

# FAT

## "ON FIRE"

ISSUE NO. 3

1997

### THE STORY OF P

TEEN CAPTIVE TALKS PG. 16-17

### SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

PG. 7

### NAKED KILLER

PROFESSIONAL FEMME FATALE PG. 18

FREE!  
A-BOMB  
POSTER INSIDE

PLUS CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

**DOUGLAS BLAU**  
**DARA BIRNBAUM**  
**DAN GRAHAM**  
**LUCI POZZI**

YOUR FAVORITE ART MAGAZINE

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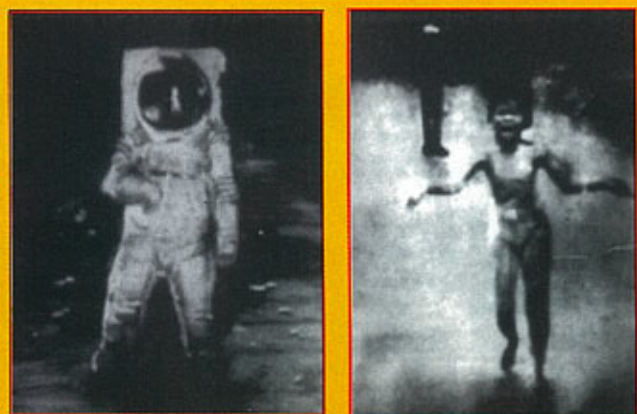
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Cover image: Collage/actress Chingmy Yau in Naked Killer





Vik Muniz

**THIS ISN'T THE KIND OF DEATH LIKE IN A FREAK ACCIDENT OR HIT. THERE'S A SLOW ETYMOLOGY AND AENEMIA TO THIS ONE.**

**TO KILL PHOTOGRAPHY MORE OR LESS**



Vik Muniz 1994 Memory Rendering of Shuttle Tragedy

It was supposed to be only medium. Its purveyors used to finesse palladium, silver, glass, gelatin, beautiful papers with skill. Photography's survivors now view its remains through a completely new set of eyes, unlike those once recognizing that rich optical medium, that indexed image pointed up to a light reactive surface. The strongest evidence of this death is that photography has become hyphenated, Photographic-Reproduction.

We should all have seen it coming, no medium can be this flexible, impartial and accurate and also delve into optics, physics, and direct representation and address the philosophy of Simulation, or "picture theory." Perhaps photography was just a medium of information-transmission that happened to extend its reign, an evolution that changed the context you measure the subject by.

Personally, I noticed a line had been crossed a few years ago. It became curious to me how photography seemed to ignore the issues supposedly inherent to the "white cube" critique of galleries. The Museum Without Walls...

Remember in the 80s Sherrie Levine was passing off "appropriated" Walker Evans photos as her own. These authentic replicas were pedigreed by the art theorists at the MIT publishing house, following the lead of the 70s artist John Baldessari who had appropriated movie "stills," to show their ciphered meanings. Soon thereafter Cindy

Sherman, another MIT photographer, was the first to stage "stills," one up on Baldessari, getting to the gauze in the Gaze or Lacan game more directly instead of only editing or re-presenting. Her recent work has been a juicy kickback to Surrealism along with Andres Serrano's material sublimines and corpses. Levine's work was a good idea, and maybe good art but it was still scooping Walker Evans' because it wouldn't have had a ghost chance without his skill. My favorites at the time were David Wojnarowicz and Alfredo Jarr. Critics were sexy to write about these artists with that French voice they were perfecting.

Ironically, photography was being canonized as an art form at the very same time as all of the theoreticisms. Perhaps this was necessary for certain patrons of museums or maybe just for pragmatic reasons: there are millions of masterpieces in the medium and it gives a lot of information for a little money

at a time when paintings were unaffordable to most. Listen, people like Robert Frank still hadn't had major museum retrospectives, bona fides like Brassai were still alive and a cheap buy. This was simply embarrassing. Photography had already established its power in magazines which helped to spend the consensus of new avant garde pedigree.

Artists began to take for real whatever they saw reproduced in ARTFORUM, which would be in all the European galleries six months later. Magazines became the new center, usurping New York in that role. "A Swelling Simulacrum..."

It's all too common for dealers and curators to get it from quick slide glands. Just as articles out in TIME and NEWSWEEK were telling of the ever more precise and undetectable computer-retouching techniques, warning us never to trust the photographic image.

80s Printing techniques with computers

and Cibachrome followed the 70s predecessors of silk-screen, four-color printing, and the now extinct dye-transfer processes which now are used in computers and became the final nails in the coffin as they increased the number of model versions or "tropes" of a photo to a point where it was gone. A death by camouflage in the photo chop shop.

More possibilities, or fewer? Sure, it was harder to pigeon hole photography, which might put more control in the hands of artists. But wasn't it also taking us further from the forces that drive visual art? All these things were co-opting the visual which was usually the last part of what came out. This isn't what one might expect from photography the medium which suggests a purely straight visuality. In fact most of the practitioners of these new forms of photography were disassociating themselves entirely from the specter of visuality.



