

BRUCE SILVERSTEIN

RANDY WEST

*Biography
Press Releases
Reviews*

Biography

Randy West was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1960. He received his BFA from Ball State University in 1984 and his MFA from CalArts in 1986. West is currently director and a faculty member in the MFA Photography, Video and Related Media program at the School of Visual Arts. He lives and works in New York City and the Catskills in upstate New York.

He began his exhibition career in 1990 with three solo shows in Los Angeles, “On Our Way to Heaven” at the Pasadena Armory and the Jan Kesner Gallery, and “Flowers + Grass” at Opus Gallery. He has since exhibited internationally. His work has been reviewed by The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times and Photography in New York.

West’s photographs have been collected by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, The Fischer Collection, San Francisco, Aaron Siskind Foundation, New York and the Pasadena Arts Commission, California among other private collections. His “Seascape” photographs are included in Center for Creative Photography’s publication “Seachange” and the series “Pretty” is represented in Gottfried Jager’s historical survey and critical book on abstract photography “Concrete Photography”. A monograph of “Bird Rabbit Snake” was published in 2005. He recently contributed writing to the 2006 publication “The Education of a Photographer” from Allworth Press.

Randy is currently working on two architectural projects with the Venice Collaborative in Venice, California. Images from these projects are on view in the current exhibition “Enlightened Development” at the Art + Design Museum in Los Angeles.

Press Release: bird rabbit snake (2007)

October 13 - November 24, 2007

Silverstein Photography is pleased to announce Randy West bird rabbit snake, a selection of photographic pigment-ink prints from 2003 that explore the inner architectural structure of birds' nests and the natural, woven building materials that comprise them.

West executes the majority of his photo projects as series with marked attention to the form, material, and tactile quality of his subject—in this case the relevance of each blade of grass that make up the nests.

The title bird rabbit snake is drawn from the title of a children's poem written by the artist which playfully hints to the motivation for this series—the shapes and lines animals create by their movements in the open fields and skies near his home in upstate New York. bird rabbit snake consists of two interconnected chapters: Reconstructions and Blades of Grass. In Reconstructions, West physically pulls apart the interlocking fibers from abandoned birds' nests, scanning the deconstructed nest as fibers are removed. The nest is “re-constructed” as West superimposes these images onto one another, layering the images digitally.

In Blades of Grass, West explores the natural shapes of individual strands of dried grass that form and construct the nest. By further separating the nests' fibers, he studies their shapes in more detail. Taken individually, one can see written characters, but seen as a group, a powerful visual language is born from the gestures of each line.

Drawing and printmaking have influenced much of West's photographic career, and while he references abstract artists such as Cy Twombly, Brice Marden, and Harry Callahan, noting their attention to the quality of a line, he believes his work is not abstract.

Randy West earned his MFA at the California Institute of the Arts in 1986 and began his career in Los Angeles. West continues to create new series, and he is a faculty member and the director of operations at the School of Visual Arts in the MFA Photography, Video and Related Media Department in New York City.

THE CITY VISIBLE



49th Street



50th Street



51st Street



52nd Street

By BONNIE YOCHELSON

SINCE moving to New York from Los Angeles in 1990, the art photographer Randy West has walked to work, even when that meant traversing most of Manhattan from the Lower to the Upper East Side. In 2004, Mr. West began to put his walking and looking to good use. For two years, he photographed the westward vistas of Midtown at sunset.

What drew Mr. West's attention was not his fellow New Yorkers or even architecture per se, but the abstract patterns formed by skyscrapers as they frame the sky. After much experimentation in spring and winter, he found that September light between 7 and 8

Little Sky Country

On certain Midtown streets, even the shape of the heavens is man-made.

p.m. gave the effect he wanted.

Under normal circumstances, Mr. West is a typical New York pedestrian, moving quickly and sometimes ignoring "Walk/Don't Walk" signs. For this project, however, he had to stop and take photographs in the middle of busy intersections, forcing others to weave their way around him and inspiring the looks of angry drivers.

In response, he abandoned his professional camera for the amateur point-and-shoot type. This change shortened his exposure time and also gave passers-by the impression that he was an awestruck tourist.

