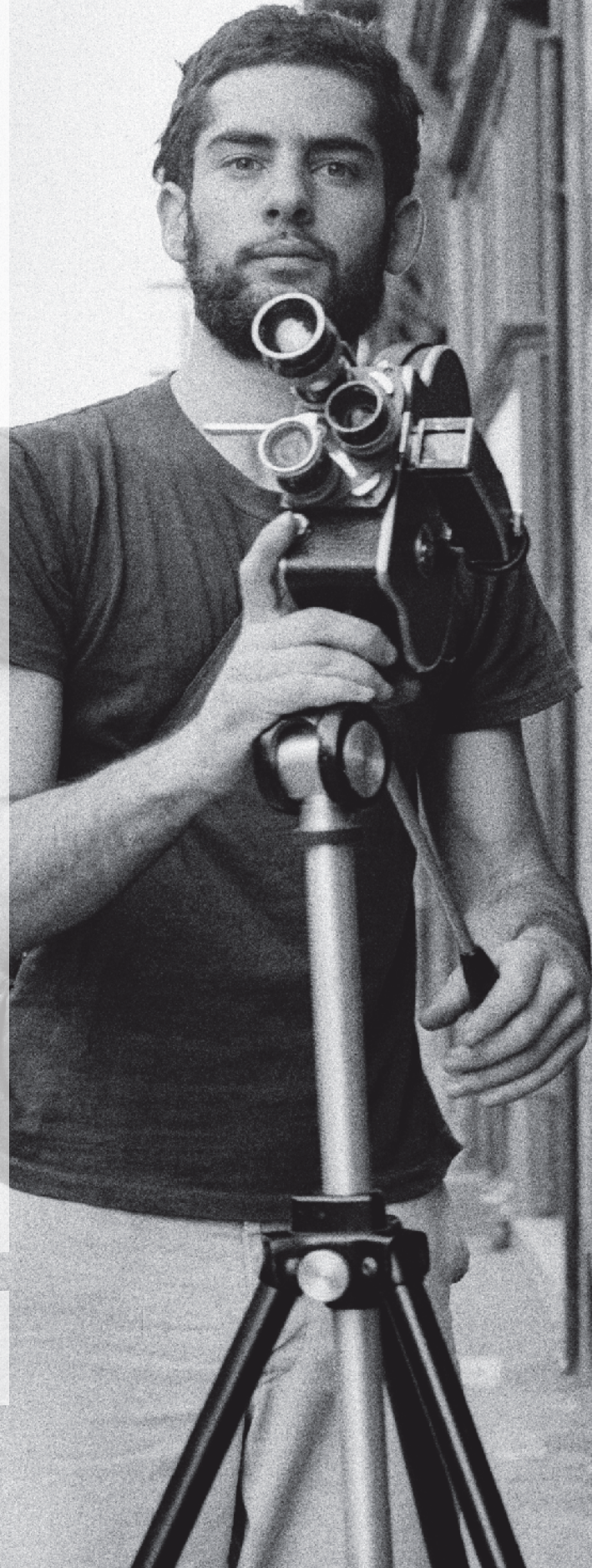


# SALZMANN LAURENCE MANN

A LIFE WITH OTHERS  
JASON FRANCISCO | 2021



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# **LAURENCE SALZMANN**

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FOR LAURENCE



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The series of essays in this book has relied on many hands, without all of whom it would not exist. Laurence Salzmänn and Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmänn have, of course, been at the center of everything. W. Keith McManus and James Rowland provided essential technical assistance. Flash Rosenberg provided valuable insight into Salzmänn's artistic practice, and Anna Grimshaw provided insight about ethnographic filmmaking.

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JASON FRANCISCO





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# FOREWORD

Laurence Salzmänn's life as a professional photographer spans more than half a century and traverses four continents. This vast visual body of work is at the same time fine art and anthropological field research displaying ethnographic and aesthetic qualities of the highest caliber. His interdisciplinary projects cover a range of human experiences and geographical locales, documenting indigenous people in Mexico, Cuba, and Peru, the last surviving members of Jewish communities in Romania and Turkey, Black-Jewish relationships in the United States, life in single room occupancy hotels in New York City during the 1960s, and lived experiences on the streets of Philadelphia.

The Penn Libraries celebrates the donation of the Laurence Salzmänn and Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmänn Collection not only for the beauty, depth, range, and human significance of its images. The Salzmänn Collection gift, comprising more than twenty distinct projects, also programmatically advances our ongoing curatorial efforts to rethink the role of photography in libraries, both as primary sources to collect and as a foundation for building and teaching visual literacy.

Learning to read a photograph is no less complex than learning to read words on a page. What do we see when we look at a photograph? Less intuitively, how do we learn to read between the lines of an image, to ask what do we not see? If we caption an image with words, how will these words alter the way we read and make sense of the images? Does understanding art require us to know more about the artist? If so, how do we make sense of the life of a photographer whose camera lens focuses outward?

In this catalogue, and the exhibition it complements, Jason Francisco, the brilliant author of this unprecedented study and himself an acclaimed photographer, scholar and faculty member at Emory University, resorts to words to help us read images and the life of the photographer behind the camera. Francisco's words describe and interpret the oeuvre of the Philadelphia-born Jewish photographer Laurence Salzmänn for the first time in a systematic critical study. It is an act of scholarly assessment and critical judgment, but it is above all an act of loving friendship.

To achieve this double act of critical distance and loving embrace is not easy. The artist's life experiences, though mirrored in his photographs, do not take form in words or images. Laurence Salzmänn is the man behind the camera—the unseen artist who makes visible the marginal, the otherwise unobserved, the nearly forgotten, and the almost lost to time and place.

The artist and his art are by no means identical. The double irony of writing and reading these texts and images reveals multiple layers of invisibility and visibility.

In many practical senses, the gift of the Salzman Collection also is a critically important boon to a generation of curators who have sought to acquire, preserve and provide access to significant collections of contemporary and historical photographs within the framework of the Penn Libraries' Special Collections. The Salzman Collection, unique and significant in its own right, also supplements and strengthens our preexisting holdings, like the Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) album and recent acquisitions including the Lenkin Family Collection of Photography of the Holy Land; the work of Mandate Palestinian Jewish photographers Zoltán Kluger, Eliezer Gelgor, Ephraim (Efrem) Ilani, Hans Chaim Finn, Yehuda Eisenstark, Assaf Kuttin, Shimon Rapaport, Sam Frank, and Paul Gross; the Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica photographic holdings; and the American photographic collections of Arthur Tress and Harvey Finkel and the Disfarmer Collection.

Not only in format but also in terms of content, the Salzman Collection advances our curatorial vision of global special collections building in the way it directly and intimately encounters Latin American, Central-Eastern European, Middle Eastern, and American history and culture. The Turkish-Jewish component of the Salzman Collection, for example, arrived at a most timely moment and was utilized during the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies' postgraduate research fellowship program on Jews in Modern Islamic Contexts during the 2018–19 academic year. There is an additional historical relationship that predates by decades and in some ways prefigured the donation: Laurence Salzman served as the field photographer on the Turkish Jewish documentation project launched in the 1980s by the Annenberg Research Institute, which today has been transformed into the Katz Center at Penn.

Giving thanks is both an honor and an opportunity. It allows us to acknowledge the generosity of those making a gift but also to recognize publicly the many individuals who devoted countless amounts of time and otherwise invisible efforts to making a gift and project like this possible. First, we are deeply grateful to Laurence Salzman and Ayşe Gürsan-Salzman for deciding to entrust us with the permanent responsibility for preserving and providing access to the Salzman Collection. This collection is named for both Laurence and Ayşe, Laurence's wife, an archeological anthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania Museum and collaborator who played a critical role across the decades in the production of this body of work.

To Jason Francisco, neither words nor images are sufficient to capture the profound and essential role he has played bringing this project to fruition, to writing and editing this catalogue, and curating the exhibition of selections of the Salzman Collection. A project of this scale and importance also depends on the work of our exhibitions designers. We thank Andrea Gottschalk, who first took on this project, and spent countless hours helping conceptualize and advance its contours. We also are deeply indebted to Brittany Merriam, who arrived amidst the COVID pandemic to take up the design, including the cover art for this beautiful catalogue, which displays her creative talents on every page. Our deep thanks to Dustin Tursack and the skilled team at Brilliant Graphiks in Exton, Pennsylvania for the production of the Salzman catalogue.

Laurence Salzman first approached us over twenty years ago about the possibility of making the Penn Libraries the permanent home for his life's work. In the course of the many years of discussions, many people have played a critical role in realizing this vision. We thank Constantia Constantinou, the H. Carton Rogers III Vice Provost and Director of the Penn Libraries, as well as Sean Quimby, the Director of the Jay I. Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, for inaugurating the catalogue, public exhibition, symposium and web-presentation of the Salzman Collection.

Historically, this project would not have been possible without the support of H. Carton Rogers, III, the preceding Vice-Provost and Director of the Penn Libraries, who gave the green light to proceed. William Noel, the Director of the Jay I. Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, provided the leadership, patience, guidance and wisdom to bring this project to completion. Ruth Sutton, the Director of the Penn Libraries' Office of Advancement, and Matthew Pilecki, Associate Director of that department, in partnership with the University's Central Development team brought their unique expertise and intensive efforts to bear upon the negotiation and execution of the deed of gift.

Special recognition and praise belong to our team at the Kislak Special Collections Processing Center (SCPC), directed by Regan Kladstrup. Holly Mengel, our head Archivist, and Donna Brandolisio, our Manuscripts Cataloger at the Kislak SCPC, physically rehoused and processed the Salzman Collection. Holly Mengel took on the daunting task and completed an invaluable finding aid, now viewable on line, of the entire Salzman Collection in record time. Abigail Lang, the Kislak Special Collections Management Librarian and Registrar, coordinated the delivery and accessioning of the Salzman gift and oversaw the shepherding of this gift from its home in West Philadelphia to its new home at the Kislak Center.

Finally, we offer our profound thanks to the technical team involved in building the online platform for ingesting the metadata and images received from the Salzmans. They are all to be congratulated and thanked for resolving numerous unforeseen complexities and providing a robust and visually compelling site for hosting, preserving, and presenting the Salzman Collection online: Douglas Emery, Special Collections Digital Content Programmer and the team in the Libraries' Technology & Digital Initiatives division: Jessica Dummer, David Johnson, Dennis Mullen, and Robert Persing.

Arthur Kiron, Ph.D.

Schottenstein-Jesselson Curator of Judaica Collections  
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# PREFACE

This book is the first critical consideration of the fifty-plus-year career of Laurence Salzmänn, whose archive was acquired in 2018 by the University of Pennsylvania's Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts. Salzmänn's long career has touched an exceptionally broad range of inquiries, which include (in no particular order): cultural anthropology, folk and folklore studies, race and ethnicity studies, American studies, Latin American studies, Romanian studies, Turkish studies, Jewish studies, memory studies, migration studies, Holocaust and post-Holocaust studies, post-Communist studies, post-colonial studies, urban studies, and peasant studies, among others. Penn acquired the archive with the confidence that Salzmänn's work has enduring value for researchers and the general public now and in the future—not merely as a visual record of times and places, but also as a sustained interpretive practice across times and places, motivated by both specific and universal concerns. This book, then, is an inquiry into what Salzmänn has meant by an artistic life, a pursuit of life-wisdom in visual form, unfolding step by step with a dynamism that defies easy categorization.

This book operates on two levels. First, it functions as a guide to the contents of Salzmänn's archive. The essays that form the bulk of this book are close readings of what I consider to be the major works of Salzmänn's career, as well as some of the smaller works. Admittedly, no retrospective can account for almost six decades of sustained work, comprising dozens of projects, tens of thousands of photographs and hundreds of hours of film, so in a strict sense this book is incomplete. It is nothing like a stand-in for all that Salzmänn has done; rather, it is a critical introduction.

My goal is to show pathways through Salzmänn's creative preoccupations, to be followed further, and to be departed from. Second, this book functions as a kind of conceptual toolkit for interpreting Salzmänn's work, which I hope will be useful for future engagements of his rich archive, and perhaps other bodies of work also. Photography's complexity as a medium, and the complexity of Salzmänn's accomplishments with it, make such a toolkit an intellectual responsibility.

The opening section of the book, "Thinking Photography," addresses a series of theoretical issues that inform my arguments for Salzmänn's specific works and his general importance. General readers can skip this section, and proceed to the essays of Part I. The bulk of this book is not written in the language of specialists, though it does reach back to make connections with the opening part.

In 1969, at the very time the young Salzman was cutting his teeth as a photographer, Susan Sontag observed trenchantly that “art is certainly now, mainly, a form of thinking”—and this remains true in most corners of the art world.<sup>1</sup> But the enormous expansion of the art world in the last fifty years, and the migration of photography from a peripheral to a central medium of artistic practice—in many ways the central medium, and also a medium without a center, a complex of lens-based practices with histories but no hierarchies—all of this has nuanced our understandings of visual thinking, while only sometimes clarifying it as if from a distance. Indeed, essential terms to describe that thinking have yet to be invented. For example, the English language lacks a word for one of central topics of this book, namely the combined act of seeing and reading at once. I am not speaking of an esoteric activity but rather something that I suspect many people have experienced, though without a word to name that experience. Not merely to glance at a photograph, but really to see a photograph, is to study it, to interpret it, to tell stories from and about it, often to re-render it in words. And to read a photograph is to observe it well, to behold its meanings, to be given a power of (in)sight by means of it. To engage with photographs is to see-read them, to see-and-read, see-yet-read, see-to-read, see-having-read, and so forth. A book inventing the missing words for what photography asks of us is a project for another time.

My see-reading of Salzman takes shape around a broad thesis, pivoting on a distinction between what can be called historical consciousness and magical consciousness. Salzman’s career is a story of an artist working with both types of consciousnesses—finding and following their distinct visual forms with a mixture of intuition and planning—for the sake of inducing and modulating these forms of consciousness in his audiences.

As I try to show, historical and magical consciousness each form a through-line of Salzman’s artistic life, the two together forming the track on which his projects ride. Besides describing the terms and stakes of his projects, my task, as I give it to myself, is to articulate how these two forms of consciousness operate aesthetically—how Salzman makes from them a distinct poetics of seeing—and, in so doing, articulating why I consider him a very important photographer of his generation. My claims have nothing to do with Salzman’s position in the art world. For most of his career, he has been largely indifferent to the stumbling chase after visibility, reputation and the processes of self-commodification to which career-conscious artists submit themselves, and sometimes even learn to like. Rather my argument proceeds from

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<sup>1</sup>Susan Sontag, “Aesthetics of Silence,” in *Styles of Radical Will*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

a careful look into his accomplishments themselves, the ambitions he set for himself and the mastery he found by way of these ambitions, both in the realm of the social and historical, and equally of the fantastical and the mystic.

While Salzman's career is in many regards a story of refinement at border-crossing, quite literal geopolitical borders and also the borders between peoples and races, also those that would separate documentary from art, I see his restlessness with borders as propelled by a consistent ethical impulse connected to the Jewish values he inherited, which have framed his life. A particular ethical seriousness characterizes Salzman's work, organically and not didactically. Salzman's work begins from a fundamental valuation of difference and divergence, a conception of the universal not as an agency of normativity, but rather as that unique thing which affirms the unique qualities of all things, to quote the American-Jewish artist Ben Shahn.<sup>2</sup> Again and again, Salzman's work spells out a commitment to the uniqueness of each human being, soul, spirit, body—each made, as Jewish tradition says, in the image of God. Again and again, his work undertakes the task of remembering the stranger, the marginalized, the ostracized, the unseen.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, Salzman's life's work takes seriously the obligation to repair the world—what Jewish tradition calls *tikkun olam*—and to do so through curiosity and questioning, which is to say the responsibilities that questions bring. Beyond a critical understanding of the positional awareness of the differences between insiders and outsiders, Salzman's work is concerned with the practice of other-centric ethics—a xenophilia made live in oneself. His projects explore what it looks like to affirm others on their terms rather than merely our own, and what it looks like to defend those vulnerable to ignorance and stereotype. In the sustaining of these investigations over decades, Salzman emerges by turns as an American, an internationalist, and a Jew—a dynamic identify in shifting balances.

I am quite prepared to dispute my own preparation to write this book. I am not a scholar of any of the fields that Salzman's work engages. I can only approach Salzman as the person I am: an artist working primarily in photography, with a background in philosophy, history and politics. Because I am a photographer, certain things are evident to me that I think are also evident to Salzman. Almost without trying, I see in Salzman variants of what I myself have learned over the last thirty years of my own life in photography: that Salzman's way of photographing is a particular blend of spontaneity and discipline, that it involves a particular kind

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<sup>2</sup>Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Concern for the stranger (Hebrew: *ger*) is of supreme importance in the Jewish religious tradition. The Torah repeats the exhortation to “remember the stranger” no fewer than 36 times, the most of any commandment, and spells out more laws for dealing with the protection of the stranger than with anything else, including honoring God, observing Shabbat, and so forth.



of half-planning, intuition and anticipation as a way of working with open-ended problems that have multiple solutions, and that it is a continuous leveraging of clarity against ambiguity, confidence against incomplete knowing. By default, my presentation in this book reflects a view of Salzman from inside these ways of knowing.

