TABLE OF CONTENTS

SALON 1
5 | ALLISON LINDER
6 | ANDREW K. THOMPSON
11 | SAMUEL RAMIREZ
13 | BUNNY BROWN
16 | EDDIE MONTGOMERY
17 | VICTORIA BANEGAS
19 | MELISSA DIAZ
22 | CURTIS JOHNNY MOORE
23 | CHARLES DALTON

SALON 2
26 | SAMANTHA RAMIREZ
27 | MELISSA DIAZ
28 | HUGO BOCANEGRA
30 | PATRICIA E. ZAMBRANO
32 | JULIE SHAFER
35 | MELISSA KIRCHHOFF
36 | STEVE BESWICK
39 | KELLY KLOPFER
40 | KATELIN WALCZYK
43 | KAYA PARK
45 | KAHLIL PYBURN

SALON 3
46 | ANNA J. MATIAS
48 | MOISES RAMIREZ
49 | NANCY MATIAS
50 | SANDRA GARCIA
51 | RACHEL VILLARAMA
52 | PRISCILLA BANUELOS
53 | OLIVIA FAVILA
54 | LUCYBEH VALENCIA
55 | PAIGE VUKOVICH

FRONT/BACK COVER PHOTOS: ANDREW K. THOMPSON
I think a lot about photography and what it means in the digital age; how it communicates, what it represents, and how the medium is continually changing. Its history is replete with technological developments and new ways of understanding images. Even within the short history of digital photography the smart phone has once again transformed how we use, think and share images from only a few years ago. Photography has the ability to be all things to all people and to adapt to every need. I find this amazing since the images made today often look the same as those made from the analog era. Part of the paradox of photography is that while its subject matter may be easy to identify, what images mean (its content) is ever changing.

Marvin Heiferman’s recent publication “Photography Changes Everything” is a wonderful book examining myriad aspect of the medium’s impact across the spectrum of human experience (see 9/15/12 dotphotzine.com book review) and touches on the above issues and more. But just as photography changes everything, it too has changed. Whatever it means to be a photographer is now an open question. Everyone has a camera and everyone can see images of just about everything, anywhere, at any time online. A legitimate question is “why bother making pictures?” As a photographer for over thirty years, I can honestly say that if I never made another picture I would have plenty to do with the ones I’ve already taken.

There seems to be a visceral pull to the act of making photographs and an obvious fascination with looking at images, which keeps us making pictures. If practice makes perfect, we should be in the midst of a glorious age of photography, but with its ubiquity, comes redundancy. The simplicity of using a camera and the technical perfection of imagery in the digital age are shadowed by the burden of countless banal images and the instant cliché.

This is where young photographers and all students of photography, young and old, shine. To grapple with the issues presented in an image, to struggle with the quality of a print, to discuss what a picture means, is the essential complement to its creation. Without this dialog, the image is meaningless. This is not to say that random pictures are meaningless, but without the viewer, particularly the concerned viewer, the meaning is latent. Though we can all look at an image, reading it takes some time and practice. It is an acquired skill not dissimilar from reading words and sentences.

I am gratified to witness ambition, intelligence and intuition in the photographs and images made by our students. In these pages we see the phenomenology of the physical world, the exploration of gender and identity, successful and failed attempts at beauty, fashion, and picturing the ephemeral. Mostly we see the earnest expressions of those with the will to leap before they look, which should make us hopeful that photography will continue to change everything, and continue to be changed.

Decay and the aftermath of destruction are recurring themes in photography and in Allison Linder’s series the points of view are constructed to present worlds within worlds, a seemingly endless loop of ever disintegrating scenes that are as much a metaphor for life as a clear document of its absence.
It is hard to reinvent something so ubiquitous as a photograph but Andrew K. Thompson is on a path to forget everything he knows about the medium and to see it with the fresh eyes of a naïf. By sewing, bleaching, painting and doing just about everything but following the rules, he is seeking a new way to see the photograph and the world.

Andrew K. Thompson
Angelica Morales has a rebellious and stubborn streak that gives her the edge in re-imagining the nude, long the realm of the male photographer gazing at the female body. Her androgynous models glide between genders with their smooth milky skin and coyly aloof gestures, suggesting our revised notions of what it means to be male.
Samuel Ramirez is a native of San Bernardino, a substitute teacher, student and artist. He understands the city as only a local can, and has the street cred to get the pictures he wants in any neighborhood. He is particularly adept at seeing through the mundane to the glorious with a pitch perfect sense of timing, juxtaposition and observation.
Bunny Brown

Socially concerned photography is out of fashion even though it is needed now as much as ever. Poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness are such a downer. Bunny Brown is a Registered Nurse and social activist, an advocate for the homeless and a photographer of incredible optimism. Her portraits neither glamorize nor denigrate, but tell the story of each subject’s journey through life.

