). What would you expect from this lovely fall landscape? The text goes on to tell us: “In the December 1953 issue of *Cancer Research*, Dr. Ernst Wynder presented the first definitive proof that cigarette smoke causes cancer in laboratory animals. A few weeks later, the presidents of the major American tobacco companies met at the Plaza Hotel and agreed to begin an aggressive advertising campaign to counter Wynder’s findings.”

“Central Park north of the Obelisk, behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, May 1993.” This is another golden scene; but the text tells us that a much publicized murder was committed here in 1986. I won't go into details, but I want you to think about the irony of representing both a white collar or corporate crime of vast proportions, and a brutal act of individual violence through a benign landscape.

Leonardo Aliaga (a current undergraduate photography major at UIC) is not denying the reality of his everyday world, living with his immediate family in Chicago; but he is complicating it by combining images taken here in Chicago with those of his extended family in LaPaz, Bolivia. It's not just a matter of putting the two worlds side by side. Rather he plays with extremes of scale and with distinct print qualities.

- • Through a complex gallery installation, held at the GBU Gallery (Alumni Hall) on campus last spring, Leonardo imbedded his contemporary life in Chicago within looming yet fragile memory-images from Bolivia. I'm calling them fragile because he exposed these large images directly on the gallery walls, after coating the walls (in the

dark) with liquid photo-emulsion.

- You can actually see the slightly cracked or uneven surface, evidence of the brushstrokes he used to apply the emulsion. The juxtaposed smaller images were printed on photographic paper and framed.

Another U.S. artist/photographer Shimon Attie of Jewish background, was obsessed with the losses of the Holocaust. In particular travelling in Germany, he focussed on the absent Jewish population of Berlin. After considerable research he introduced that missing history through slide projection in his "Writing on the Wall" series (1991-93).

- Attie found and projected images of Jewish life from the 1920s and 1930s back into the Scheunenviertel neighborhood of Berlin where they were originally taken. The photographs of these projections have been widely reproduced and published in book form (Sites Unseen: European Projects: Installations and Photographs, Burlington, VT, Verve Editions); but the physical act of projection in a public space was of primary importance to Attie. As he said, "One can always overlay images in a darkroom or with a computer; But I wanted to touch those spaces."

In a related project carried out in the Netherlands, called The Neighbor Next Door, from December 1995, Attie references the double-sided role of the Dutch people during the Nazi occupation, both sheltering those persecuted by the Nazis and in some cases, collaborating with the invaders.

- "For one week in the middle of December 1995, Attie mounted 16mm film projectors inside the windows of three different apartments along Prinsengracht, the canal-street in central Amsterdam where AnneFrank's family and an estimated 155 other groups were hidden during WWII. From 5 pm to 1am each day, Attie beamed short film loops onto the street. This was footage shot clandestinely from nearby windows by those in hiding during the Nazi occupation. The image of the sheltered was now displaced by moving images of what the sheltered saw.

In all three of these cases the photographers (Sternfeld, Aliaga, and Attie) want us to understand the historical significance of an unmarked site, or the associative power of a family snapshot. To accomplish this they construct an image or installation through juxtaposition, by which I mean the simultaneous presentation of two different kinds of information. Attie's images are layered on top of each other through projection; Aliaga embeds a smaller framed image within a large-scale one applied directly to the wall; Sternfeld positions text and image side by side.

At this point I want to elaborate on the approach suggested by Attie's work, showing you additional examples of non-digital image construction. We will look at the work of artist/photographers who build an image before the cam-

era shutter is ever triggered. This approach to photography has been labelled “the directorial mode” because it involves the photographer functioning very much like a theatre director. He or she

- creates a pose or sequence which is performed before the camera, or
- fabricates a set to be photographed, functioning as a sculptor or stage designer or
- uses some combination of the above

In a sense, this “directorial mode” is very familiar, something that we all practice. We might call it “visual spin.” Think of styling yourself for a high school yearbook photo, or the elaborate staging of wedding shots. Think of the “photo-op” concerns of presidential “handlers” when they arrange a Rose Garden ceremony, or a campaign shot.

The artists whose directorial work I wish to show you have a variety of agendas or intentions: they may be commenting on this public relations aspect of contemporary life - the self-conscious (or unconscious) construction of a persona, heavily influenced by media and popular culture. Or they may be challenging stereotypical or fixed identities, as is the case with numerous feminist artists

- Jo Spence
- Cindy Sherman
- Lorna Simpson

They may be dramatizing an identity through exaggeration as in Richard Avedon’s portrait series titled In the American West.