I should say from the outset that it is beyond the scope of this book to consider every one of Salzman's projects, in a career spanning more than fifty years. A complete list of his photoworks and filmworks is provided as an appendix. It is impossible also to present here anything close to a visual representation of even one of his projects. The images that appear here should not be taken as a distillation of his life's work. Rather, I have chosen them because I find them useful in studying the archive. If my presentation is successful, it will compel readers to go directly to the work either online or by visiting the Kislak Center. Further, this book is not a biography of Salzman, a recounting of his own personal story. Some biographical details appear in the text, others in the chronology he has written, and still others in the interview with his wife, Dr. Ayşe Gürsan-Salzman—the chronology and interview included as appendices. Primarily, however, this book is a turning toward his work, not his life in its times.

On the other hand, I cannot begin to write about Salzman's work as someone might in forty years or a hundred—hoping very much that a century from now we will have seen a flowering of engagements with his legacy. I cannot write as if I did not know him as personally as I do, and as if I did not love and value him as I do. And so it is fair to say that this is a book of thoughts, pushed from behind by feelings. For this reason it is, I suppose, a book of live engagements and not forensic analyses. For the flaws of this approach, there is no rhetorical self-inoculation that I know of, only a willingness to be mistaken and look again.

# BACKGROUND/ THINKING PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographs are paradoxically among the most accessible and the most complex forms of visual culture. To speak of a photographic image is to speak of an image made by the convergence of multiple technologies—optics, mechanics, chemistry, electronics—some of which require practice and expertise, and some of which a child or even a non-human animal can use. To speak of photographic meaning is to speak of what such images force us to contend with—the acts of interpretation prompted by and concentrated in them. To speak of a photograph is to speak of an image that is often solicitous toward its audiences, inviting viewers into its plainness or its spectacle, its empathy or its coldness, its realism or its recondite description. And this is just to say that to speak of a photograph is not to speak of an image that is self-meaningful, or an image that retains whatever meaning is imputed to it or extracted from it.

Photography is and always has been a dynamically unstable field. Part media, part science, part art, part vernacular culture, photography sits at the intersection of literature, philosophy, history, politics, theater, cinema, technology, and painting. It is, on the one hand, a means of visualizing these conceptual overlaps, what the crossings of these inquiries look like by way of light reflecting from the surfaces of the world. On the other hand, photography reveals the gaps, fault lines, zones of cancellation and vanishment that appear when these inquiries cross. The overwhelming majority of the billions of photographs made by various means in the nearly two centuries since photography's invention are, I venture, unself-conscious and unself-critical undertakings, but this is not to say that any photograph is interpretively simple. Even the seemingly most naive photographs present us with the complication of discerning mimesis from transformation, the medium's capacity to record and copy passively, as against its capacity to alter, extend and intensify seeing.

If photographs ferry us into and through the shared, observable world, they do so along currents of distinctly subjective tendencies, temperaments and biases. If they communicate persuasively, with authenticity and (according to the dominant mythology) involuntary truthfulness, they have also been continuously subject to distrust that spies in them manipulation, distortion and falsification. If photographs are simultaneously windows onto the world and mirrors of photographers' concerns, they are also stand-ins for both, brokering access to outer and inner realities, and blocking entry as much as they allow it.

In some measure, photography can be defined not merely as a visual claiming of the world, but as the slippage between the world and its image—the difference between whatever we envision the unrepresented world to be on its own, and whatever we conclude appearances and illusions to be on their own. A fixing of appearances that is empty of fixed meaning, a method for making illusions endure, a visual convening of new and old, arriving and departed, fresh and expired, discovered and invented and forgotten purposes, it is fair to describe photographs as radical objects of culture, as entropic as they are fertile.

All of this is to say that critically approaching Salzman's photographs means wading into the complications that characterize photography as a medium. Beyond the general issues are the complications of his own handlings and preoccupations. Of the general issues, three are especially important, which I will call the problems of severance, agencies and language.

Reproducing visual appearances with more or less convincing exactitude, photographs generally describe their contents through severance, isolation, and compression, fragmenting space and time in order to create a greater imagination of space and time in which the image participates. The photographic frame typically seems to have been cut out of the spherical whole of space, often in such a way that the viewer feels the ability almost to predict what exists to be seen outside the frame (a power almost never associated with painting and drawing). Likewise, the photographic "moment" is typically one in an imagined procession of moments, extracted and magnified. This moment is so strongly related to a flow of time that the viewer may feel the ability almost to predict what came before and what came after the moment pictured—or at least certain, when the moment seems of indeterminate duration, that the time of the picture belongs somehow in history and not just in imagination.

Consider, for example, a photograph from Salzman's 1999–2003 project *La Lucha / The Struggle* (**Figure 1**). The picture situates us in the midst of a relay of guesses about what we do not see as one method of accounting for what we do see. Seven figures are arrayed across the picture's horizon line, which is itself situated about halfway along its vertical axis. These figures are spaced at regular intervals, without quite forming a symmetrical design. The light is flat and even from corner to corner through the picture, the space enclosed by the concrete wall and floor suffused with a soft glow.

Inasmuch as the picture can be said to begin from its edges, what can we say about the place where this scene is happening? Are we below ground or maybe on a roof? Is the light coming from the sky or from windows? How high is the wall? How long is it? At the far left, partially blocked by the figure, are what appear to be two steps—where do they lead? The wooden pallet at right, what is it leaning against, and what does that unseen surface tell us about the shape of the room itself? The picture poses these and many related questions about the space it shows, and does so because of the inbuilt logic of pictorial severance that is foundation to lens-based images. It answers none of them.

Similarly, the image poses similar questions about the time interval it shows. We might guess that the exposure was  $1/125$  of a second, but this or some similar fraction of a second does not begin to explain the senses of time present in this picture.<sup>4</sup> Several temporal senses seem to congregate in this photograph. The concrete environment itself is, of course, static, and imparts a general sense of temporal stasis, with the cracking of the floor and the chipping of the wall indicating slow-to-develop effects of seasons and years. Against this stasis, the figures seem in their places provisionally, in the midst of some process of change and movement. But how to understand this movement? Of the seven figures, four of them are standing at rest—numbers 1, 3, 5, 7 from left, and possibly number 2 also, depending on how we read the shifting of his weight onto his right leg and the differing positions of his arms. The standing times of these figures seem to be of varying durations, with number 3 perhaps the longest and most indeterminate. Figures 4 and 6 are most evidently in motion, in mid-step, but how quickly are they moving, and at a regular or irregular pace? As with the imagination of space, the inbuilt logic of pictorial severance raises questions that the picture cannot answer about how time passes in this place.

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<sup>4</sup>I do not know the particulars of this exposure, but I can reverse engineer it to some extent: Salzmann used a medium format Hasselblad 500 C/M for this project, probably with an 50mm  $f/4$  Zeiss Distagon. The negative was made on Kodak Tri-X film rated at 400 ISO. Guessing that the wall was some 20 feet from where Salzmann stood, and studying the depth of field, I would call the exposure  $f/5.6$  at  $1/125$ .

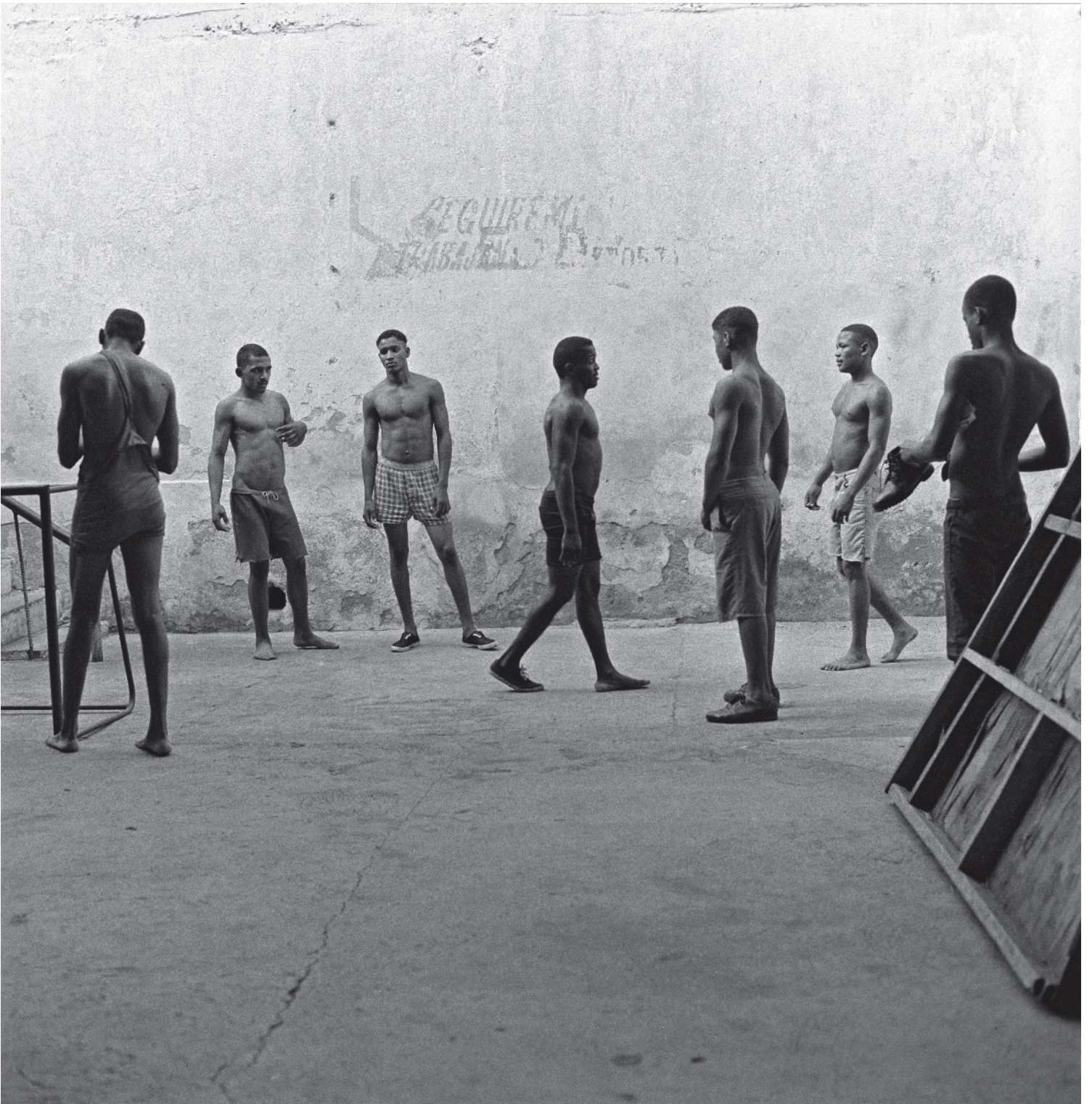


FIGURE 1

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001.

In my understanding, at least four types of interpretive claim are present in photographs, and what photographs “mean” is, more specifically, how we understand these claims in balance. I think of these claims as agencies operating in and through photographs—as means for controlling interpretation, as powers that act on our understanding. If I am right in this approach, photographs are, properly speaking, sites where these agencies convene, and at the same time vehicles for emitting or disseminating them culturally. These core four agencies exerting interpretive claim are as follows:

A. The subject to which the image refers, often the world toward which the lens is directed. Photographic meaning is prototypically a matter of strong reference, such that the image is understood not merely to point to something outside itself, but to be inhabited by that something—not merely to reproduce appearances, but visually to embody what appears, to instantiate it. In this sense, the photographic image shares an identity with whatever we name and identify in it. This sharing of identity is commonsensical: we show a photograph of what we ate at a restaurant and say, “this is their cheesecake, it’s fantastic,” without thinking to say that the image is an illusion or a rendering of the cheesecake, though this is what it is. A simple thought experiment proves the point. Imagine being shown two versions of one of Salzmann’s Bucharest trolley-riders from his 1976–1976 project “Souvenirs of a Recent Time” (**Figure 2**). The two images are visually indistinguishable, but you are told that one of them is a photograph and one is a painting. That piece of conceptual information is, I think, enough to make you see the images differently. To identify the picture as a photograph is to be led to think that a window of an actual trolley in Bucharest, and an actual building reflected in it, and an actual figure behind it, an actual ice and precipitation on that window, are significantly responsible for what the image looks like. To identify the same picture as a painting is to be led to think that an artist’s imagination is significantly responsible for what the image looks like. With the photograph, the world pictured acquires heuristic agency, a claim on the meaning of the photograph and often the first claim. That the world outside the image has any such agency at all is a defining quality of photography as against other types of images. Or to put the point differently: photography carries a cultural need for a type of image caused by the subject seen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Elaborating the photograph in classically Aristotelian terms seems to me a useful exercise in grasping the senses in which we commonly understand the world’s responsibility for the photographic image. In Aristotle’s scheme, the photograph’s material cause is the photographic technology used, including camera, lens, analogue enlarger or digital printer, etc.; the formal cause is the image form these materials can and do make, e.g. the look of a telephoto lens; the efficient cause is the photographer; and the final cause is the world itself rendered in the image, in Aristotle’s words, “the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done.” See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V2.



FIGURE 2

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1975.

- B. A photographer's specific perception, vision, reading, and handling of the subject. The decisions that a photographer makes are, of course, crucial at every level. For observational photography, these decisions begin from the simple and difficult questions of where and when: exactly where in space to put the camera and where to point it, which is to say where to want it put and pointed; and exactly when to release the shutter? And they quickly give way how and why: with what equipment, technique, form of delivery; and for what expressive or communicative tasks? In the case of Salzman's Bucharest trolley, the decision to approach this window of this trolley on this day from this height, with this camera and this lens focused in this way, these and a thousand other decisions were made within a nexus of intentions and motivated guesses. Modernists at least from the time of Alfred Stieglitz have understood these choices as exercisings of the very kinds of skills that govern other fine arts practices, i.e., those that privilege the artist's control, skill, intentionality. The modernist tradition has typically understood the artist's agency as a statement, even a reclamation of authorial prerogative, as against the other agencies at work in the creation of photographic meaning.
- C. The medium itself, its technologies, properties, and capacities and characteristics, which are understood to operate independently of the world and of the artist. It is photography as a medium, for example, to which we commonsensically attribute things that we cannot normally see except through photography. Unaided human vision cannot discern whether the hooves of a horse at full gallop all leave the ground at once, cannot discern the micro-droplets of venom sprayed by a terrified bombardier beetle, and cannot discern exactly what remarkable sphere a mining detonation causes to propel through the air—all of which we can see clearly from short exposure photography. Likewise, human vision cannot see what a cumulative half second of time looks like, much less an hour or a year, though photography shows these things to us. Unaided human vision cannot see deep depth of field or change the proportions of visual phenomena or change the brightness and contrastness and color palette of the retinal image, but all of these things appear in photography as part of the technology's agency. In Salzman's trolley photograph, the technical particularities of the camera and lens and film and developer Salzman used all have a claim on this picture, which would have been different with different equipment.



D. The authorizing contexts in which images are presented, deployed and used. Examples include news and information, advertising, editorial work, fine art, historical and cultural record-making, personal and family memory-keeping, and others.<sup>6</sup> To speak of authorized contexts for interpreting photographs is to speak of the discursive frameworks that stand behind and with photographs, which effectively transform a photograph from something to be seen into something also to be read. Such authorizing contexts direct the viewer into particular interpretive pathways, which lead into a shared cognitive space within which the image makes—rises to—sense. The same photograph is liable to shift meanings as it shifts authorizing contexts. Salzman's trolley photograph would jerk interpretively back and forth (like a trolley itself) if, for example, we were to encounter it on a wanted poster in a Bucharest police precinct, as against seeing it on a Bucharest billboard advertising the latest recording of Taraf de Haïdouks, as against its appearance in a history exhibition on public transportation during the Communist period in Romania, as against finding it on the cover of a bitter emigrant poet's memoir, titled *I Never Loved You, Romania*.

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<sup>6</sup>What I am calling authorizing contexts could arguably amount to a matter of photographic genre, but to use this term calls down complications. To speak of commonly ordained uses of photography, with attending conventions and modes of reception, is to speak of something different—to speak across—traditional genres in visual art, which are also sometimes grafted onto photography, such as portraiture, landscape, still life, history painting, or scenes of everyday life.

Photography's relationship to language is crucial and not incidental to what we construe to be photographic meaning. Sometimes words assign meaning to images, as for example a newspaper caption or social media tag (in both of these cases enacting the conventions of authorizing context). Sometimes words propose meaning for images, as for example an advertising slogan, or a wall text in a museum exhibition, or an essay by a blowhard academic droning on too long about the philosophic esoterica of photography. Or to put it most succinctly, words catalyze photographs into meaning. Language acts—written or oral, implicit or explicit—lead us to see photographs, to look into a photograph and not just at it. The addition of language makes the image into a picture of something, which is to say whatever incomplete coherence emerges in the imagination when we try to account for what the image is showing us.