The captions are Bunny Brown’s recollections and impressions.

Dennis was a quiet reserved man, more often listening than participating in the conversations at the Malibu Day Work trailer. He walked with stooped shoulders and head down, portraying the image of a beaten warrior. His smile was faint when he spoke of his journey to Costa Rica. His dream is to regain his truck-driving license and drive a commercial truck in Costa Rica. When I returned several months later with his pictures, he was excited to tell me that he was moving to the Palm Springs area to work as a caretaker at a friend’s home.

Joanne recently lost her Malibu home and has found shelter at night under the Library bushes. She was well spoken and finds solace in reading daily. She was friends with most of the local homeless and she stated “they all look out for me”. She states she wrote grants for public organizations until recently when she lost her job. Joanne was very distraught over a recent break-up with her boyfriend, whom she states “Stole everything from me; my home, my money and my heart”. She stated she used all of her savings to bail him out of jail on a “bogus murder charge” and now he wants nothing to do with her. Her journey is to remain in Malibu and her dream is to live in a house again.

I first met Pappy while he was sitting on a Laguna corner with Merlin sitting on his lap. Pappy proudly pointed to the soft purple collar that he bought for Merlin just the day before. Placed in front of him were a few dollars and some change in a paper cup. Pappy is a Vietnam Vet and has been homeless for over ten years. Pappy suffers from arthritis in his hips and is limited in his walking. Ben and Charles are “always close if I need help”. His journey and hope is to live locally in a RV park with hook-ups. When I returned one month later to give copies of the pictures I took of him and Merlin, Pappy cried.
Shirley approached me while in a shopping center in San Bernardino. She wore scrubs and both hands clutched her purse securely to her side. Shirley had been living in a Motel 7 in downtown San Bernardino for 9 months until her belongings were thrown to the street the night before. Shirley worked as a caregiver for a diabetic woman and also cleaned the rooms at the Motel when she couldn’t afford the rent. Her journey is to keep her 13 year old son in school and “out of trouble”. Her son lives with her on the street as of today.

Joel is a man of few words, one in fact. His name was the only information I was allowed to get from him. His girlfriend and he travel outside of Laguna daily to pan handle for money. According to the local homeless, Laguna people are not very generous in giving. While I was on the beach, Joel was attempting to keep his girlfriend from gaining too much adverse attention. I had tried to talk to her, but Joel quickly shooed me away and she obviously was in no frame of mind to have a conversation. When Joel was not by her side, the other homeless people instinctively tried to protect her, saying such things as “pull your pants up” or “stay here on the grass, don’t walk to the water” etc. When Joel arrived later, he quickly shielded himself and his girlfriend with a sleeping bag in the middle of the park. I was unable to interview him, but I would expect his wish would be for safety for himself and his girlfriend.
As we slowly climb out of the great recession, the high desert city of Victorville is showing signs of renewal and Eddie Montgomery is there to bear witness to its slow but steady recovery. An Iraq war veteran who has seen a lot worse, Montgomery looks beyond the weeds and vacant lots to the core of the city and the manifestation of its rebirth.

Victoria Banegas is on a quest for the mysteries of life, whether actual or invented. After finding an old and outdated medical book, she photographed the illustrations through a magnifying glass with a 3-D flash. The results are a cartology of the imagination, as well as the human physiology, a playful reminder of the limits of observation and the unlimited scope of the artist’s vision.
The Salon is a wide ranging group exhibition of work by photographers of all styles and techniques that address issues from the obvious to the sublime. The power of this selection is driven by the individual photographers and their visions, and the effect of juxtaposing these disparate images is often the joy of discovering the subtle narrative implicit in each.
Wandering with a camera on Highland Avenue in San Bernardino is generally not advised, but for Canadian Marie-Andree it was an adventure in American culture. The busy barbers cut hair, dispense advice, provide comic relief and banter with their regulars. The Black barbershop is legendary and these images of its daily rituals testify to a justified place of honor in our neighborhood.
The mystery of fashion and its hold on our imagination are driving forces in the work of Charles Dalton. He carefully selects subjects, accessories and lighting to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, and shrouds the obvious in obscurity and fantasy.

The intensity of the desert landscape makes a perfect setting for juxtaposing a beautiful model and props. The light is so strong and clear that it vies for prominence and overpowers anything a human can add, and reminds us that the land was here long before us and remains our playground for only a short time.
NANCY PERRY

The self portrait is proof of the power of photographs to reveal something akin to truth on both sides of the camera. It takes courage to give up the control of being the photographer and to look at one’s self without blinking, and even more to share the images with the world.
The family portrait has been a staple of photography since its founding, from family snapshots to formal commercial photography. Patricia E. Zambrano seeks out GLBT couples for environmental family pictures in living rooms and bedrooms that suggest their shared lives and demonstrate the synergy that comes from love and commitment.
In 1999, Julie Shafer took a photography course at the University of California Irvine (UCI) as a general education requirement. After seeing the announcement for the course, she knew it was something she needed to do. Shafer was inspired by a letter she read from Chief Seattle to President Pierce in 1855, “How can you buy or sell the sky – the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. Yet we do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water.”