- • The cover shot on the left is Sandra Bennet, a 12 year old from Rocky Ford, CO. The figure on the right is Red Owens, an oil field worker from Velma, Oklahoma
- • But I was most intrigued to discover that this figure from Avedon’s book (Ronald Fisher, beekeeper, from Oak Park, IL) was the same honey man I had often passed at his Oak Park Farmer’s Market stall. Avedon, as you may know, has had a stellar career as a fashion photographer — which is perhaps the quintessential directorial role. In fact Avedon’s book and exhibition stirred considerable praise, but also considerable controversy because of the way he decontextualized, homogenized, (and some would say exploited) all the individual portraits in this series by posing them against as alienated specimens against his stark white backdrop.

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Directorial photographers may be re-imagining historical tragedies as in the book titled Hitler Moves East. (A Graphic Chronicle, 1941-43) created in 1977 by photographer David Levinthal, collaborating with Doonesbury cartoonist Gary Trudeau, when they were both in graduate school at Yale.

- • Levinthal used German war toys, as well as household items such as flour or detergent to create the fairly convincing illusion of these miniature sets. Trudeau in his introduction to the book points out that “Levinthal has made no attempt to conceal the formal identity of his subjects” - the fact that they are toys...
- • “What he has done is take us half way there. He has set up an exquisite tension between the integrity (or innocence) of the object and the horror of its context...”

By the way, to create this illusion technically he is taking advantage of one of the camera controls I described at the beginning of the talk - what is it?

Other directorial photographers fantasize about nuclear disasters. Patrick Nagatani, collaborating with painter Andree Tracey, created sets which involved constructing full-size tableaux. These were photographed and blown up to mural size. Then additional props or models were introduced into the set, and they were re-photographed, so there is an interesting play of two and three-dimensional illusion.

- • You see here a 1986 image titled Alamagordo Blues (Alamagordo is a nuclear test site in New Mexico). Nagatani and Tracey’s work was inspired by this found photo from around 1950 on the left; and it parodies the notion of nuclear test tourists with a mania to record everything — with the added irony that these tourists are of Japanese descent (as is the photographer Patrick Nagatani).
- • These slides show the set under construction.

Here’s one other example by photographer Sandy Skoglund, which I couldn’t resist showing you:

- • No, these are not St. Patrick’s Day cats. Skoglund calls this picture Radioactive cats: She says, “I was thinking of what forms of life might best survive nuclear attack, and cats, with their predatory nature, seemed likely...” She constructed the room, molded the cats in plaster and positioned them in menacing attitudes around the live couple — neighbors that she recruited to pose.

Yet other directorial photographers challenge the very notion of visual or scientific truth

- • Spanish photographer Joan Fontcuberta created an elaborate scientific hoax, by inventing the persona of a German naturalist (Dr. Peter Ameisenhaufen, 1895-1955?) who supposedly traveled almost every country on earth and classified virtually every known species — and several unknown ones! In fact, to document this tongue-in-cheek tale, I understand that the photographer
- • Fontcuberta collaborated with a taxidermist in fabricating the specimens you see here; and he generated extensive corollary scientific materials such as x-rays, anatomical drawings, field habitat photos, etc., Fontcuberta has displayed his invented collection in a

natural history museum, as well as in various art gallery venues. And his book Fauna, is a deadpan publication by the non-existent European Photography/Scientific Division

use video camera to show book, turn off class view of Mac to adjust

- Solenoglypha Polipodida (multiple legs)
 - Micostrium Vulgaris (plays w/ doctor's hand)
 - Myodorifera Colubercauda (snake-tailed gopher)
 - Cercopithecus Icarocornu (unicorn owl)
 - Squatina Squatina (Engelfish)

Brazilian photographer Vik Muniz employs his virtuosity in drawing (using highly unorthodox drawing materials) to render a photographic likeness. He then photographs the drawing, resulting in an actual photograph which contains the drawn illusion of a photograph! This may sound confusing, but the results are witty and amazing.

- • This image, rendered with chocolate syrup, is called Pollock (The technique of the rendering simulates the painting style of the abstract expressionist artist Jackson Pollock)
- • This one, rendered with sand (?) is called Aftermath, Muniz's drawings in this series are made from photographic portraits of street children in Brazil. Through executing the drawings over this debris on the ground, he makes a commentary on the rubble-strewn environment in which the children survive.

At this point I want to show you examples of work which has been generated with, or modified by, digital technology. Strategies of juxtaposition or layering and montage may be greatly facilitated by digital technology. But I hope that you will see that this technology is only one of many ways that contemporary artists construct and manipulate images. I disassembled my chemical dark-room over ten years ago, and now process almost all of my own work on a Macintosh computer — as do many of my colleagues; so I don't hesitate to acknowledge that the computer is an amazing and invaluable tool.

Let me show you how effectively this tool has been used by my colleague, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, a professor at UIC's School of Art & Design. 1992 was the Quincentennial year in which Columbus's voyage to the New World was celebrated (by some), protested (by others). Manglano-Ovalle's piece was a small but powerful commentary on the idealization of Columbus as discoverer/explorer, and on current U.S. immigration policy. It asks the question: who belongs in this country?...Let me show you the final "art" work; and then, with slides shot directly from the computer, I will take you through his process of generating it.