Photography is often spoken of as a language, but I have never found this idea compelling, even as a metaphor. More accurate, I think, is to say that photography is a hybrid act of showing and telling, a showing that beckons acts of telling which, in turn, affirm the showing as a condition of shownness. There is no word in English for the fusion of showing and telling that we encounter routinely in photography, much less the strange combination of contingency and mutability of that fusion, just as there is no word to describe an image turned into a state of language and vice versa, no words other than metaphors for the mental acts that condense images into words, or that thicken words into vision. (We can invent such a word, “showtell” or “tellshow” and the cognitive dissonance that results deserves exploration.) Likewise there is no word in English for the particular fusion of seeming-to-be and being-despite-appearances that defines the photographic illusion—an image that is as unreal as any imitation but more abundantly realistic for that unrealness.

But for all the insistence with which photographs prompt storytelling, this is not to say that photography is a narrative medium. It is not, or at least not blithely so. Without words, and before and after words, photographs are simply evocative and implicative, closer to the condition of poetry than to narrative proper. To consider photography by itself to be visual storytelling,<sup>7</sup> we need to ignore a great deal about what we cannot understand from photographs, which includes even the most basic distinctions between cause and consequence, starting point and ending point, reason and unreason. To return to Salzmann's photograph from Cuba (**Figure 1**), the picture confirms nothing about plot, character, theme, symbolism, conflict and resolution, and other rudimentary elements of what we call narrative.

Are these seven figures part of a group or a team, working together, or are they individuals who happen to be together just then? How often do they come here, and for how many years? We know they are athletes, but who is more skilled and who less? Who is physically stronger and who weaker? What are the interpersonal dynamics of the group? Is there a leader, and who is it?

Is there a contest for dominance? What can we say about the character and personalities and psychologies of these wrestlers? Why does the figure at the far right hold a shoe? We can only begin to speculate, to impute, to venture in words.

The extent and intensity of narrative indeterminacy in this picture is typical, not atypical, of photographic images, both those made using realistic pictorial forms and abstraction. Some would conclude that photography represents a crisis of narrative, others that photography should be understood as something other than narrative in the first place. Again, there is no ready word to describe what happens when images seem to invite storytelling as a response to (the crisis of interpretive disjunction surrounding) what they show, when images accommodate such stories without end or regard for the contradictions that may emerge, and when images even serve to authenticate the stories that attach to them—what happens when images do all of this with blithe indifference and radical disregard. Taking the liberty to try to invent a word, I would say that photographs are better called paranarrative (to the side of narrative), or narrativistic (narrative-like), or antenarrative (before narrative), circumnarrative (around narrative), the last particularly attractive when it comes to articulating the rhetorical tricksterism that photography's narrative solicitations trade on.

It is worth making one further point about the language we use to describe the ways that words mediate photographs, broker the complications of photographic appearance without ever resolving the internal turbulences. The word “caption”—an anchoring text for a photographic image—shares an etymology with what has become the most common term to describe a photograph, its ability to “capture” something important, and also now a routine term for a technical aspect of the photographic process, as in “digital capture,” which is to say digitization.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>For didactic purposes, I might suggest a loose syllogism on this point: photography is to poetry as cinema is to prose. This is not to say that poetry cannot be narrative, pragmatic, informational or straightforward, or that prose cannot be lyrical, expressive, imaginative or experiential. These would be stupid assertions on their face. But like photography, poetry tends to isolate things as a way of considering them, while cinema, like prose, de-isolates things. Like photography, poetry tends toward an encounter with inwardly or outwardly dilated moments, while cinema, like prose, tends toward a passage through moments well concatenated. Like photography, poetry is an art of saying something else by saying something precisely, while cinema, like prose, is the art of saying something precisely so that it can also be said otherwise.

<sup>8</sup>“Caption,” “capture,” “captive,” “captivity,” “captivate,” also “capable” and “capability” all derive from the Latin “captus,” past participle of the verb “capere,” meaning “to take” or “to seize.” Interestingly, “capture” turns out to be the etymological cousin of the English word “have,” both sharing the same Proto-Indo-European root “kap,” “to grasp.” “Have” is further linked to a word like “haven,” whose original meaning is “a place that holds ships”; etymology becomes poetry when a place of sanctuary (“haven”) shares a root with the condition of imprisonment (“captivity”).

“Caption” and “capture” are in turn linked to the words “captive” and “captivity,” which is to say that we are speaking of a metaphor: photography as an act of holding captive, confining, imprisoning something in the condition of an image.<sup>9</sup> Why has this metaphor become dominant, so much so that it may seem even not to be a metaphor? The answer to this question seems to me a further question: what cultural need does such an image type fulfill—an image that seizes, restrains, controls, holds what it shows in virtual bondage? Why should we not say that what we mean when we say a photograph “captures” something is that it captures our imagination of something? There are, after all, other metaphors that equally well account for what a photograph does, including the opposite, namely release something into awareness, let free an encounter with the world and the self, circulate a play of interpretation. Instead of speaking of a photograph capturing the world, we could equally well speak of a photograph prolonging it across time and place, setting it loose and setting it up to be lost.

John Berger observed some decades ago, I think correctly, that we should not mistake photography’s capacity to preserve appearances with a capacity to preserve meaning.<sup>10</sup> Rather, we should approach photographic appearances, in Salzmann’s case an archive of them, as a portal into the play of agencies that we discern in them. Across Salzmann’s archive we encounter a gap between what a picture is of and what a picture is about, which is to say a constant irresolution and the anxiety that accompanies it. Notwithstanding the effort to articulate a way through this irresolution, for example to provide an account of Salzmann’s artistic intentions (which I will mostly not do, because it is not my role to ventriloquize him) or speak of Salzmann’s projects as occupying various positions in a field of possible positions (which I will do), Salzmann’s works will remain uncommitted. If photographs emerge into meaning by way of catalytic uses of language, then strictly speaking, what we mean by photography is an image-text space, a zone of convergences between images and texts—which is also a zone of divergences and departures, where the image appears (all over again) prone to meaning, or subject to it, vulnerable to it, perhaps at the mercy of it. To wish for an easier, more stable, less paradoxical situation is to wish for a medium other than photography.

In 1983, the Czech-Jewish philosopher Vilém Flusser (1920–1991) published what has become an important text in photography’s theoretical literature, *Towards a Philosophy of*

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<sup>9</sup> Insofar as we understand photographs to “contain” or “capture” what they show, strictly speaking the photograph operating in an authorizing context seems to retain or store a visual reading.

<sup>10</sup> Photographs, Berger writes, “offer appearances—with all the credibility and gravity we normally lend to appearances—prised away from their meaning.” See John Berger, “Uses of Photography,” in *About Looking*, New York, Vintage, 1980, p. 55.

<sup>11</sup> Vilém Flusser, *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie*, published in English as *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Anthony Mathews, London, Reaktion Books, 2000.

*Photography*, in which he studies photography as a visual recording technology that is also cultural technique.<sup>11</sup> Flusser approaches photography as a tool for encountering reality objectively, which yields images that are paradoxically more real than the realities to which they refer. Flusser questions what it means to treat such images as sources of knowledge, both informationally and morally—knowledge about how to live. The intricacies of Flusser’s arguments are not my concern here but rather the predicating terms of his exploration, which I find powerful tools for approaching Salzmann’s aesthetics and his ethics.<sup>12</sup>

Flusser understands cultural consciousness to operate in two realms simultaneously, which he calls the magical and the historical. He associates magical consciousness with the production of images, and historical consciousness with the production of texts.<sup>13</sup> In Flusser’s account of magical consciousness, things happen without causes and consequences; they gain meaning through temporal, spatial and symbolic association with other things. Time in magical consciousness does not describe a linear or progressive unfolding of things that happen only once, but the appearance of things that recur in continuously adjusting meanings and implications. Flusser does not liken magical consciousness to music, but the analogy seems apt enough: the chorus in a song establishes a certain repetitional logic, and recurs with changing effect, according to what comes with and between its instances. In speaking of magical consciousness, we are speaking of the connotative powers that one thing can exert against another, the forces of attraction and repulsion that suggestion, implication and inference generate.

If magical consciousness describes a closed mode of signification in which signs (images, sounds, words) gain meaning in a modulative relation to one another, historical consciousness describes an open mode, in which signs gain meaning in relation to something outside the system of sign-making itself. In historical consciousness, things happen exactly once, in a succession of causes and consequences that describe linear time. Historical consciousness involves a type of abstract thinking that brings an apriori demand to the problem of representation, namely

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<sup>12</sup> Flusser’s analysis is unsatisfying on many levels, including its cribbed investigation of photography’s semiotics, its conceptual fawning over poorly grasped technical sides of photography, and its refusal to address actual images made by actual photographers in actual circumstances. The last turns into a significant problem, inasmuch as photography in general eventually becomes photographs in particular, which talk back to theory in inconvenient ways. My interest in Flusser is not in recuperating the flaws and limitations of his thinking, but in repurposing certain of his basic assertions, which I find insightful if directed differently than he himself thought to direct them. Thus my interest in Flusser is apart from the claims that he makes concerning the differences between traditional and technological images; the “orders” of abstraction in traditional images, texts, and technical images; the hierarchies of perceptual and conceptual thinking with regard to images and texts; and the “history” of magical consciousness’ gradual re-investiture in historical consciousness, and of historical consciousness’ investiture in the imagination.

<sup>13</sup> Flusser’s account of the relationship between the image and the text is more mythic than historical, essentially a contest between idolatry and what he calls textolatry, in which writing arises to conquer the traditionally made image, and does conquer it, leading to a counter-conquest by a new, technological image-type emblemized by photography.

“to clear a path to the world behind it,” in Flusser’s words.<sup>14</sup> As such, historical consciousness undertakes a decoding operation or a meta-coding operation in pursuit of coherent reference between the world understood to exist outside representation, and the internal coherence of a representational system.

If Flusser’s distinction is right, photography’s distinctness as an image type can be explained as its capacities to function on the terms of both historical and magical consciousness. The magical dimension of the photograph derives from the interpretive irresolutions with which virtually all photographs are bound up. There is, as I have sketched above, the temporally, spatially and narratively marooned character of the photograph. And there is the predicament of the photograph bearing an imprint (as it were) from two sides—the imprint of the world itself, whose light-reflecting surfaces are necessary to make any image at all, and of the actions of the image-maker, without whose decisions the image would likewise not exist. And there is the situation of the photograph’s lack of independence from the technology’s own capacity to produce images, and a concomitant lack of independence from the discursive environments into which photographs are thrust, and the changing tasks with which they are invested. The upshot is a normalized condition of essencelessness, an inability to reduce the image to any of its contributing elements. Rather, the photograph in its essencelessness is precisely the ground for magical consciousness.

In the photograph’s magical dimension, the present is always present, is always still present—a present that is continuously arising in presence, indeed that cannot help but endure in presence as we look into the image. But inasmuch as the present in presence was made for a future that will regard it as the past, the magical consciousness induced by a photograph lies just here: in the photograph’s special capacity not to scant time’s hybrid character, which crosses present, future and past. And further, in the photograph’s magical dimension absence is also ineluctably present. The enduring illusion of the present precisely points to a not-yet-arrived, absent future, which in turn points back to an already-gone, now-passed present, which is also a face of absence. In other words, both presence and absence are hybrid presentations of present, past and future. In this situation, it is only natural that meaning should arise in the magical way—through suggestion, imputation, association, inference, symbolic resonance.

In the photograph’s historical dimension, the present was always present—was necessarily present—a present that can only not endure in presence. It was a present in a succession of presents, one following the next, marking out a fixed chronological progression, notwithstanding

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<sup>14</sup>Flusser, op. cit., 10. Flusser’s point seems to be that historical consciousness is *abstract* insofar as it involves a process of removal: to convey anything about reality already involves removing it from a pre- or extra-representational state into a condition of representation.

that the terms describing it are relative to our position in it (yesterday's present is today's past, and tomorrow's past is today's present, and so forth). The historical consciousness induced by a photograph lies exactly here: in time's unamalgamated character, which distinguishes one present from another according to familiar rules. In history, no two presents can occur at once, and the order in which they occur cannot be determined in advance or changed afterward. In a photograph's historical dimension, however ambiguous and interpretively opaque a photograph may be, it participates in a temporal reality greater than itself, and it communicates that reality, which operates through it. If in magical consciousness the photograph produces a sense of time, in historical consciousness it receives a value in time. If in magical consciousness the photograph gains and loses imaginative texture, in historical consciousness it transmits a non-imagined actuality. If in magical consciousness the photograph creates and sustains subjective experience, in historical consciousness it relays an objective condition persisting through subjective experience, conditioning it from without.

Salzmann's career is unusual for the ways that he works within and with both types of consciousness, leveraging one against the other, testing one with the other, infusing them into one another in varying proportions. There are certain projects that lead with or privilege historical consciousness—call them documentary works—and others that give advantage to magical consciousness, which could be called art photography. I am not particularly fond of either label, inasmuch as neither accounts for the senses in which the not-dominant consciousness is always present, beyond which there is the danger of reinforcing the stereotype that documentary is or should be artless, and that the art in art photography is or should be a subverting of “mere” documentary. Salzmann's documentary work, whose purpose is an acute consciousness of and in history, is shot through with a deep feeling for the magical dimensions of photographic images, not as aesthetic surplus but as a probing of that historical consciousness itself. And Salzmann's projects that wander away from documentary purposes—and there is no phase of his long career in which he failed to wander—return to touch historical consciousness at various points, folding them into the journey that magical consciousness follows.

As such, there are legitimately distinct ways of describing Salzmann's practice. On one hand, he could be called non-committal, insofar as his documentary works consistently fall short of message-making, and his fine art works refuse to valorize—read: fetishize—the familiar conceits of originality, mastery, and rarity. This is not to say that his fine art works lack these elements, or that his documentary works have nothing to teach or advocate. But Salzmann does not push either didacticism or aestheticism as terms of primary engagement, and for some observers, he will seem to have incompletely embraced the documentary and artistic problems he sets out for himself. On the other hand, Salzmann can fairly be called insistent, even relentless in pursuit of what I read as a holistic vision. Again and again, in place after place he takes on the problem of

pointing historical and magical consciousnesses toward one another, and creating varieties of intersection between them. In Salzmänn's vision, in my reading of the ways as it has taken shape over a lifetime, historical consciousness resists consigning imagination to the realm of the subjective, and magical consciousness resists isolating the outer world in the realm of the objective.

In what follows, I consider Salzmänn's major works within these two registers of his works, looking into the ways his integrative aesthetics operate on a case by case basis.





# PART I: SALZMANN AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Salzmann is best known as a documentary photographer, which is to say—drawing on the first section above—a maker of images that operate within a historical consciousness, and for the sake of it. Photography in its documentary mode is primarily the practice of making historical consciousness visual, which is to say pictorial—making pictures in history, of what will be regarded as history, for the sake of the social project called history. Salzmann, like all photographers working with the documentary idiom as it has developed in the last hundred years, inherits certain basic ideas about the ways such pictures operate—ideas by now naturalized in Western visual culture. I would summarize these as follows:

1. The documentary photograph reveals, gives shape to, and stands for a durable connection between viewer and viewed, who are understood to share the same world, if occupying different positions within it. The documentary photographer functions as the go-between, with an equal share in the domains of viewer and viewed. The documentary photographer is often celebrated for uncommon social flexibility and the ability to transgress social boundaries, which in certain places become also ethical and even spiritual boundaries. In short, documentary trades on confronting social difference, and attempting to make it visible. As an early example in Salzmann's oeuvre, I would turn to a portrait of his father, Harry Salzmann (1902–1970), made in 1962 in his father's offices on the ground floor of the family's home on Pine Street in central Philadelphia (**Figure 3**). Harry Salzmann's parents were Jews from the town of Tulchyn in what is today Ukraine, and emigrated to Philadelphia when the elder Salzmann was an infant. Harry Salzmann became a successful surgeon and in 1933 married Eunice Chaiken (1916-2003), daughter of a well-to-do Philadelphia Jewish family. The portrait has the qualities of a sympathetic confrontation, Salzmann's father centered precisely in the frame, looking directly and steadily into the camera, his brow slightly furrowed in the soft natural light, his gaze stern. He holds a not-quite-comfortable posture, head slightly forward of his shoulders, arms moved behind his back in a gesture that is not one of repose, and that has the effect of opening the lapel of his buttoned coat to make a heart-like shape for his breast.

The portrait has the quality of a gentle face-off, with the son rendering the father as a certain kind of equal—not bigger, not mightier—but also not comprehended, a figure appearing momentarily illuminated in a prepossessing darkness, caring but remote. The photograph is something like a meeting point between the inner realities of father and son, a point of convergence that admits a feeling for the distance between them.



FIGURE 3

LAURENCE SALZMANN, DR. HARRY SALZMANN,  
FATHER OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1963.