Shafer turned a U-Haul van into a darkroom and made a box with the dimensions of its door into a portable darkroom. She used the van to travel to different mining sites and make images of the land. The prints contain white scrapes and other evidence of abuse from the wind and sand, suggesting the human toll on the land by years of mining, staining it with toxins. Shafer feels that no one has the right to put a price on the land.

More of Julie Shafer’s work can be viewed at julie-shafer.com.
There is something sinister about the women in Melissa Kirchhoff’s ‘mermaid’ series. They are so clam and beautiful but gaze at us with an unnatural intensity that suggests their allure may be a siren song, luring us to get close enough to be fatal.
Victorville, California is a high desert city with more than its share of challenges. Once an important stop on Route 66 on the way to Los Angeles, it grew into a sprawling exurb of cheap land and low cost housing. The Great Recession of 2008 wiped away the mirage of an ever-rising real estate market and Beswick’s pictures show the nearly completed remains of an abandoned development, poised so it seems, for a renewal.
The history of Modernism might be summed up in this one image by Matt Siregar. The nature of film, the late modern industrial landscape, the dreamscape and the combination of unusual angles collide in one photograph. Scratches mimic power lines and a massive deity hovers over a smoldering psychological landscape.

One is never sure what Katelin Walczyk’s pictures are about, except to say that they are never about what they show. A conceptualist in the vein of Robert Cummings, Walczyk distorts, obscures and does everything to avoid direct representation, though sometimes what is shown is nonetheless quite marvelous.
Kelly Klofer’s images of a filthy home may make you cringe, but the three young men who live there think it’s just fine. This contemporary ‘bachelor pad’ revels in the chaos of youth culture run amok, a type of freedom many would rather avoid.
Proximity can denote intimacy but in Kaya Park’s photographs they suggest a clinical detachment, a cool and aloof observation of the physical topography of the body. Scars, freckles, piercing and skin texture are gloriously enlarged to create images that are at once alien and familiar.
Ideas and ideals of womanhood continue to evolve and shift and artists explore these issues from various angles. Kahlil Pyburn’s images avoid the familiar notions of sexual freedom, nurturing, and ‘having it all’ to explore the darker psychological aspects of roles imposed and accepted by women and the cultural and historical context that pervades their lives.

An observer twice removed, Moises Ramirez’s photograph of a church service seen through a mirror acts as a meditation on the medium; a clear representation but not the actual scene seen with one’s eye. This strategy is grounded in the status of the observer that is the hallmark of the photojournalist who must remain slightly distant even when deeply involved in a subject.
The Mexamerican experience is so prevalent that it has become the new normal, and Mayte Escobar mines her own cross-cultural heritage to explore what it means to be truly bi-national. With deep roots in both cultures and countries, she examines the schism for creative markers while fully embracing the reality of her two countries and cultures.
Deana Romo continues her exploration of the construction of beauty through media, twisting and reinventing each magazine page or cosmetic advertisement to question its motive. We see her hands on a model’s face, a contrast between a real woman and a myth that opens a window into the chasm between the two.
“MisConnections” is a series based on Wendy Arreola’s observations of personal interactions in the digital world where groups of friends are just as likely to be staring at screens as talking to one another. Time is relative, crawling when we’re bored and flying by when we’re having fun, and these images demonstrate photography’s ability to suggest both simultaneously.
The venerable tradition of street photography is alive and well in Fred Brashear’s photographs. It takes a certain personality to mingle in a crowd, observe, compose and make pictures. Of course, there is usually a confrontation or two to deal with, but Fred stays calm and keeps observing and making pictures, creating a visceral portrait of the hectic Los Angeles street scene.
Majestic is the appropriate term for Joshua Tree National Park whose intense landscape, brilliant light and unforgiving sun are both glorious and deadly. Darcy Curwen’s photographs celebrate its preternatural flora and ancient rock formation with the eye of a formalist and the heart of a naturalist.
Photography’s ability to document human actions and performances is utilized by Jay Dawes in a series of various acts, both sincere and absurd. His "Attempts" recall Yves Klein’s "Into the Void", a photograph in which the artist seemed to be jumping out a window that was actually a fabricated action. Unlike Klein, Dawes is actually doing things like trying to teleport, iron without using his hands or racing a beam of light (spoiler alert: Jay loses). In recording these absurd actions Dawes point to the minor role humans play in the universe but also to our power of observation, desire for innovation, and vanity.
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