- • this work could actually be described as a forgery, though it wouldn't fool the INS
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Next I want to show you the work of a highly influential Latin American photographer named Pedro Meyer who has become a strong advocate for digital photography during the last ten years. In 1995 Aperture press published a number of his digital works under the title Verdades y Ficciones (Truths and Fictions), and a CD-ROM with the same title (and substantially the same content) was published by Voyager. He is currently editor & publisher of an important website called ZoneZero, which I will be showing you shortly. But first I want you to see two of the works which appear in Truths and Fictions

- The first image is called “Serenata Mexicana: Yuma, Arizona” (You will notice it is dated 1985/92, referring to the date of shooting the images and the date of digitally combining them)
- The second is called “Largest Chair, Washington D.C.” In the first image we have little doubt that some kind of manipulation has occurred; in the second image, that which seems obviously unreal in terms of scale, is in fact, “straight.”
- black slides:
switch to CD-ROM
now I want you to hear Pedro Meyer discuss the process behind “Serenata Mexicana.”

With both his words and his images, Meyer is provoking us to rethink any obvious distinction between truth and fiction. In fact, he is convinced that digital strategies allow photographers to approach more complex truths.

I hope that I have demonstrated to you that BOTH traditional and digital photographs can present complex truths, depending upon the strategies that are employed. Or one might say that BOTH traditional and digital photographs can falsify or distort reality (as I have demonstrated in earlier slides), just as writers may deploy language in the service of what we call FICTION or NON-FICTION. Yet we may experience fiction as having the ring of truth. To quote Pablo Picasso: “Art is the lie that tells us the truth.” Does that paradox makes sense to you?

Next I'd like to show you a few examples of work created by UIC students in recent years, using digital technology. Where possible I'll show you some of the component parts of a finished image.

- Carlos Gomez digitally inserted his mannequin figures into the
- quaint futuristic village he constructed with old-fashioned cardboard

and computer keyboard cobblestones.

off slides, on w/ CD-Media Explorations:

- • Adam Hoff, undergraduate working in a Media Explorations class with Professor Gary Minnix, experimented with representing the fluid identity shifts — resemblances and differences — between himself and his two brothers, first through cutting and pasting with Adobe PhotoShop, then creating a more subtle blends on the right, and then creating a simple animation using Adobe Aftereffects software, which allows the morphing of still pictures.

Ramon Luna and Roseann Liss grappled in very different ways with identity issues. Ramon, an undergraduate with a double major in photography and graphic design, was born in Puerto Rico, moving to the U.S. during his high school years.

- • He digitally combined pictures of himself with a friend — cavorting in a swimming pool — with historical maps of Puerto Rico in gestures which suggest to me both defiance of and immersion in that island identity.

RoseAnn Liss-Bethany, who received her M.F.A. in photography from UIC in 1997, came to Chicago from New Mexico. She describes herself as a “mixed race woman of Latin, European, and African descent.” Her M.F.A. thesis project, titled The Fiction of my Identity explored the myths or stereotypes thrust upon her and members of her family by those who “experienced her difference as awkward and incomplete.”

- • The section of her thesis that I am showing you consists of a grid of portraits of her niece Nicole and is titled “Just Four Years Old.”
- • Realizing that Nicole appeared quite different from one image to the next, Roseann digitally inserted text (labelling her ethnicity) and
- • graphics (referencing phrenological diagrams) over the images, to confound notions of a fixed identity. (Do you know what phrenology is? The study of the conformation of the skull based on the belief that it is indicative of mental faculties and character)
- • By using markings which looked authoritative but made no sense, she hoped to expose what she calls “the lunacy of the situation,” imposed on a small child, “just four years old.”

Michael Ensdorf who received his M.F.A from UIC in 1989, is assistant professor of communication and associate dean of arts and sciences at Roosevelt University. He is also an artist whose work has been shown and published in both the U.S. and Europe, most recently as part of the exhibition Photography after Photography, now touring museums in Germany, Austria, Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, and finishing at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia

However, I would like to show you a work which he designed specifically for the medium of the web, rather than for gallery exhibition.
[Much of what you may find on the web involves reproductions of pre-

existing pieces. This is useful as a kind of electronic thumbnail catalogue, but doesn't engage the full potential of the medium.] Michael's piece is found on a site known as DIF (Digital Imaging Forum) which has been developed by two distinguished multi-media artists at the University of Houston. His piece, which he calls "Momentary Distractions," was created from segments of digital video footage that he took in Spain. Feeling awkwardly voyeuristic with his video camera, he distanced himself from his subjects, using his digital zoom (extreme magnification) to capture the faces you will glimpse here. As I show you some of the site, I'll read the quote that Ens Dorf chose to accompany it:

“ slip into the empty moment.
You don't need to control everything.
You don't need to control anything.
You can't control anything anyway.
Everything drifts.”