For these photographs, which are

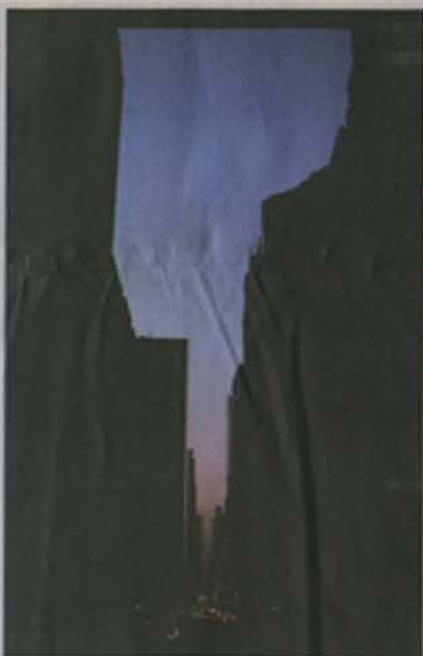
displayed on his Web site, www.randywest.net, along with his other work, Mr. West

walked north on Third Avenue and looked 30 long blocks west toward the sky over the Hudson River. On any given day, he had only 20 to 30 minutes to work before the sky went black. He stopped for five seconds to photograph the vista, and quickly moved to the next block.

In these fleeting moments, the clouds caught the shimmering light of day's end and the streets began to glimmer with street lights and neon signs. Framed by the canyons of Midtown, these ephemeral effects, highlighted by a black border on each print, take the shape of upside-down skyscrapers.



53rd Street



57th Street



58th Street

ART REVIEWS

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1990

LOS ANGELES TIMES

From Layered Images to Formal Structures

By SUVAN GEER

Photographer Randy

West's subtle black-and-white portraits on linen that is pressed into rag paper have the sensitive, fuzzy edge of graphite pencil drawings. Carefully delineating skin and bone from a surrounding blackness, the photographs give the subjects a tender vulnerability that has a sensuous, fleshy quality.

Yet as portraits they are academic and seem less about the people than the photo process. It is not until the artist turns that process loose on three large landscape panels and an interior still life with attendant portrait that we sense the potency of this method of making photographic images. The large vertical panels immediately become fog-enshrouded views from three windows, tantalizing us with indistinct, fragmented trees and hills. The still life, a gray table in a gray room, has the soft, gauzy feeling of a Norman Lundin charcoal study. A faint, almost black portrait of a man's face mounted to the left of the room imagery gives the whole a dreamy, suggestive potency that promises to be an engaging way of scripting narrative photography.

AROUND THE GALLERIES

By LEAH OLLMAN
Special to *The Times*

Photographs as elegant hybrids

Randy West's series of photographs, "Bird Rabbit Snake," are elegant hybrids. They're photographic but incorporate an act of sculpture and evoke drawn and calligraphic line.

West based these 2003 prints on abandoned birds nests he gathered near his home in upstate New York. Unsatisfied with images of the nests in their entirety, he pulled apart the fibers and twigs and reassembled them as coarse tracery on a scanner. The "Reconstructions" form a chronicle of West's own drawings in shallow space.

Some have the improvisatory, contingent feel of a Cy Twombly. Others recall the gestural potency of Franz Kline, or the dense complexity of wire sculptures by Anne Müdge or Alan Saret.

In the "Blades of Grass" images, West sets just one or two reeds against the pristine clarity of the paper. They loop or curve like shorthand symbols, letters in a foreign alphabet or balletic notations. Velvety soft shadows lend the images dimensionality in places, but their absence elsewhere reinforces the sense that these lines are of rather than above the surface.

Harry Callahan photographed reeds in snow, Aaron Siskind the abstract graffiti of the city. With this lyrical, reductive work, West echoes those efforts and makes his own modest contribution to the practice of photographing line in space.