2. From the common ground of a shared world, documentary splits into descriptivist and activist streams, the former undertaking visual investigation without (further) instrumentalist goals, the latter undertaking moral suasion and political persuasion with various degrees of reformist and programmatic specificity. The descriptivist stream often invokes a compensatory cultural purpose, namely the portrayal of a way of life or a social condition that is fugitive or threatened or already in the process of vanishing. The activist stream invokes a material purpose, often a change in law or policy. The historical roots of both of these streams are outside the bounds of this essay, but suffice it to say that the descriptivist stream is closely linked to the pre-photographic tradition of genre painting, and the activist stream emerged in the US roughly a hundred years ago in two broad types, one associated with Jacob Riis and one with Lewis Hine.<sup>15</sup> Salzmann's archive bends toward the descriptivist method,

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<sup>15</sup> While both Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine are interested in the use of the photograph as exposé for sociopolitical reform, Riis is inclined toward what we might now call victim photography, condescending views of the disempowered souls whose affliction (we are given to understand) stems from the lack of enlightened social policy. *Footnote continues on page 38.*



FIGURE 4

LAURENCE SALZMANN, JUANA,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS, SAN LORENZO,  
JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1967.

and consistently so, from his soft and enigmatic 1966 portrait of Juana from *The Family of Luis*—Juana’s gaze downcast and unfocused as she presses her cheek into the side of a rough-hewn wooden door marked mysteriously with a letter, “M,” the size of her own head (“M” perhaps for “muerto,” death, or “madre,” mother, or her son Manuel) (**Figure 4**)—to his 2016 laconic portrait of Peruvian cowherds and their animals, whose one of which rests its head on the shoulders of the other, joining their bodies visually to form a horizon line against which the figures rise, while below animal and human legs are nested into one another, jointly supporting all the weight (**Figure 5**). The activist tradition is not altogether absent, appearing most pointed in Salzmans’s early project *Single Room Occupancy*, and sometimes as commentary.

3. Documentary work is investigative, and as a type of investigative practice, I would situate it between journalism and visual anthropology. Journalism can be broadly distinguished from documentary by its emphasis on topicality and newsworthiness. Visual anthropology



FIGURE 5

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MERCADO DE ACORO,  
PERU, 2016.

studies and uses images as academic research, and was Salzmänn's primary field of formal training (he did not attend art school, or a journalism program). As critical inquiry, visual anthropology studies the social and ideological character of representation and self-representation, sometimes as an element of mass culture and sometimes as a more localized or private activity operating within and sometimes against mass culture, conditioned by it in varying textures. As a practice, visual anthropology tends to approach photography as a research tool to create images that can function usefully within the academic disciplines of participant-observation and subject collaboration, or illustrate academic analysis. Salzmänn repeatedly anchors his work within what I would term a research aesthetic, which I would distinguish from the academic practice of visual anthropology not according to some metric of rigor, but a rule-bound versus non-rule-bound approach to method. As will I hope become clear, Salzmänn repeatedly begins with discrete research purposes and then wanders away from them, makes his way back to where he started, wanders away again, sometimes in the same direction as before, returns

again, and then as an approach to finishing what he has done, circumnavigates the whole thing one last time in the form of a book or an exhibition or a film. The live element of discovery and in situ redefinition of purposes mitigates against the conceits of knowledge, and is characteristic of artistic methods in at least two senses. First, when we speak of power and insight in art, it is not at all clear that we are speaking of knowledge—a poem or sculpture or theatrical performance may draw on or reflect knowledge, but to claim that it is knowledge raises many questions.<sup>15</sup> Second, inasmuch as academic work is typically bound up with effort to deliver answers to questions—answers that dissolve questions, or tame them, or establish category differences for correct and incorrect responses—artistic work rarely works this way, and often understands answers as that which reveal the predicating questions more fully, toward more nuanced and deeper incomprehension. As a simple example, Salzmänn made the photograph in **Figure 6** in the village of Marginea, Romania, in Suceava County, southern Bukovina, not far from Rădăuți. Salzmänn was living in Rădăuți in 1974–1976, mostly photographing Jewish life in the town, but traveled regularly through the region and photographed ethnic Romanian communal, religious and folk life also. In the hands of a visual anthropologist or academic ethnographer, this photograph might have had many of the same elements. We would see the bride’s simple wedding dress and tiara, wedding attendees not in suits but in sweaters and high collars, one in a Romanian military uniform, and a wedding hall’s backroom, with its plain, even stark floral wallpaper. In Salzmänn’s hands, none of these things resolve into a sense of control over what is pictured. Two of the three men do not look at the camera, one appears with his head bowed, his figure mostly blocked from view, and the other is shown with his

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<sup>15</sup>They form the “other half” in Riis’ best-known book, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890). Hine’s purpose in his Ellis Island and especially his child labor photographs, by contrast, is a sensitive disclosure of injustice through harsh facts keenly felt, an exercise in ethical education through visual encounters with others who are wronged but not incapacitated. Unlike Riis, whose subjects are passive, generally downtrodden and the object of pity or enlightened social responsibility, Hine shows people who have not succumbed, who have not capitulated—subjectified subjects, as it were, who are also subjected to intolerable exploitation. This is what Hine considers the “human document.” For a critique of the ways that Riis’s photographs and also statistical “evidence” problematize rather than clarify the notion of social “fact,” see Cindy Weinstein, “How Many Others Are There in the Other Half? Jacob Riis and the Tenement Population,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, Vol. 24 (2), 2002, pp. 195–216. For an illuminating discussion of Hine and the formative period of documentary photography, see Alan Trachtenberg’s “Camera Work/Social Work,” in *Reading American Photographs*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1989, pp. 164–230. For a meditation on the interiorities of Hine’s work apart from documentary uses, see Alexander Nemerov, *Soulmaker: The Times of Lewis Hine* (Princeton University Press, 2016).

<sup>16</sup>For example, if the difference between originality and uniqueness can be defined as the difference between that which is new and can be replicated and built upon by others (the original) and that which is new and idiosyncratic and cannot easily be imitated and built upon (the unique), it would seem that the former is capable of transferring knowledge, while the latter embodies it only.



FIGURE 6

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MARGINEA WEDDING, JUD SUCEAVA,  
ROMANIA, 1976.

arm outstretched, perhaps absorbed in some kind of negotiation. The man in the uniform looks sharply into Salzmans lens as he exits the frame, his gaze and stiff-postured walk seeming to leave a ripple of tension behind him. The bride looks lost, her eyes not quite meeting Salzmans camera, her hand raised to her chin. Perhaps she is biting a nail on her wedding day. More than a record of this event, Salzmans offers a vignette, shot through with pause, doubt and indecipherability.



FIGURE 7

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
 "MY TWO MOTHERS, ZENORA CARTER & EUNICE C. SALZMANN,"  
 PHILADELPHIA, 1972.

4. Documentary work implicates itself in a visual rhetoric of acceptable discomfort, which even a hundred years ago figured as an element of mass culture, and which documentary succeeded in claiming for its audiences as a sign of ethical cultivation. The documentary impulse uses pictures to induce various states of discomfort—a willingness to be stirred, abraded, disquieted toward some sense of improvement, repair, progress.<sup>17</sup>

The question of the practical impact of this position is another story. Generally, the disclosure of injustice is itself insufficient to induce change. Practical effects require two other things: photographers capable of doing more than using the camera as a recording device, which is to say capable of bending the inbuilt ambiguities and narrative contingencies of still pictures toward social legibility; and further, a political climate and popular culture receptive to this gesture. Salzmänn's work shows him decidedly to be a man of the left, a man who prizes photography for its yield of political provocations, but a man with an allergy to visual didacticism, sermonizing and lecturing. A pointed example of this wanted discomfort appears in Salzmänn's 1971 project *City/2*, an investigation of the social and psychic tensions at play in the streets of Salzmänn's native Philadelphia.

<sup>17</sup> And to return briefly to the historical models set forward by Riis and Hine, Riis's version of documentary confrontationalism was a raw visual naturalism that would carry a blunt appeal for legal protections for the disenfranchised; Hine's confrontationalism took shape as a delicate and intense empathy that called the viewer before a poverty of reason and of heart. In both methods, the implications for future photographers was to generate a feeling of urgency and crisis, an insistence that we who see the pictures dwell in the same unrepaired world as the subject seen.





FIGURE 8

RUBEN GOLDBERG,  
"BETTY BRYGHT ON FOX ROOF," CA. 1939.  
JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1967.

The project's leading theme is the ways that the city's peoples live with one another but not quite together—the ways they miss one another even as they depend on one another. Midway through the sequence, as if its fulcrum, Salzmänn places a diptych titled "My Two Mothers": at left is Zenora (Nora) Carter, the African American woman who raised him, and at right is Salzmänn's mother, Eunice (**Figure 7**). Eunice was Nora's employer and her social superior according to the privileges broadly given to white-skinned people in American racial consciousness, but at the same time, in different senses, her dependent. The complexity of these women's relationship and the different, perhaps competing maternal roles they played were formative for what Salzmänn would seek to do with his work, namely release into searching photographs the social differences that played out both in the streets and in his own home.

Born in 1944, Salzmann grew up a transitional era of documentary's evolution. Following the First World War, documentary had become a staple element of mass media in the United States, filling weekly picture magazines and proliferating in a modified form as journalism in the daily press. The rhetoric of showing social "fact" was embraced across the spectrum of political perspective and institutional authority, not least by many agencies of the US government during the Depression—most famously the Farm Security Administration, which launched the careers of several of the most important photographers of the era. In the aftermath of the Second World War, documentary in the US became roughly synonymous with visual humanism, or more precisely, visual humanism girded by official confidence in a bettering world. Documentary addressed the cultures of loss, survival and rebuilding after the war, and showed the redevelopment of an enlightened capitalist culture whose dominant truths were predicated upon scientific advancement, mass communication, and a developed conception of public service.

But if the dominant postwar idiom of documentary was clearly establishment-biased, it also included a subaltern society of independent, experimental, often critical-minded photographers, whose attitudes toward social actuality was distinctly unsettled and probing, and whose idea of what documentary pictures should look like gradually emerged as less communicative and more expressivist, less bound up with the illusion of transparency and more introverted, gestural, and quiet. From the mid-1950s, television came to dominate the mass market in images of social "facts" offered in suitably dramatic and timely ways, and documentary photography gradually came to occupy a much smaller audience share. For virtually the whole of Salzmann's working life, documentary has thrived among independent photographers and artists, particularly those communicating subtle, complex and alternative viewpoints on culture and society. It has broadened from the rhetoric of concerned humanism to include new forms of visuality. These include dialectical approaches that have problematized the human subject, rejected canonical ideas of freedom and (self) knowledge, and questioned the ability of the image to escape the sign system into which it is bound. And these new approaches have managed not to forsake documentary's traditional ethical prerogative, namely to retain ethical authenticity for even the most deconstructionist approaches.

With Salzmann, there is an open question about how he came to find his way into documentary thinking, and how he came to register his own sense of himself within it. There is a further question about what came to characterize his way, his method, his style. Some part of the answer might reside in Salzmann's direct teachers, in particular Reuben Goldberg (1906-1960),<sup>18</sup> chief photographer of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology from 1937 to 1960.

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<sup>18</sup> For a capsule biography of Reuben Goldberg, see Alex Pezzati, "Goldberg Variations," *Expedition Magazine*, Vol. 46, Issue 1, Penn Museum, 2004.

Goldberg was a personal friend of Salzmänn's father, and agreed to take the teenage Salzmänn into the Penn Museum's darkrooms to instruct him privately in the rudiments of photography. Salzmänn learned quickly. In college, he was hired by Temple University anthropologist, archaeologist and historian of science Dr. Jacob W. Gruber, a pathbreaker in the field of historic archaeology, to photograph at Gruber's most extensive excavation of the 1960s, the Mohr Site, a former Susquehannock Indian village near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It is likely that Salzmänn learned a great deal from Goldberg. Goldberg was a versatile photographer, nationally regarded as an interpreter of three-dimensional sculpture and art, but also keenly interested in the body in motion—photographing dancers of all sorts (ballet to modern to burlesque), as well as athletes and acrobats (**Figure 8**).

It is likely that the young Salzmänn imbibed Goldberg's ethos—his inquisitiveness and the spirit of his curiosities, his tastes for the offbeat and the unorthodox—as much as his practical techniques. From Gruber, Salzmänn had his first encounter with what would later take shape in his career as a research aesthetic, the practice of visual inquiry in the foil of social scientific knowledge, specifically anthropology and history. That this first encounter should have been at an archaeological dig seems in retrospect something of a premonition, inasmuch as his concerns came to be bound up in the investigation of lost and almost-lost lifeways, and as he came to marry a highly regarded anthropologist and archaeologist at the University of Pennsylvania, Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmänn. By the mid-1970s, Salzmänn was himself a student in Visual Anthropology in Gruber's own department at Temple University.

Still, I am unconvinced that Salzmänn's debts to Goldberg and to Gruber fully describe a creative genealogy. Somehow, Salzmänn learned by his early twenties that observational photography—the shaping of pictures from within the flow of unscripted actuality—is not, strictly speaking, a matter of composition, but the contrary: composition's skillful disruption, its partial undoing, its managed disordering. Somehow, Salzmänn learned that keenness of seeing is not the ability to make composed statements from uncomposed life, but the ability to make such statements and then walk them back a little, to loosen composition from its own inbuilt stasis, to anticipate and keep back from too much certainty, which yields the formulaic, the generic, the cliché. Somehow Salzmänn learned not just to compose but to improvise, not just to discipline chance but to dance with it.

I say “somehow” because I do not know just how this happened, and I suspect Salzmänn does not, either. It is likely that Salzmänn absorbed by osmosis the varieties of observational practice available in the popular press and to some extent in museums and galleries beginning from the late 1950s. These would certainly have included Henri Cartier-Bresson, who understood as well as any photographer ever has that photography is a non-literal art with an extraordinary capacity to ventriloquize the literal, an indirect art masked in directness, a circumstantial art of provisional truths passing as necessary truths. They would have included the most accomplished picture magazine photographers, such as W. Eugene Smith, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Margaret Bourke-White, Carl Mydans, Gordon Parks, Philippe Halsman, Elliott Erwitt, and others. They might have included other important photographers who supported careers only partially through media work, such as Robert Frank, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Leon Levinstein, Lisette Model and Wright Morris. It is possible that Salzmänn saw the popular exhibition *The Family of Man*, created by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which showed in the winter and spring of 1955 before touring the United States and then the world.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that in his formative period, Salzmänn did not know the pathbreaking work of experimental documentary photographers mostly below the popular radar, such as Roy DeCarava, William Klein, Saul Leiter, Sid Grossman, Diane Arbus, Helen Levitt, Ed van der Elsken, William Gedney, Dave Heath and Louis Faurer.

At the root—if there is a root—I cannot account for Salzmänn’s urge to embark on the artistic work that would define his life, and I cannot trace a clear line of influence or artistic genealogy. Taking a lead from Garry Winogrand’s astute observation, “You become an artist *despite*, not *because*. . .”—it is not clear to me what factors of “despite” and “because” led Salzmänn to his life’s work, or (as it were) produced him. I find little value, for example, in asking whether his drive issued from a rejection of the world of his childhood, or conversely, from a need to restate it on new terms. I can speak in generalities of that world as materially comfortable, and as marked by a polarity between the heavily Jewish society of his parents and the heterogenous social mixture of the public schools he attended.

I can speak in generalities of the prevailing culture of conformity in the early Cold War America of Salzmänn’s youth, a culture of shallow consumerist fantasy in the shadow of threatened nuclear annihilation, and of class, racial and (reimposed) gender hierarchy. But can I deduce from any of this why Salzmänn became neither beatnik nor hippy nor Communist nor any

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<sup>19</sup>With the support of the US Information Agency, versions of the exhibition were shown in 91 cities in 138 countries between 1955 and 1962, and seen by an estimated nine million people worldwide. The show and its accompanying catalogue—in print for decades and widely known—presented a sentimentally generalized vision of human life cross-culturally. While enormously popular, the exhibition has been strongly critiqued for dehistoricizing its subjects, decontextualizing the work of contributing photographers, shamelessly serving the ideology of Cold War American liberalism. For a penetrating critique, see Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (1981), 15–25.



FIGURE 9

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PRODUCTION STILL FROM "RAGMAN,"  
PHILADELPHIA, 1964

kind of card-carrying dissident? I can speak also of the tensions within American Jewish life in the decades immediately following the war. These would include the transitions within Jewish minority consciousness as Jews decisively claimed and were afforded whiteness, also the uncertain relations to the old world of pre-emigration Europe, often defined by a regime of silence and loss, as against the complex and increasingly urgent claims of Holocaust memory and loyalty to the young Israeli state.<sup>20</sup> But would such a discussion account for the eclecticism of Salzman's topics, and the specific ways he pursued them? It is true that Salzman's earliest effort at a project—his 1963–1964 photographic series and film *Ragman*, concerning African American garbage

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<sup>20</sup> For an illuminating analysis of Jewish identity as framed by the binary American categories of blackness and whiteness, and Jewish ambivalence toward self-identification as white Americans from the 1870s to the 1940s, see Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness; Jews, Race, and American Identity*, Princeton, 2006.

scavengers in Philadelphia—contrasts sharply with the relative privilege of his upbringing his upbringing (**Figure 9**).<sup>21</sup> However, the effort to derive Salzman’s artistic methods and preoccupations from the social circumstances of his background, or artistic influences he wanted either to emulate or to conquer, or an ideology he adhered to or deserted, all seem to me exercises in squeezing conclusions from speculations. I find that type of analytic work mostly sterile.