Leo Charney, "Empty Moments"
(1998, Duke University Press)

- • black slides

Finally I'll show you an image by noted Canadian photographer Jeff Wall who has recently visited our campus (and will be returning as part of a residency later this spring). I chose Wall's work because it skilfully synthesizes a number of the elements I have talked about today:

- (1) directorial mode construction of a set or tableaux;
- (2) shooting with high-resolution analog film;
- (3) then digitally scanning and blending separate segments to form the final composition.

and because he is one of the most respected artist/photographers working today. In fact, the cover story of the latest issue of Artforum is an interview with Jeff Wall, regarding the making of the piece I'll be showing you. The piece, by the way, is called The Flooded Grave.

First let me say just a few more things about Wall's approach to photography. He (like many contemporary photographers) is intrigued with the relationship between still and moving images; but, for the most part, he is committed to generating works which are large-scale single frames. In fact, he has described his ambition to create the still image as a quintessential cinematic moment, condensing the energy of a narrative sequence into a single composition. To accomplish this he may spend months or even years constructing sets, coaching and costuming models, and digitally synthesizing dozens of individual shots to form the desired panoramic result — much as a movie director will shoot dozens of takes which are reordered in an editing studio.

I won't try to tell you what The Flooded Grave means.

- • But let me show you slides of the finished work, as well as several detail shots, followed by a few slides of the work-in-progress; and I would like **you** to tell me what you think it means....

As I show you the slides, I'll read you Wall's description of his process:

- • “In the fall of '98, I shot exteriors at Cemetery 1 with (one assistant) while (the other assistant) was building the ecosystem and tanks (in the studio). As soon as I felt the (Cemetery) **background** shooting was complete, we moved to Cemetery 2 to shoot the hole and the **foreground** area. I wanted to shoot all the exteriors at the same time of year, so the light would be consistent. The foreground shooting had to be done as quickly as possible, since we had to make a plaster cast of the hole when the photography was finished. I needed the cast to make the shape of the imaginary ocean floor match that of the hole in the real world. The imaginary ocean floor would be built in the **studio** tank. The two worlds would be (digitally) married at the waterline....”
- • The next thing was to acquire the material from the ocean. For that we worked with licensed marine-life specialist. I wanted the underwater zone to be a sort of snapshot of the sea floor in the area around Vancouver. I didn't want it to be a representative display of flora and fauna like you see in zoos. So we made sure we only included what might have really been on the ocean bottom at a given instance in time. I wanted to drag up a real moment from the water.”
- • This last slide is to give you a sense of the scale of this work (90 x 110 inches) and the medium (the finished print is not paper, but a transparency illuminated from behind). In general Wall's works often combine the epic quality of historical paintings with the luminous presence of Duratrans light boxes (a form that is usually associated with commercial advertising in airports or malls).

I would like to leave you with the thought that “cutting edge” photography **certainly** does not have to be as elaborate or expensive as that of Jeff Wall. However, like the work of Wall, the avant garde work I admire is attuned to contemporary media technology, while at the same time growing out of a keen critical awareness of historical & cultural traditions, both in terms of process and content.

I hope that many of you will be inspired to explore the world of images, certainly as discriminating viewers, and perhaps as creators as well. Keep abreast of ongoing developments in fine arts photography and photo-journalism. But above all, keep your eyes and critical faculties open to the image landscape that surrounds you on all sides.

I've suggested a number of sources that may be helpful on the last page of your outline:

To crystallize or summarize what I've been saying, let me open Pedro Meyer's most recent editorial at the ZoneZero website:

It appears that a boxing match is taking place; in one corner we have "traditional" photography, and in the other, a new contender: "digital" photography.

However, there is one major problem with this alleged "fight", these two cannot be opponents, as they are both on the same side. What is called "traditional" photography can be produced either in an analog way using a chemical process or in a digital format, electronically. If you have a particular "style" of photography, which could be done using either technique, there need be no confrontation at all, and the metaphor of antagonism becomes redundant. The only reason why people perceive the changes in photography in this way, is because there is a lot of misunderstanding as to what digital photography is actually all about.

ANALOGUE / DIGITAL

A form of representation, such as a painting, a chemical photograph, or a video tape, in which the image is composed of a continuous variation of tone, light or some other signal. Similarly, a gramophone record is an analogue medium for reproducing sound or music. Analogue representation is based upon an unsegmented code while a digital medium is based upon a segmented one in which information is divided into discrete elements. The hands of a traditional (analogue) clock which continuously sweep its face, in contrast to a digital clock which announces each second in isolation, is a common example of the difference.