Jan Kesner Gallery, 164 N. La Brea Ave., (323) 938-6834, through July 31. Closed Sunday through Wednesday. www.jan-kesnergallery.com

the village **VOICE**

CHOICES June 20, 1995

VOICE
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An opinionated survey of the week's events
JUNE 14-20

PHOTO

RANDY WEST: West's pictures of swimmers wading into the sea are printed in pewter grays on photo-sensitized linen and further darkened by a fine layer of graphite. The results are smoky and indistinct, as if seen through a dense fog. Like Bill Jacobson's and Michal Rovner's atomized bodies, these receding figures seem to be in transition from one world to another, suspended between immediacy and memory, the present and the future, life and death. Through July 8, Yancey Richardson Gallery, 560 Broadway, at Prince Street, 343-1255. (Aletti)

July 27, 1999 **VOICE CHOICES**

PHOTO |

"BARELY THERE"/"THIN AIR"

Two cool, thoughtful shows a floor apart at 560 Broadway explore the minimalist impulse in photography, from restraint to negation. Though James Welling (an ancestor figure in this context) is the only artist they have in common, both shows share a decidedly contemporary sophistication about photography's uneasy, even antagonistic, relationship to content. But, judging from the evidence here, photos that have been stripped to the bone can offer more immediate access to sheer visual pleasure. Randy West, in "Thin Air," shows images of dyed fabric that are at once literal and transcendent; like many of his cohorts, West invites us to invest the act of seeing with as much contained passion as he does. In "Barely There," Marco Breuer records the delicate explosion of a sparkler on photographic paper, Roger Newton probes the unknown, and Fred Cray nearly disappears behind the gorgeous atomized scrim of his self-portraits. In "Thin Air," the show's cocurator, Stephen Frailey, shows subtle, playful pictures of ephemeral constructions, Bing Wright contemplates windows, and Orit Raff and Tim Davis investigate the mysteries of the bathroom and the office. Nothingness has never looked better. "Barely There" through July 30 at Janet Borden, Inc., 431-0166; "Thin Air" through August 20, Julie Saul Gallery, 431-0747. (Aletti)

TIME OUT NEW YORK AUGUST 12 -19, 1999



Tim Davis, *Sunset on Foam Core Door*, 1999.

"Thin Air: A group show of minimalist photographs"
Julie Saul Gallery, through Aug 20
(see Soho).

Photography has always been a step away from nothingness—an ethereal process by which a moment in time is frozen forever. "Thin Air" is a very strong group show that speaks to photography as such; the exhibit captures the something that happens when the "nothing" of photography takes nothing as its subject.

As the title promises, most of the work here is in a minimalist mode. Stephen Frailey (who helped organize the proceedings) presents simple still

lives of everyday objects set against deep-black backgrounds. In one photo, a sky-blue pill package with perforated edges is seemingly torn from time and space, forever stripped of its function.

Orit Raff transforms the mundane character of such objects even further. One untitled piece seems to feature the flat color-fields of an ocean sunset: It's actually the base of a door, with light reflecting warmly off the floor underneath it. James Welling performs similar leg-ordemain in *Wreckage*, in which flakes of phyllo dough populate the folds of draped black material. The title lends a nice sense of melodrama to the scene.

Ultimately, "Thin Air" s strength lies in the way the artists give form to the otherwise transparent nature of seeing—and of photography itself. Randy West photographs colored fabrics at close range so their intimate weave fills each frame. Bing Wright makes the photo a literal window on the world: One of his images is of a window printed actual size, with the sill and lock silhouetted against a cloudy sky. And his series "Wet Glass" is little more than streaks or pearls of water distorting an invisible surface.

Among the younger artists getting deserved exposure is Tim Davis, who photographs his own office to find spatial disruptions within—for example, the upside-down reflection of the street outside in a fluorescent-light fixture. Like the other artists here, he creates a sense of presence where only dreary, normal emptiness had been before.

—Tim Griffin

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MAY 31, 2002

ART IN REVIEW

Randy West

*Yancey Richardson
535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through June 29*

In Mr. West's show, "Pretty," the photographic approach takes a more Modernist vein. His rectangles of pale color might be mistaken at first glance for single-color abstract paintings. Look closer and you see they are pictures of flat, evenly lighted expanses of colored fabric. Subtle modulations of light and small deflections in the cloth create a spacey, dematerialized impression, as though you were looking into nothing but hazy, colored light. In a written statement, Mr. West says that he means the pictures to evoke specific friends who have died, which is not implausible given the ethereal, meditative mood. Different as they are, both these bodies of work are animated by tension between the image as a record of something real and the picture as an independent vision in its own right. **KEN JOHNSON**