The most I can say is that Salzman already as a young photographer found his way—by some inscrutable combination of intuition, accident and curiosity—to the pattern-making impulses that gradually acquire momentum, then necessity, and eventually urgency, or in short, an authentic creative practice. And in Salzman’s case, these impulses took him out into the world, toward the darting-from-surfaces and glancing-between-specificities that photography involves. From the beginning, Salzman naturally understood the camera as a tool for stopping but not halting the chase, catching an observation only to release it and resume the pursuit. Against those photographers who wanted to—learned to—treat a picture as a trophy, Salzman’s instinct was to treat it as one point in a relay, a spontaneous system of tangents, giving itself forward in an implied dislike of the ethos of masterpieces and self-congratulation. Salzman’s career has not been a search for a succession of masterpieces, though a great many of his pictures could be (reductively) approached that way. It has also not been an effort to narrate the gaps between masterpieces, in the spirit of psychoanalytically driven art practice, or create a network of masterpiece-evasions, in the manner of contrarian conceptualism. For reasons I cannot explain—it would seem presumptuous to try to explain them—Salzman rather quickly found his way to the artistic problems that he would then spend decades unfolding.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> African American “ragmen,” as they were known in Philadelphia, roamed the city with horses and carts picking through garbage, looking for resalable scraps of fabric. While the occupation was associated at the turn of the twentieth century with poor Jewish immigrants, by the 1960s it was often Jews who owned the stables that rented the horses; a collection of such stables were located near Bainbridge and 4th Streets in the heart of what had been and still partly remained Jewish South Philadelphia. Salzman’s sensitivity to the convergence of Jews and Blacks in the rag (or in Yiddish, *shmatte*) economy of the 1960s anticipates Salzman’s 1990s work, *Face to Face: Encounters between Jews & Blacks*.

<sup>22</sup> Across the range of artistic temperaments, and rather against the current fashion for artists who feel the need to reinvent themselves repeatedly, Salzman marks out the sort of artist who spends a career elaborating problems that announced themselves with a certain clarity from the beginning. An emblematic example of this type of artist would be, for example, the American photographer Paul Strand (1890–1976).

As will become clear, these problems fused the ethical seriousness that has frequently been expressed through the documentary form, a distinctly internationalist voice, and what I would call a feeling for the thresholds. In one way or another, almost all of his works that address social and cultural actualities in his own time—works that describe what appears in and as historical consciousness, to use Flusser’s term, toward further historical consciousness—do so by conceiving of photographs as thresholds between complementarities. Salzmann’s method positions us not in the hold of truths, but between them—on their sills, at points that need to be exceeded for truth to clutch us, these further clutching truths implicated in but not actually located within the dominion of the image. Again and again, Salzmann’s works of historical consciousness locate us in the transitional space between observation and memory, the ephemeral and the enduring, the undated and the topical, the crystalline character of the present and the turbid character of the no-longer and might-yet-be present.<sup>23</sup> Later, when it comes to the works not of historical but magical consciousness, the leading term for the threshold becomes the visible and the invisible: the photograph as the zone of transition in which the invisible passes into visibility, and the visible passes into invisibility.

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<sup>23</sup>To speak of a threshold or a transitional space might be distinguished from a crossroads or a zone of intersection, inasmuch as the latter is concerned with what appears precisely in that space of overlap, while the former is concerned with the act of removal into that space of overlap.

# THE FAMILY OF LUIS

In 1966, Salzmänn was invited to train for the Peace Corps at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. His training included immersive courses in Spanish, plus an “in-country experience” in which he was taken to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.<sup>24</sup> He was assigned to live with a family of adobe brick makers, migrants from the Mexican state of Zacatecas, who resided in a shantytown (*barrio humilde*) outside Juárez, near the Rio Grande river. Salzmänn began to photograph them while their guest. His application to join the Peace Corps was eventually rejected—he was twice “deselected” owing to his independent mindedness and a youthful progressivism that the Peace Corps likely mistook for budding Communist sympathies.<sup>25</sup> Salzmänn later returned to Ciudad Juárez for three extended stays to continue to photograph. The project became his first sustained work, completed in 1969, with contributions from the poet Thomas Payne, and Salzmänn’s companion at the time, Marcia Olson (**Figures 10–19**, see also **Figures 224 and 225**). Along the way, Salzmänn received encouragement from Kneeland McNulty, curator of photography at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, who bought several prints for the collection, and from the anthropologist Oscar Lewis, whose 1961 book *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* made a significant impact on Salzmänn.<sup>26</sup>

The project is an extended series of portraits, centered around the owner of the brickyard, a middle-aged bachelor by the name of Luis Robles, who lives with a couple by the name of Juana and Alvino, their children Manuel, Sara, Faustino, Danilla, and Velen, and Juana’s father Juan. The project takes shape as a revolving encounter that moves continuously between the family’s

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<sup>24</sup> Salzmänn is a polyglot who is fluent in Spanish, Romanian, French, and German, besides his native language, English. From these languages he is able to communicate with speakers of all Romance languages, as well as Ladino and Yiddish. Of non-European languages, he is proficient in Turkish and Quechua.

<sup>25</sup> In 1960, at the age of sixteen, Salzmänn decided he wanted to see the Cuban revolution firsthand, and hitchhiked from Philadelphia to Havana, without telling his parents in advance. (Through the US trade embargo against Cuba was enacted in October, 1960, travel from the US to Cuba was not prohibited until February 1963.) In the middle of his senior year of high school, Salzmänn dropped out, and hitchhiked from Philadelphia to Mexico City, eventually making his way to the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, where he got a job on a German refrigerator boat heading to New York (given the job of steering the boat by Cuba just as the Bay of Pigs invasion was occurring). After finishing high school, Salzmänn worked as a merchant seaman, which allowed him to travel to and live in Europe for the first time, laying the foundation of his language acquisition.

<sup>26</sup> The text studies a poor family living in the Mexico City slum of Tepito, and elaborates’ Lewis concept of a “culture of poverty,” according to which the values, worldview, feelings, aspirations and character of impoverished people play a major role in perpetuating their condition. Widely influential in the 1960s, this concept was subsequently attacked as a blame-the-victim approach to the problem of endemic poverty, and has given rise to a nuanced debate about structural as against cultural factors in explaining the persistence of poverty. For whatever insight Salzmänn gained at the time, *The Family of Luis* is not a visual polemic on behalf of Lewis’ ideas.



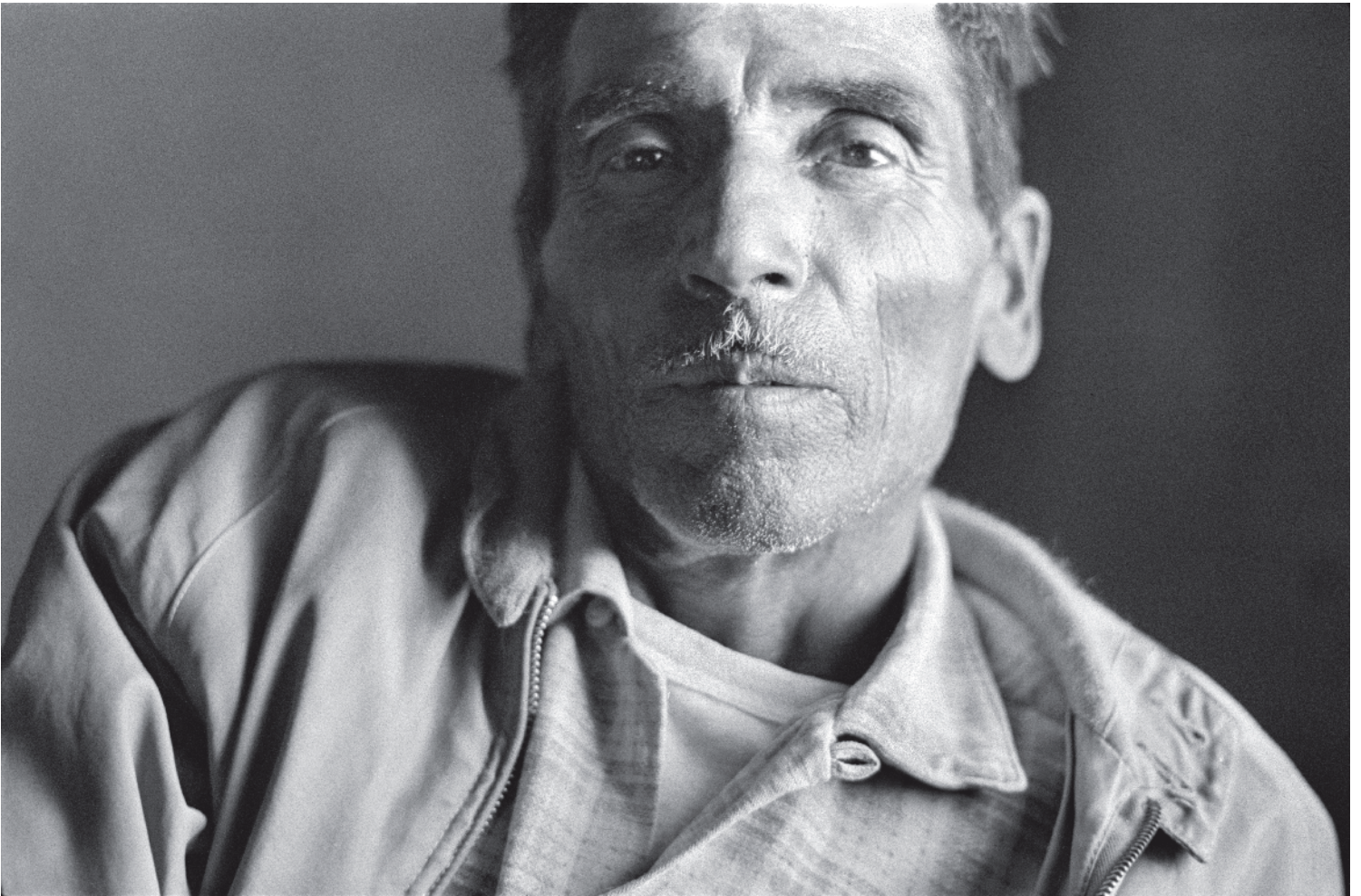


FIGURE 10

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS, SAN LORENZO,  
CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.

and outer worlds, and no attempt to describe as if from an objective distance the routines and patterns of daily living. Salzman does not adopt the stance of a dispassionate but sympathetic reporter, for example in the mode of Walker Evans in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, or of a reporter-manqu in the manner of Evans's collaborator, James Agee, whose approach Payne's text vaguely recalls.<sup>27</sup> The photographs jettison nearly all reportorial conceits, and instead function as an analogue of this extended family's inner and outer realities, which Salzman positions himself to receive with a distinctly non-conclusive receptivity. In his directness and presentness to Luis's family, Salzman bypasses standard interpretive frameworks that would either ennoble them in their poverty or condescend to them (however unintentionally) by treating them as specimens of a certain social status, standing, place. A good comparison for Salzman's approach—though made in a very different place and with a very different method—is the Ellis Island work of Lewis Hine, who approached new, socially stigmatized immigrants to the United States with extraordinary humility and an invitational, non-judgmental welcome.

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<sup>27</sup> See James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Houghton Mifflin, 1941.

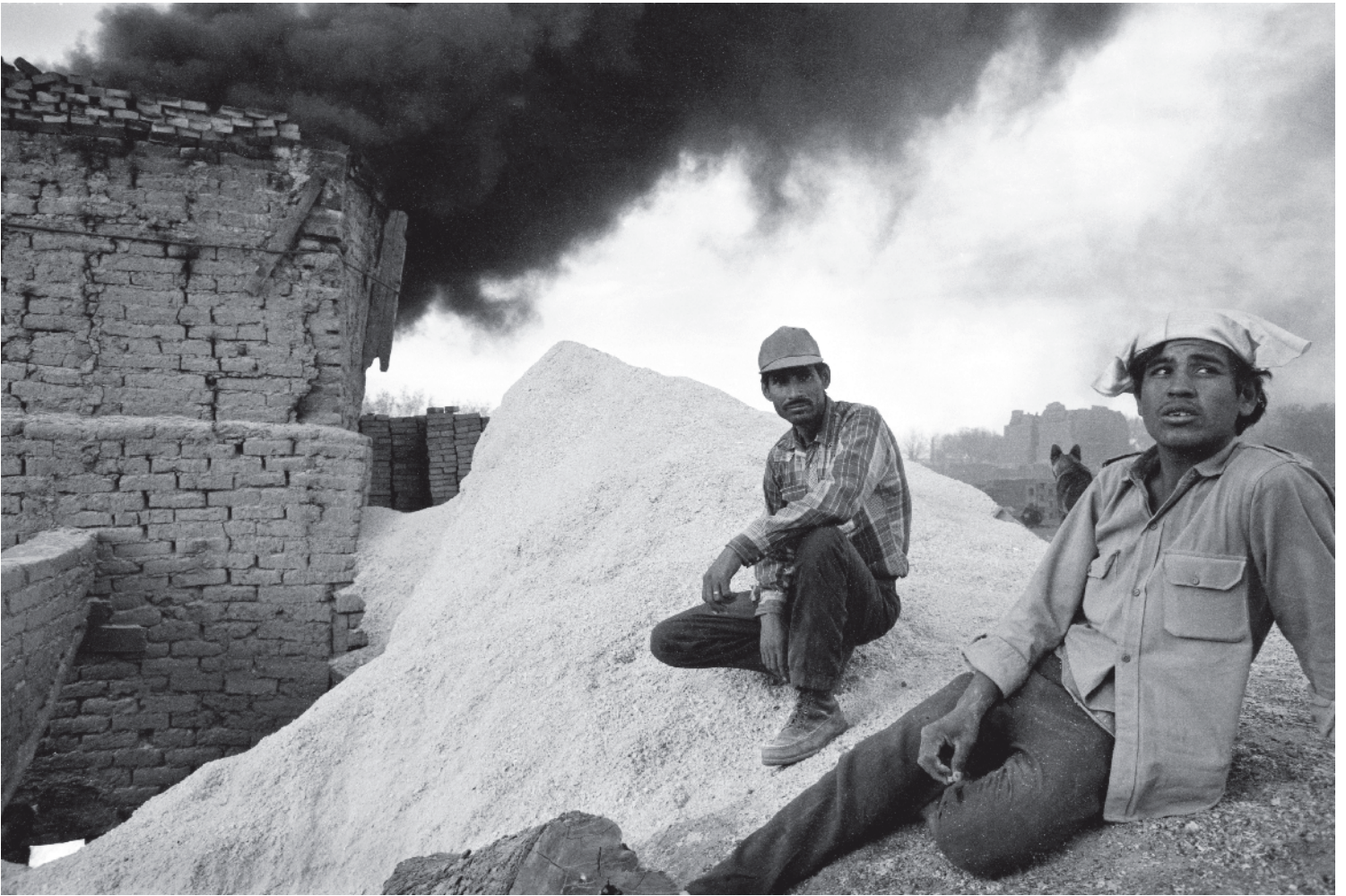


FIGURE 11

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.

Salzmann refuses to sum up his subjects in photographs, or attempt to encapsulate them in the appearances they form to him, or to synopsise their days and weeks. He refuses to use photography to extend an illusion of mastery over his subjects' realities. While extraordinarily compassionate, his pictures are ultimately neutral about the temperaments and character of the adults, and uninterested in portraying the children in some state of innocence. One of Salzmann's most penetrating portraits of Luis (**Figure 10**) shows him relaxed and utterly at ease, in such a way that we understand him as a beneficent patriarch but also a man of restraint and self-withholding. It is a view both compatible with the praise he receives from others in the accompanying text, and not altogether incompatible with the revelation that his loneliness may have led him to pedophilia. Many of the photographs describe figures in waiting (**Figures 11 and 12**), which could just as well be described as a process of waiting or an act of waiting or a condition of waiting. Salzmann turns repeatedly to the task of describing time as prolonged, as



FIGURE 12

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.

if to make the photograph responsible for a condition of unabridgedness, loosened from whatever we call merely a moment, or an artistic action meant to transform a moment into something durable enough to feel more than momentary, a moment made extra-momentary. These extra-momentary moments are further elaborated by the stories that accompany them, profiles of each member of the family which structure the work into chapters.