Vik Muniz 1994 Memory Rendering of Saigon Execution of a Veitcong Suspect

The 80s was art as far as it ever gets from visual perception—but it was using photography more. Perplexing, a Burgess Shale period in photo-repro which gave clout to a swelling art-media body which missed most of the truly new challenges to believe instead that its picturing publicity and advertising nature were embodying the art in just the way a pre-industrial culture might think a photo embodies and steals a piece of your soul. Quite simply, everyone seemed to be conveniently forgetting life, the origin.

The cibachrome mentality of the 80s made us forget that you have to be in the actual room with a real Sol Lewitt, Jenny Holzer, or even Lawrence Weiner installation, that even a slacker document photograph of a 70s performance by Dennis Oppenheim hung in some show works powerfully and is perceptually aware of its real deal with the viewer. It wouldn't even work in a magazine state unless recast. This art works because it demonstrates life in the subject, print, or format.

Representation is a detonation and ain't to

"Can a morphing program do me a imagination?"

With computer photography artists can pander to the collector who now can say "It's on disk, I'd buy one if you could do it in blue." The artist can send the disk to the collector and say, "do it yourself." These new techniques wow people for a bit, but it's trinkets for land. They promise to make things more accessible, quicker cheaper with more options. But as in the compact disk revolution it leads to "Just buy me any CD for Christmas." You forget that these changes make mastery less likely for the simple reason that there's actually too much more choicy fuzz to master.

A great photographer always takes many bad photographs and any somewhat productive amateur always at least a few great ones. André Malraux was right, the "Museum Without Walls" via photography did keep growing to the extent that it's never been more challenging to cook up a photo image worthy of a museum yet never have so many artists thought it possible. Museums are now

be pinned down though there's a smoking gun. The oil fires in Kuwait must have been immeasurably more enigmatic and awesome than all the photographs of them combined. Wonder should get you out of the house.

Entire bodies of work are tailor-made for magazines, but usually if an artist had the skills to pull it off, they probably wouldn't be interested and would rather make the real thing. It's more important to get a picture of your work in a magazine these days than for a sympathetic viewer to see the real thing—to say nothing about which magazine it is for—it doesn't seem to matter as the artists and audience treat them as if they are all great.

Magazines used to come about out of the hunger of the art community or some workaholic with some bucks, but now the new ones seem vainly driven right out of Quark and Photoshop and a moonlighting art director if they're lucky, no persona—all gratta.

bookstores. Painting retrospectives are curated and arranged with the catalogue in mind as in the Documenta and recent Whitney and Corcoran Biennials. So now a critic should have to review the catalogue and not the show?

A good rule of thumb is this: if it looks good in a picture or it's a good picture it's only a good picture and probably not worth seeing in person but if it's obvious that there's something missing its either not much of a picture or it's something worth going out of your way to see in person. Television's "reporting live" from the murder scene may satisfy some human thirst. Photography in this computer age whittles away at visual art and "documentary drama" is the knee-jerk can't help. It's too late, it's a done deal.

No photos please! I got me an obscure memory and I know where you live.

PAUL DICKERSON

PAUL DICKERSON: 1961-1997

Paul was an artist of great substance, a provocateur, a curator and a writer. When he chose to take his life, he left a studio filled from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling with his work. Racks of paintings, files of drawings, and thousands of pages filled with sketches, notes related to his work and life, as well as extensive writing on art and art criticism. Paul curated a number of exhibitions and organized panel discussions. He also was the guest editor of *New Observations* in 1996.

I first met Paul in 1993 at his one-person exhibition at Stark Gallery, New York and we became friends. His unique manner of thinking left me baffled and speechless, but satisfied. He could gather threads from Leonardo Da Vinci to Matisse to Guston to Puryear without blinking, and his notes show that he not only studied the masters, but also compared them and thought about their and his own intellectual plight. Paul was also widely read in classical and modern philosophy and poetry, all of which informed his work and thought.

A teacher by nature, he inspired others to train themselves in the art of looking. Paul taught me how to love art more deeply than I had before, to celebrate it and to live eagerly for that experience. I'll carry this with me always, and I'll miss a brother.

MILES BELLAMY

During a recent visit to Paul Dickerson's studio, I was impressed by the many "landscapes" populating that 1000 square feet studio.

Paul's sculptures have seemed to me less about the objects themselves than the set of qualities of the object(s). Paul's medium, as I believe he understood it, was not matter, but the perceptual fields that can be fashioned from a resonant thing.

This idea produces some strange and animated landscapes; a grouping of small cactus models all with the same limb broken off; a tiny and exquisitely curved lump of asphalt; a 150 pound core of concrete sitting in its own delicately painted bell; Red plastic lobsters clamped in various positions on various supports in various places.

I particularly like his pieces which cultivate the space between different perceptual qualities within the work, so that he gives the ensuing resonance its own sense of air.

Paul's premises and works are a great adventure in looking and seeing. But its pleasures are not without their problems. If perception is the subject, how do you decide what not to make art from? And then, how does the artist or viewer proceed; is perception objective or personal?

Paul's adventure should not be sealed away in memory. It should have continued; now, in new ways it should continue.

JAMES HYDE

Please visit the Paul Dickerson Memorial Webpage at: <http://www.thing.net/~paul>



BRAND NEW

Photograph of Canvas on FIRE!

Kevin Hanley