I see in *The Family of Luis* the earliest shape of a defining commitment that Salzmann has sustained across all of his documentary works: that he as artist—and we by extension, his viewers—strives to understand others on their own terms, and not merely on ours. The result is a picture whose subjects stand apart from other ways they might have appeared at the hands of other photographers—as objects of inquiry or knowledge or concern. The concern we come to feel for them is a state of ethical dilation, which for Salzmann is precisely a state that the photograph induces. With this project, Salzmann first discovered that a photograph is not

just a study of the way things look either objectively or subjectively, but a conceptual space in which life takes a different shape than the one it takes in the world itself—a liberated space in which people can meet freely across culture and time. The photograph, for Salzmänn, does not just stand in for something that once existed in history or that can come to exist in memory, does not just stand for something, but *is* something, endowed with enough autonomy to push back against the various understandings, half-understandings and ignorances of maker, subject and viewer alike. With this project, Salzmänn discovers photography as a meaningfully free space which is also an ethically heightened space, a place of social, historical and psychological convergences which paradoxically also offers a measure of escape, a space owned in a formal sense by the photographer but not entirely controlled by anyone. In this sense, the photograph as Salzmänn seeks it forms an ethically radical space, where self and other are extended chances to remake and unmake judgment about both.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Salzmänn's other-centered ethics engage critical debates concerning the representation of others. Salzmänn seems never to have asked the question, "what right do I have to represent others?" His work simply bypasses the question of whether a photographer should or must share an identity with those he or she is representing. There is no identitarian litmus test for Salzmänn's ethics of receptivity to others. And Salzmänn's work offers no universalist justification to argue against those who would demand that he establish himself as ethically qualified to represent those different from himself. In this sense, Salzmänn's ethics pitches him against not only those on the right who endorse social and cultural hierarchies that Salzmänn disdains, but also those on the left who would subject him to critiques of privilege based on race, gender, class, national origin. The latter would ask: is a white American Jewish man from a comfortable family committing a grave mistake—or worse, an act of cultural aggression—in entitling himself to photograph poor people of color from a developing country? There are valid arguments on many sides of this question. But for those asking for the sake of intellectual policing, I would ask the following: do any of the eleven photographs from *The Family of Luis* which appear in this book (**Figures 4, 10–19**), or any not appearing here, confess anything about Salzmänn's identity? Do they allow us to say anything at all about his race, class, gender, religion, national origin, or anything else? Or to ask differently, could these photographs just as well be seen as the work of a photographer with an utterly different identity? Could they be the work of, say, a woman photographer from Mexico City whose family knew Luis Robles from before he left Zacatecas, and who has herself known Luis her whole life? Or maybe a nomadic Chilean photographer who met some people from Ciudad Juárez on the beach in Baja California, and accepted an invitation to sleep on their couch for a few months? If the photographs could just as well accommodate a range of imputed identities to their creator, this is to say that the photographs are not encoded with the photographer's identity in any obvious way, and so do not endorse or credentialize any particular identity as a sanction behind the work. And if so, then on what grounds is Salzmänn pre-disqualified because of his identity?

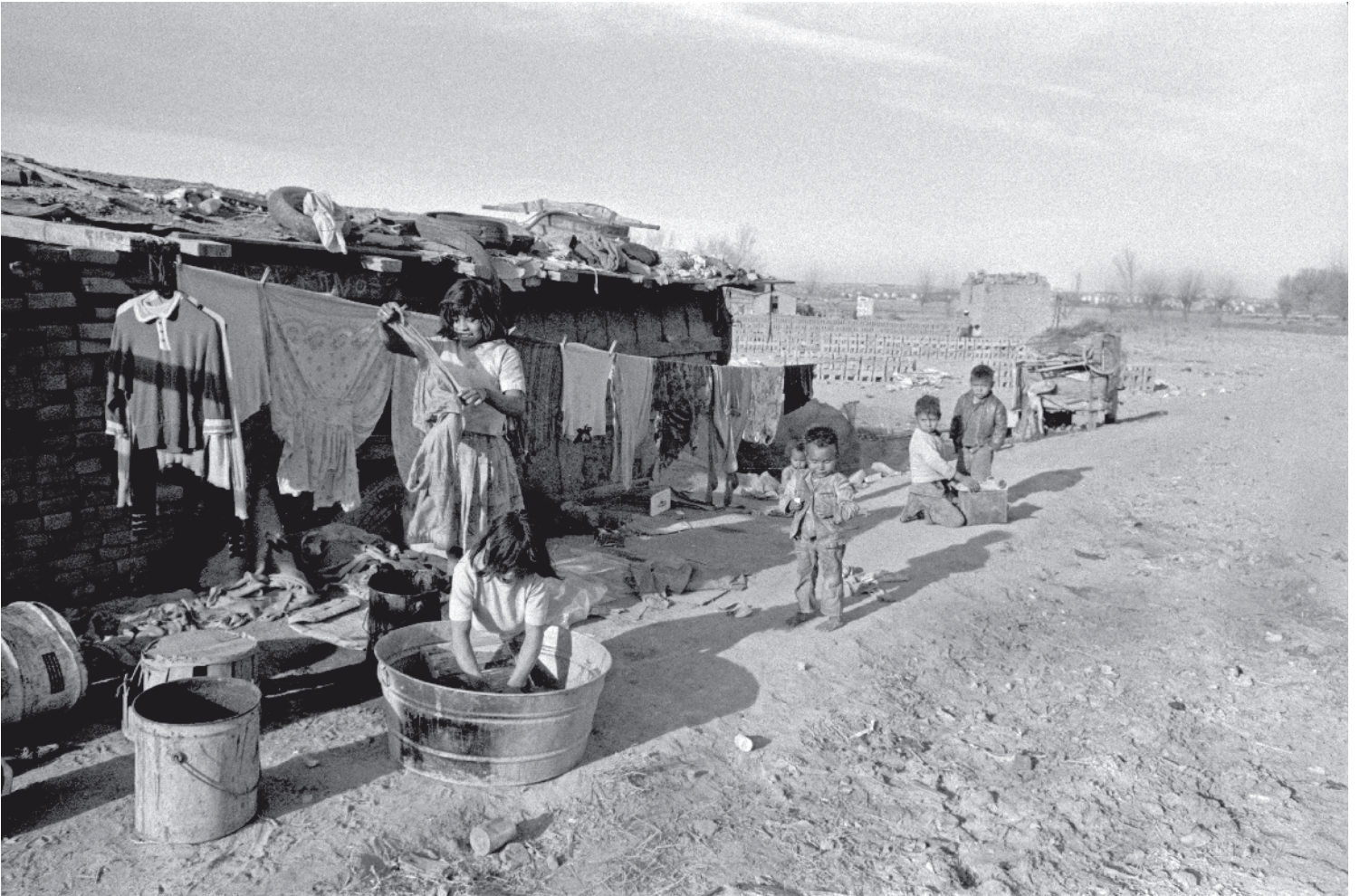


FIGURE 13

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS, SAN LORENZO,  
CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.



FIGURE 14

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
SARAH AND HER SISTERS,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.



FIGURE 15

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JUANA AND CHILDREN, FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.

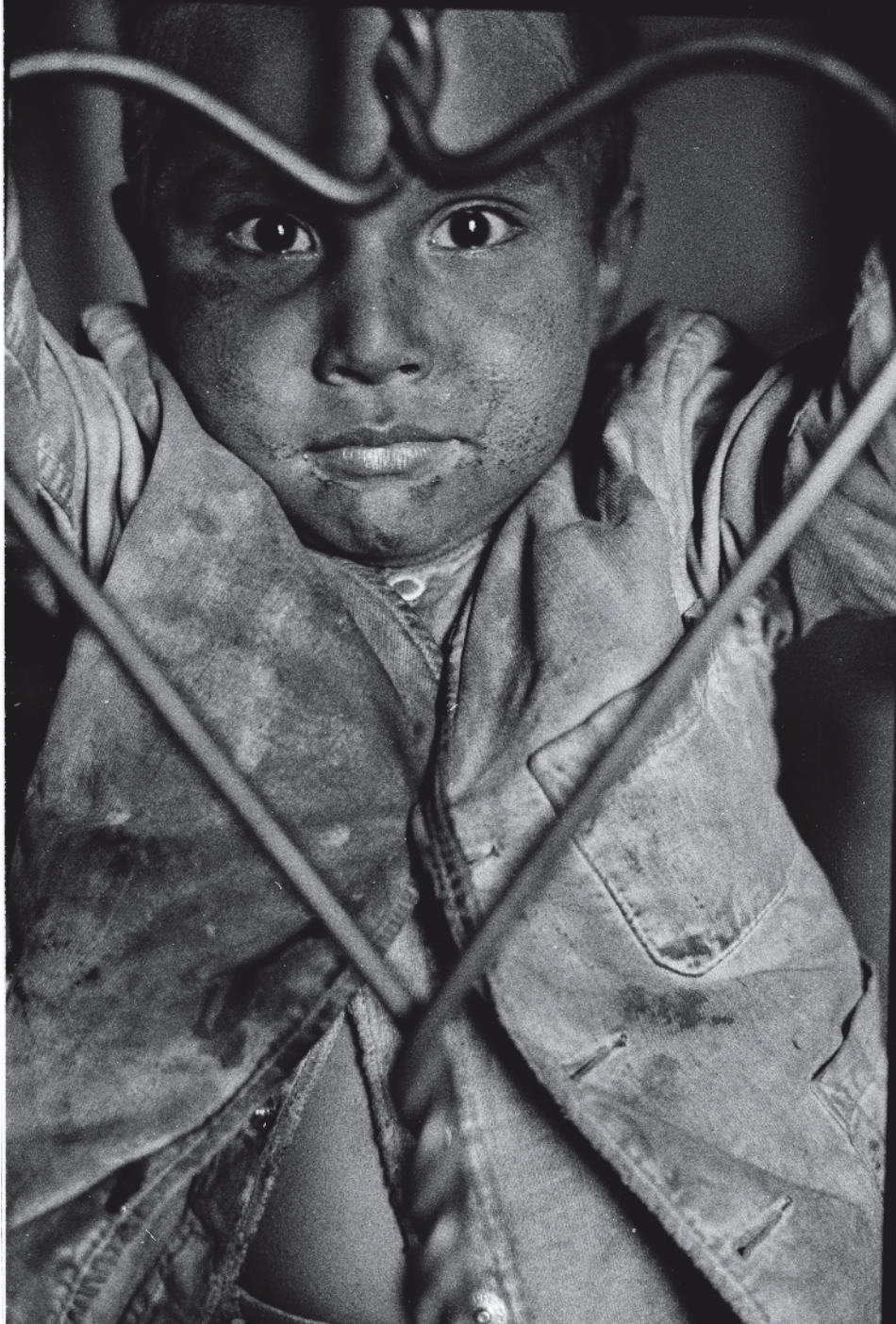


FIGURE 16

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
VALEN, FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.





FIGURE 17

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.



FIGURE 18

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JUANA AND CHILDREN, FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.

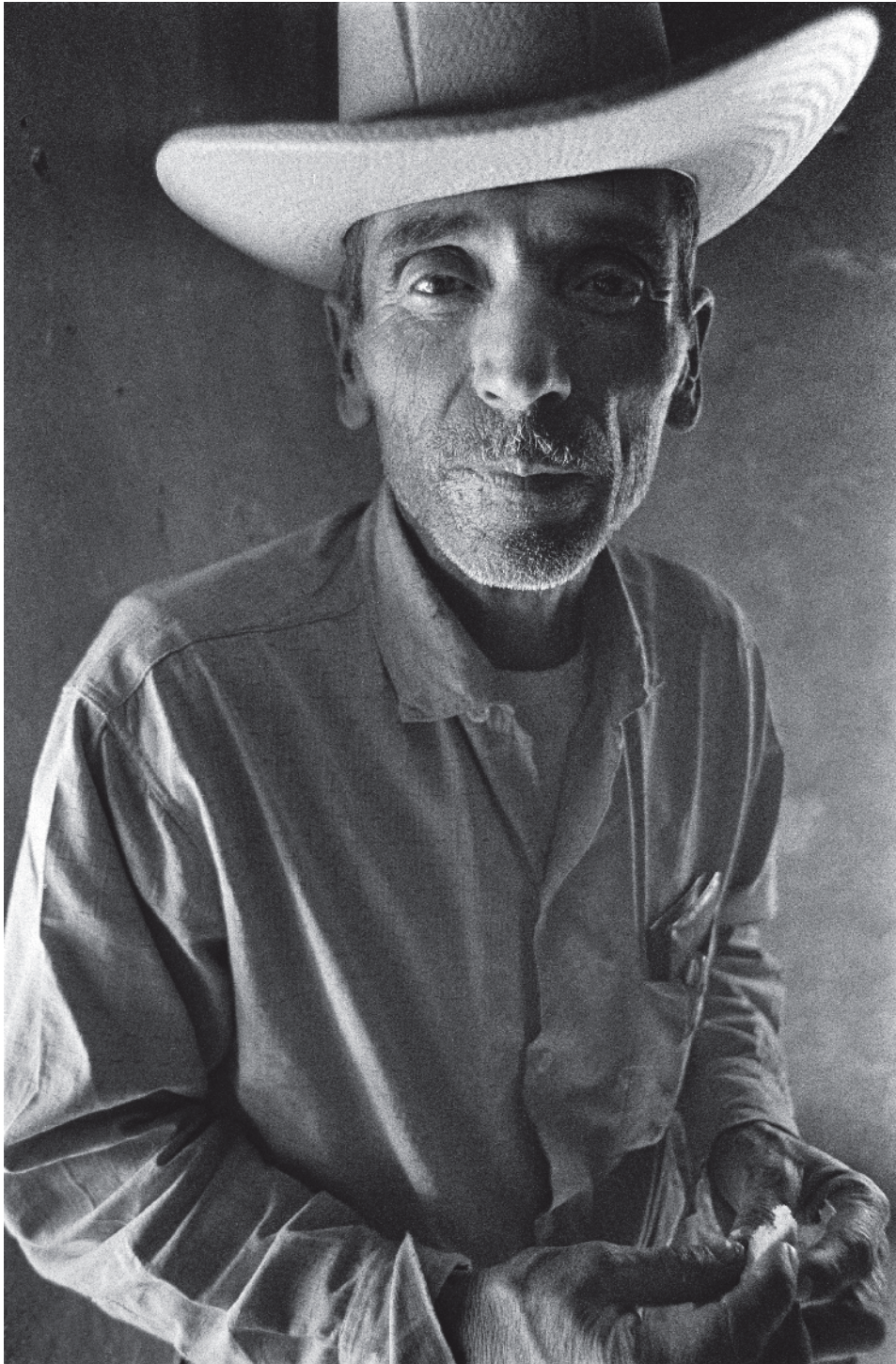


FIGURE 19

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LUIS ROBLES, FROM THE FAMILY OF LUIS,  
SAN LORENZO, CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1966.

# SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY

In 1968, St. Luke's Hospital Department of Community Psychiatry hired Salzman to work on its Single Room Occupancy project on New York's Upper West Side. The project's purpose concerned unattached single people clustered in urban rooming houses, what was termed at the time a "Community of the Alone."<sup>29</sup> Broadly, the project's goals were qualitative: to help create and sustain a positive self-image and feeling of mutual care among SRO residents, to further residents' willingness to seek outside assistance, and to improve the hospital's own ability to address the needs of these people. Salzman was assigned to live in an SRO called "The Valencia" on West 95th Street between Riverside Drive and West End Avenue in Manhattan. Many of the residents struggled with drug addiction; some had recently been released from mental hospitals, part of the first wave of deinstitutionalization that would reach greater and greater levels in subsequent decades.<sup>30</sup> His task was to become as involved in the lives of other residents as they would agree to, and to collect various kinds of data. In time, with the consent and collaboration of residents, he began to photograph freely in the building and in the streets around it, and then began a tenant-based filmmaking program (**Figures 20–31**).

Salzman's work with St. Luke's Hospital is the only example in his career in which he partnered with an organization doing direct work in community development or social improvement. It is the closest Salzman ventured toward activism of a conventional kind—the effort to make a concrete, tangible difference in the lives of others. However, while Salzman did receive support and recognition from the New York State Council on the Arts and from the American Film Institute—in 1971, the New York State Council published his work as a portfolio titled *Neighbors on the Block*—it is not clear that the hospital itself had eyes for his visual work, or much use for it.<sup>31</sup> The reasons lie in the character of the work itself. It is unsystematic and idiosyncratically unstructured. Salzman does not attempt anything like a survey of the building,

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<sup>29</sup> For an overview of the hospital's project, see Joan H. Shapiro, "Single-Room Occupancy: Community of the Alone," in *Social Work*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 1966), pp. 24–33. Shapiro writes: "Unattached single individuals constitute a group of the poor population characterized by marked social and psychological maladaptation and chronic physical disease; they are neither sick or deviant enough to be institutionalized nor well enough to use health, social, and welfare services effectively. Many cluster in urban rooming houses known as single-room-occupancy buildings (SRO's) where untreated illness, hunger, loneliness, and sporadic violence are an unrelieved concomitance of existence." Salzman dedicated his SRO film *Eddie* to Shapiro.

<sup>30</sup> For an overview of the origins of the policies that led to the widespread release of mentally ill people in the US from hospitals into communities, see Richard D. Lyons, "How Release of Mental Patients Began," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1984, Section C, Page 1.

<sup>31</sup> In 1970, the New York State Council on the Arts published a portfolio of Salzman's photographs, titled *Neighbors on the Block*, and in 1971, Salzman's film *Eddie* received a grant from the American Film Institute for documentary filmmaking.



FIGURE 20

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.

going from room to room, attempting to represent everyone, or almost everyone. And he does not use the camera to stabilize or vicariously settle the turbulences of the world before him. His approach is easily distinguished from the work of a related contemporaneous project, Bruce Davidson's project *East 100th Street*.<sup>32</sup> Davidson's project focuses on a single block in East Harlem, where he returned again and again from 1962–1968, slowly gaining the trust of residents, most of them people of color and economically disadvantaged. Taken with a large format camera, Davidson's photographs are slow-working and intimate, often formal portraits made in his subjects' own living spaces. The effect is to give a sense that we come to understand a representative cross-section of a block that stands for many blocks, as if to know the sprawling city in microcosm.

Salzmann's work is almost the reverse: he does not make the building a microcosm of anything, does not hold his subjects at a slow and contemplative arm's length, does not presume that his pictures can or do confer understanding of the lives we see. Rather than the idiom of knowledge, Salzmann works mostly in the idiom of encounter. What he means by collaboration is not (like Davidson) a portrait session, which is generally pitched toward the sense of a distillation or a heightened, momentary dropping-out of life's movements. Rather, Salzmann throws us into the midst of things, and not with the ceremony of a repetitive compositional strategy, but abruptly, with pictures that are an eclectic mixture of close and mid-range, pondersome and gestural. The non-systematic thinking and its enactment in an arrhythmic series of images is intellectually ingenious—honoring something true about the world before him, not attempting to discipline it into representation—and also great intimacy. While some of Davidson's subjects pose nude for him, often with great tenderness, he does not photograph the sex lives of people, as Salzmann does (**Figure 20**). Few of Davidson's photographs venture toward the raw vulnerability that Salzmann wants to show (**Figure 21**) or the particular mixture of fragility and self-support that leads neither to reassurance—a sense when looking into the picture that this person will somehow be okay—nor to its opposite, a sense of unstoppable decline (**Figure 22**). None of Davidson's pictures allow for, much less trust inscrutability in the way Salzmann's do (**Figures 23 and 25**).

As a result, Salzmann's SRO work is far from the kind of message-simple documentary that one might imagine hospital publicists finding useful, and it sits also to the side of the (laudable) programmatic goals of social work itself. These photographs have a kind of propellant energy—the energy of the coming and going of the building itself, which is also a psychological coming-near-toimmiseration and sometimes to misery itself playing out. But Salzmann's instincts constantly move him away from the act of pinning his subjects down, or pinning them to pre-seen visions of helplessness or victimhood.

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce Davidson, *East 100th Street*, Harvard University Press, 1970.

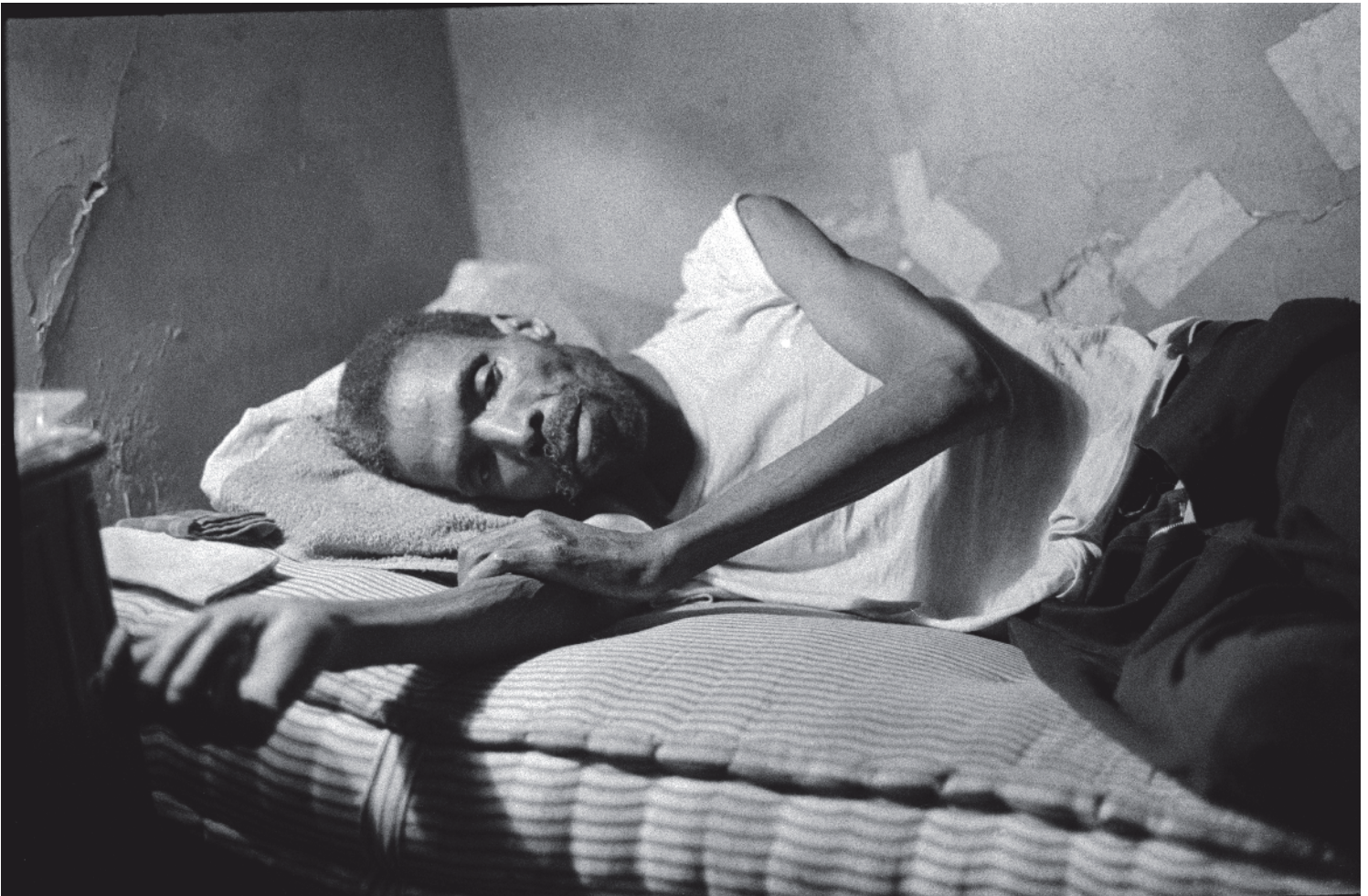


FIGURE 21

LAURENCE SALZMANN, "BIG SIX,"  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.

As such, the images are narratively open-ended, sometimes stubbornly so and sometimes with a casual insouciance. The same is true of the two SRO films Salzman made with Peter Barton, *Eddie* and *Alfred*, about SRO tenants Eddie O'Brian (**Figure 22**) and Alfred Cade (**Figures 27–29, 31**) respectively. Both films are highly impressionistic. Both are shot in rough black and white using a handheld camera and only available light. Both are edited with a strongly symbolist hand: images of the protagonist bump and scrape against his voice, often deliberately out of sync.<sup>33</sup> The films drop narrative details that are not otherwise available in the photographs, but neither film attempts to tell a coherent story about its subject. Rather, both are experiments in a cinema of immediacy about half-incoherent men in need of love and care. The images jerk through nights and days while a voice-over functioning as inner monologue performs a psychic situation defined

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<sup>33</sup> In one scene, Eddie walks the nighttime streets in half-silhouette, a shadow of a man, while his voice breaks into convulsions as he recounts his childhood game of swinging from Harlem fire escapes, which enticed his younger brother to follow, leading to his brother falling accidentally to his death. Likewise, Alfred is profiled as an invisible man, a social castoff whose very life is rendered as the garbage of an affluent society, using collision-based symbolist editing.



FIGURE 22

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
EDDIE O'BRIEN, FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.

by poverty and isolation. Salzmänn's SRO photographs and films, each in its own way, refuse the authorial stance that would reduce the people we see to their condition in life or to their condition in pictures. Both refuse to render people as data or as lyric valuables. The independence of mind and spirit that found its way to such a stance would become more and more developed—confident, fierce—in the coming decades.





FIGURE 23

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ALFRED CADE WITH GIRLFRIEND "LILLIAN,"  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.



FIGURE 24

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.



FIGURE 25

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.



FIGURE 26

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ALFRED CADE,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.

## Alfred Cade

“The first reason I came to live in the hotel is I had finished with my course at the hospital and I came home, looked around for a place and they recommended, Welfare recommended, that I come to the hotel. I went to the St. Loucy Hotel, 315 West 94th Street where I stayed for a while. An’ then, ah, found out I could do little things in the Neighborhood Community Plannin’ Projects, so I got them, an’ that’s what I’m on now... Community Plannin’ Projects. Meantime, I’m waiting for my girl to come back; I think she’s been busted, but I am not so sure. However, she’s not the only pebble on the beach an’ I’ll find another one. Now..

*I love you, I love you, I love you,  
Sweetheart of all my dreams.  
Oh, I love you, can't do without you,  
You're like a treatheart, it seems.  
Oh, you may do what you may,  
Or say what you may  
I know that I'll always love you this way, because,  
I love you, I love you Lily, I love you.  
Lily, sweetheart of all my dreams, dreams, dreams, dreams  
Dreams, oh, sweetheart of all my dreams.*

“An’ ah, ain’t nobody should be satisfied to go along at the rate that the welfare people expect you to go: takin’ that, comin’ back for more. The idea is to expand on your project, see if you can’t do somethin’ else. For instance, I’ve been to school f’r three years at college. I’m gonna get, I’m gonna get my two degrees an’ maybe a third degree.

“Still, I would like to get into the position where I didn’t have to bother with any of them an’ let those people who really need it, get there. If I had an efficient business of my own, I’d like to be doin’ that... like law, or music, or somethin’ like that, or writing, and I would like journalism.”

FIGURE 27

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ALFRED CADE TEXT PANEL,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.



FIGURE 28

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PRODUCTION STILL FROM THE FILM "ALFRED,"  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.



FIGURE 29

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ALFRED CADE AND LILIAN,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.



FIGURE 30

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ST. LOUIS HOTEL, WEST 94TH STREET,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.





FIGURE 31

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
HOTEL ENDICOTT,  
FROM SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY,  
NEW YORK, 1969-70.

## CITY / 2

In 1971, Salzman participated in an exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art on the nature of public space in the city. The theme was timely: the previous decade had seen seismic political and cultural shifts, from the Civil Rights movement to the anti-Vietnam War movement, to the feminist movement, plus the emergence of youth countercultures, not to mention race riots in many cities—all of which played themselves out very publicly, claiming and reclaiming the public realm as the space of debate, denunciation, repair and transformation. It seems no coincidence that the sixties were also the decade in which street photography ascended to the top tier of art photography in America, emblemized in the epochal 1967 exhibition *New Documents* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Curated by John Szarkowski—or perhaps more accurately, organized as a chapter in a career-long curatorial argument about the practice of photography as art—the exhibition featured the work of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand. It not only introduced these photographers to wide audiences for the first time, but effectively christened them as the leading photographers of their generation, the true heirs of photographic modernism, and so photographers of historical consequence.<sup>34</sup> Their métier was careful, unscripted observation with handheld cameras, a reclamation of the documentary form for what Szarkowski called “more personal ends. . . not to reform life, but to know it.” These photographers were, of course, three among many. They found themselves riding the crest of the artistic output of a great many talented artists, some of whom—DeCarava, Frank, Klein, Levitt, Heath, and most recently Leiter and Vivian Maier—would join them in the canon that *New Documents* inaugurated.<sup>35</sup>

Salzman’s contribution to the Philadelphia Museum’s show was a series of photographs that became *City / 2*, as in “city divided by two,” but which Salzman has always pronounced “city over two” (**Figures 32–43**). The “two” that Salzman had in mind is the racial divide that

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<sup>34</sup> For a still-penetrating critique of Szarkowski’s ideas and agenda, see Christopher Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography,” *October*, Vol. 22 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 27-63.

<sup>35</sup> Older photographers, especially those affiliated at one time with the radical New York art collective known as the Photo League, have gradually been brought into this canon, including Sid Grossman, Harold Feinstein, Walter Rosenblum, Ruth Orkin, Louis Stettner, Louis Faurer, and David Vestal. Other photographers who are Salzman’s contemporaries have managed to find a place in this period of photography’s history as it has taken shape, including Danny Lyon, Nathan Lyons, Larry Clark, Leonard Freed, Henry Wessel, Sergio Larraín, Roger Mayne and Joel Meyerowitz. Other exceptional photographers working in this vein and of this generation have yet to reach wide recognition, including Richard Gordon, Paul McDonough and Harvey Stein. Still others, somewhat younger, are still “emerging” even as they have been mature photographers for decades, such as Michael Martone, Mitch Epstein, Jeff Mermelstein, Joseph Szabo, David Alan Harvey and Stephen Scheer.

structures city life. Unscripted observation in the streets of Philadelphia was, for Salzmann, a way of interrogating the balkanization of civic consciousness that yields Black Philadelphia and white Philadelphia, two cities defined against one another, often with quite precise boundaries.<sup>36</sup> Salzmann's project crosses these boundaries freely, in an implicit defiance of unspoken rules about who belongs where. Most of the photographs show either white or African American residents, while a few show mixed scenes. He photographs mostly in the mode of formal observational precision inspired by—sometimes masquerading as—the offhand aesthetics of the snapshot. We are situated as pedestrians, passersby in well-halted worlds in which people alternately live in the street as if it were an extra living room, or dwell in a common amnesia, not registering one another's existence.<sup>37</sup>

Or to put the point differently, *City / 2* turns out to examine the meaning of social division or “over two” in at least two senses. The photographs lay out not one but two spectrums of urban reality in Philadelphia: one describing racial segregation from entirely Black to entirely white society, and the other describing social alienation on a spectrum from isolation (often isolation in the midst of others) to togetherness. If we cross these spectrums, we arrive at four general positions: alienation in public Black Philadelphia, togetherness in public Black Philadelphia, alienation in public white Philadelphia, togetherness in public white Philadelphia. The range of photographs in the project describe each of these positions. The photographs that seem most emblematic to me, though, are those that describe a state of standstill between these positions. In one such photograph, Salzmann looks across the kissing fenders of wrecked cars to a mixed race group of residents gathered on the sidewalk for reasons the picture only reticently discloses—the wreckage we see takes us to the top left corner of the picture, where another car seems almost to have crashed into a porch, and it becomes clear that the picture is an allegory for a more

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<sup>36</sup>For an overview of the history of the institutional racism that supported racial segregation in Philadelphia, see Kristen B. Crossney, “Redlining” in *The Greater Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/redlining/>. I should add that the precise division of neighborhoods in the minds of Philadelphians is not with regard to race alone; there are many neighborhoods with hard borders, beginning and ending with specific streets. In the cases of streets that run long distances, crossing through these boundaries, Philadelphians will often specify the block number of the street to indicate which neighborhood an address belongs to.

<sup>37</sup>On the heels of *City / 2*, Salzmann's academic interests in visual anthropology led him to the graduate program at Temple University, and eventually he was hired by Timothy Asch and Alan Lomax as a film editor. Salzmann's own ethnographic filmmaking of the period included *We're #1*, on the culture of mumming in Philadelphia—ten years later followed by a second film on mumming in 1981, *Who's Havin' Fun*. In both of these films, the racial tensions associated with mumming are openly present, inflected differently than in the photographic handling. If *City / 2* concerns broad American social realities as encountered in Philadelphia, the films are more insistently and narrowly about Philadelphia itself. To my eyes, this pattern is broadly true as a difference between Salzmann's photoworks and his filmworks across the decades of his career: his films tend toward a type of specificity that remains enclosed in specificity, while his photographs belong to a type of specificity that gives itself away to universal.

inchoate breakdown, leaving people to stand with each other in uncertain contemplation (**Figure 36**). Another photograph pictures two pedestrians passing in a makeshift walkway beside a construction zone (**Figure 42**). As the photograph seems to give it to us, the two men—one Black and one white, each in a trench coat and fedora—form a two-headed creature that moves neither this way nor that. This creature is caught in a tangle of spray-painted letters half the size of its body, a chaos of inscription from which the words “THE NEW” appear twice. The sun is bright, the light contrasty and aggressive; the two-headed Black-white man seems to throw a single shadow to the right of the white man’s head, and the Black man faces in the direction of a hulking shadow cast by a figure outside the frame. A sense of anomie is palpable.

If Szarkowski was at pains to present American street photography in the turbulence of the era as the province of skilled idlers, time scavengers, experts in chance, Salzmänn refused to neuter such a photographer politically. *City / 2* is as observationally difficult as any of the best work of its era, and considerably more politically acidic. It links to three other similarly astringent collections of photographs made in public places, none of them in the US: *Souvenirs of a Recent Time*, a series from the Romanian capital of Bucharest made in 1974-1976 (**Figures 44–48**), *Jerusalem’s People in Public*, a series made in Israel in 1976-1977 (**Figures 49–52**), and an untitled series from Peru made in 2016–2017.<sup>38</sup> Outside the US, and particularly in Bucharest, this vein of Salzmänn’s work shows him turning repeatedly to small figures moving against large walls and buildings, frequently in strong sunlight (**Figure 44**). These figures are fully sealed in anonymity, glimpsed in some desultory passage between stasis and rhapsody, as if leaving the province of historical consciousness for the realm of magical consciousness, the focus of the second part of this book.

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<sup>38</sup> In fact, *Souvenirs of a Recent Time* braids together two distinct image types, those mentioned here and also the photographs of trolley riders discussed in the essay below in Part II of this book. In this sense, *Souvenirs of a Recent Time* work functions as a kind of hinge project between works of historical and magical consciousness, the major domains of Salzmänn’s as I understand it.



FIGURE 32

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IN FRONT OF THE FIRST MOVE HOUSE,  
N.33RD & PEARL STREET, FROM CITY / 2,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 33

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
22ND & NAUDAIN BEFORE GENTRIFICATION,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 34

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
20TH & SOUTH STREETS IN A BLACK OWNED BUSINESS DISTRICT,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 35

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
RITTENHOUSE SQUARE,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.





FIGURE 36

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
33RD & HAMILTON STREETS, FROM CITY / 2,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 37

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
CHARLES, 16TH & PINE STREETS,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 38

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MARCIA GOING WEST ON MARKET STREET,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 39

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IN FRONT OF PLAYS AND PLAYERS,  
1700 BLOCK OF DELANCEY STREET,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 40

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 41

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
SOUTH 18TH NEAR PINE STREET,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 42

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
8TH & MARKET STREETS,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.



FIGURE 43

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
HELEN IN FRONT OF HER HOME IN SOUTHWARK,  
WHICH WAS DEMOLISHED TO MAKE WAY FOR THE DELAWARE EXPRESSWAY,  
FROM CITY / 2, PHILADELPHIA, 1971.





FIGURE 44

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 45

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 46

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

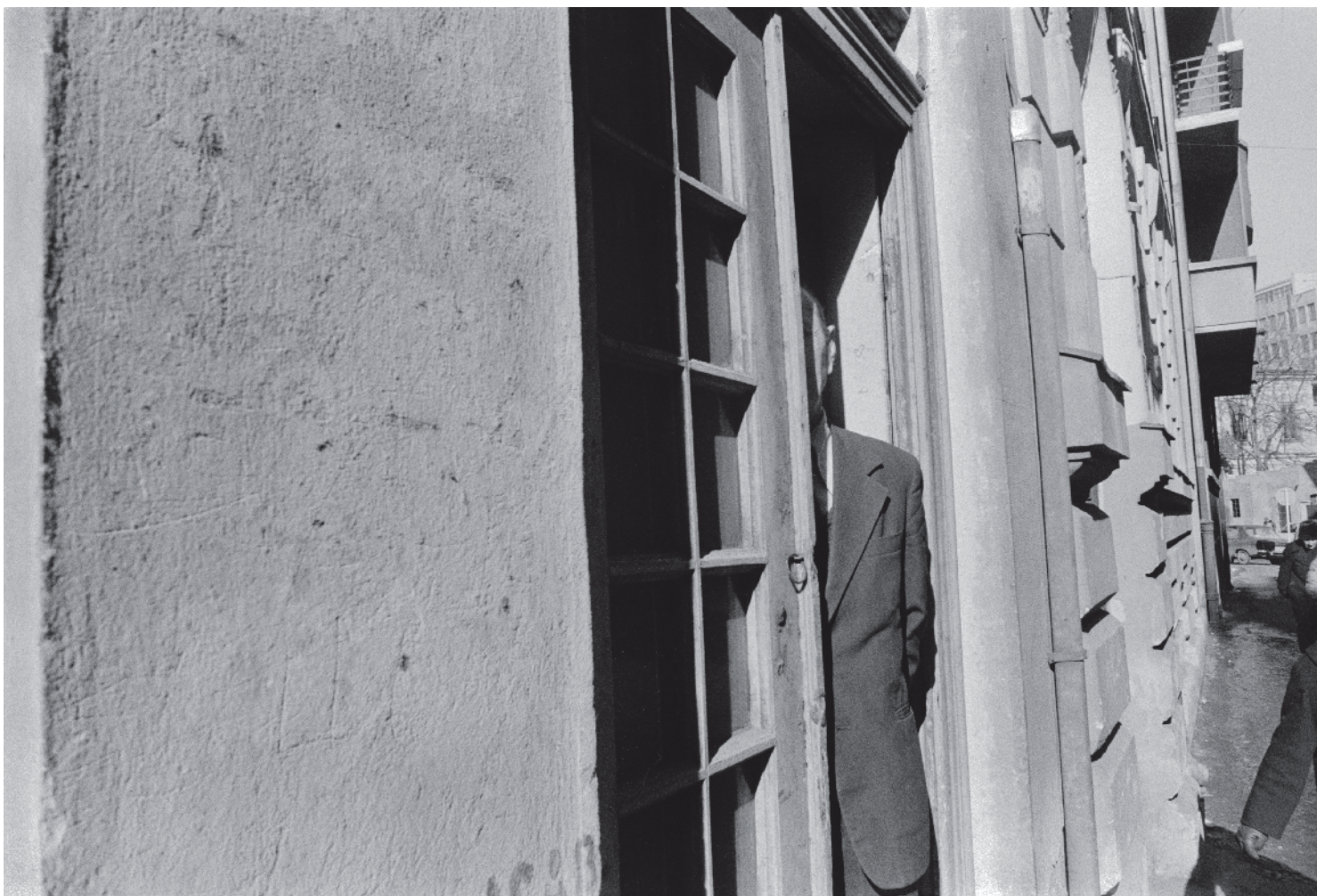


FIGURE 47

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

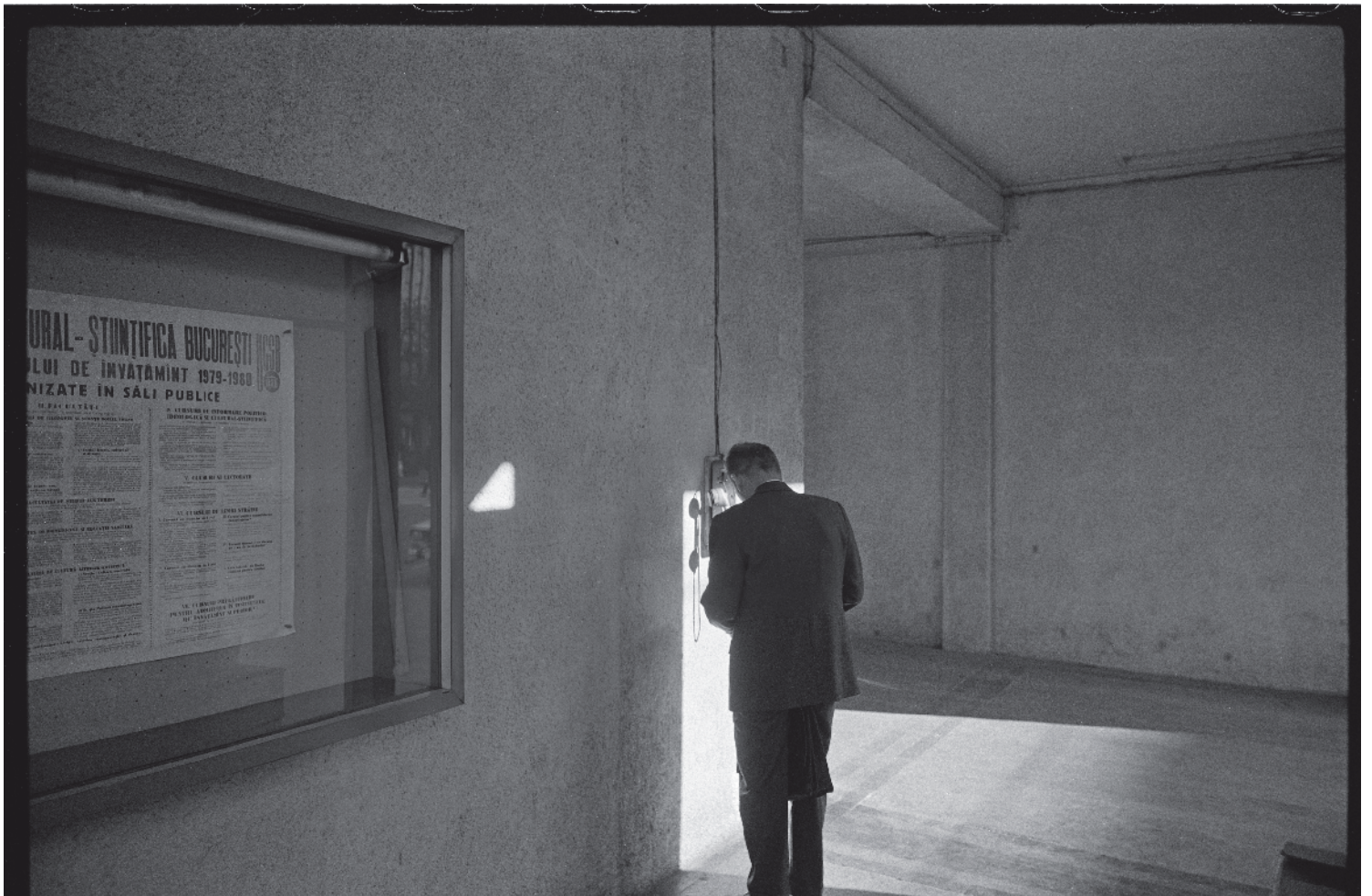


FIGURE 48

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 49

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JERUSALEM'S PEOPLE IN PUBLIC  
JERUSALEM, 1976-1977.



FIGURE 50

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JERUSALEM'S PEOPLE IN PUBLIC  
JERUSALEM, 1976-1977.



FIGURE 51

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JERUSALEM'S PEOPLE IN PUBLIC  
JERUSALEM, 1976-1977.





FIGURE 52

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JERUSALEM'S PEOPLE IN PUBLIC  
JERUSALEM, 1976-1977.

# TLAXCALAN SKETCHES

In the summer of 1969, braided between his work in New York City and Philadelphia, and as a follow-on to his project in Ciudad Juárez, Salzmann spent six weeks in the village of Santa Isabel Xiloxotla, near the city of Tlaxcala in southeastern Mexico. Two years later, he returned for another month.<sup>39</sup> These visits resulted in one of Salzmann's most plaintive documentary works, *Tlaxcalan Sketches* (Figures 53–57). With this work, Salzmann rounds out what I would call four primary modalities in which he approaches the problem of giving-image to historical consciousness. These modalities are defined, as I see it, by two continuums:

Narratively tethered photographs	←—————→	Narratively untethered photographs
Retentive visual poetics	←—————→	Irretentive visual poetics

Narrative tethering is self-explanatory: the image is attached to information outside itself that yields an imagination of a story running through it or it running through a story.<sup>40</sup> This information is generally textual—caption, essay, vignette, for documentary purposes usually non-fictional, though not necessarily.<sup>41</sup> Retentive visual poetics approach photography as a means of storing and storing up interpretive tension, rooted in the metaphor of photographic capture described earlier. Irretentive visual poetics approach photography as a means of acting on—often releasing—interpretive tension, so that the image functions to let free from the world and ultimately from itself the mixture of thought and emotion it shows.

If we cross these two continuums, we arrive at four intersectional spaces, four conceptual baskets: narratively tethered retentive poetics, narratively tethered irretentive poetics, narratively untethered retentive poetics, and narratively untethered irretentive poetics. Broadly speaking, *The Family of Luis* belongs to the first basket, narratively tethered retentive poetics, though it is perhaps situated further toward irretentive poetics than later projects, such as *Anyos Munchos i Buenos* and *Face to Face*. *SRO* belongs to the second basket, narratively tethered irretentive poetics, though the

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<sup>39</sup> He would not return to Santa Isabel itself, though his major work of the 2000s, *Écheleganas*, was centered in a nexus of villages just fifty miles away. It is not clear whether the earlier work seeded the later work, or whether the proximity was coincidental.

<sup>40</sup> Without such information, the imagination is *still* working, but in a less overtly directed way.

<sup>41</sup> For a still-compelling example of documentary photography whose narrative tether is fictional, see the work of Wright Morris, especially *The Inhabitants*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946.



FIGURE 53

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM TLAXCALAN SKETCHES,  
SANTA ISABEL XILOXLTA, TLAXCALA, 1969-1971.

tethering is looser than with other works, such as *The Last Jews of Rădăuți*. *City / 2* belongs to the third basket, narratively untethered retentive poetics, along with the other urban public works mentioned above. *Tlaxcalan Sketches*—if my rubric works—belongs to the last basket, narratively untethered irretentive poetics. Most of Salzmänn's rural works likewise belong here, including *Tlaxcalan Sketches*, *Miorițza*, *Écheleganas*, and his late work on Quechua peoples in Peru's Sacred Valley.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This analytic tool works for Salzmänn's photographs and films alike, though photo- and filmworks of the same project do not necessarily fall in the same interpretive baskets. As a photowork, for example, *Écheleganas* belongs with those projects that are narratively untethered and poetically irretentive, but almost all the filmworks Salzmänn made for this *Écheleganas* are narratively tethered and poetically retentive. In the films, the narrative tethering occurs, of course, through speech rather than written text.

*Tlaxcalan Sketches* proceeds altogether without narrative architecture. It unfolds a series of impressions of village life to be seen in no particular order, according to no discernible plot, without confessing any names or relationships, recognizing no hierarchy of major and minor disclosures. In the world it describes, there are few events, tasks, and rituals. And yet, Santa Isabel is not ethereal. It is a place of mudbrick walls and gardens, dirt tracks and bare electric lights, erosion and big agaves, crisp light and brass bands. It is a world of utopic overtones, not defined primarily by suffering or by desire, and so not a world of struggle, conflict, virtue and change. It is not a fundamentally damaged world and also not a deathless one (we do witness a burial), but it is a world at peace, seemingly made of peace—where dreams approach but not because they are required to live with decency. Or to put it differently, Salzmann's Tlaxcalan photographs poignantly describe a world without historical poignancy, inasmuch as such poignancy appears against a void, a backstory of loss.<sup>43</sup> Salzmann's Santa Isabel has no such backstory.

And if so, the question arises: if such a world is without historical poignancy, in what forms *does* it register historical consciousness? This is the point at which I see an uncommon ambition come into view: a photographer's meditation on historical being yielding to a meditation on history's own being in time. In that meditation (as I might verbalize it—I find it difficult to put into words), history seems to be “in” time as much as time is in—is the stuff of history. It is as if time were a limitless expanse surrounding history, bearing and supporting history from without, in the way that atmosphere and space surround the earth. A photographer with such an awareness would arrive at a new task for the documentary image, namely to allow a feeling for time's amplitude to penetrate the surfaces of history, to bleed through it, to illuminate it as if from without. Such an awareness is exactly what I see in Salzmann's photograph of silhouetted bodies behind a pane of glass, its frame linked to the bottom of the photograph's own frame, then extending to the picture's edges and, it seems, indefinitely. The figures have the height of children, but as the picture give it to us, they might just as well be angels or wraiths. They press forward from the free realm of time toward the condition of history, growing visibly darker as they near the dividing line, their fingers black at the point of contact (**Figure 54**). I see something similar in a photograph of three figures on the village's outskirts, two surefooted and barefoot in grass and twig, one touching a tree as if it were an old friend—his arm almost a new growth from the massive trunk—and everything brilliantly backlit, including the sky itself (**Figure 55**). To speak this way about documentary pictures is admittedly to push the authorizing discourse away from the informational, toward the evocative and the poetic. And this is, I think, precisely the point of this mode of documentary work: to cross the borders between literal and nonliteral, to shape walls into membranes—lucent with feeling as much as fact.



FIGURE 54

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM TLAXCALAN SKETCHES,  
SANTA ISABEL XILOXOXLTA, TLAXCALA, 1969-1971.

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<sup>43</sup> This thought and the following observations about the “behind” of history are indebted to Louise Glück’s pithy reading of Robert Pinsky: “The overwhelming preoccupation of the poems is less history than what lies beyond history: chaos, eternity. Projected against this unknowable void, history takes on the poignancy of what is (in other poets) the property of individual life.” See Louise Glück, *American Originality: Essays on Poetry*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017, p. 44.



FIGURE 55

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM TLAXCALAN SKETCHES,  
SANTA ISABEL XILOXOXLTA, TLAXCALA, 1969-1971.



FIGURE 56

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM TLAXCALAN SKETCHES,  
SANTA ISABEL XILOXOXLTA, TLAXCALA, 1969-1971.



FIGURE 57

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM TLAXCALAN SKETCHES,  
SANTA ISABEL XILOXOXLTA, TLAXCALA, 1969-1971.





# THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI

To the extent that Salzmänn's internationalism had not already proclaimed itself, by the time he reached his thirtieth year, it was fully mature. A Fulbright grant in 1974–1976 permitted Salzmänn to spend two years living in Romania, originally to study ethnic Romanian folk culture. In an introductory tour of the country, he received a recommendation to visit the southern Bukovina town of Rădăuți, well known for its open-air peasant market and near several monasteries renowned for their paintings. He traveled to Rădăuți, arriving on a Saturday, not knowing the peasant market was held each Friday. He wandered into the large synagogue just beside the main square, to find nine men gathered, unable to begin public prayers.<sup>44</sup> Salzmänn became the tenth man. He had learned German in college, and so had a language in common with the town's Jews, who remained German-speaking as a legacy of historical Austro-Hungarian rule in Bukovina.<sup>45</sup> He was abruptly drawn to the people he met, and experienced a revelation of sorts, to focus his work on this small community. He obtained the necessary permits, and established himself at the town's single hotel, staying for two years, followed by a series of return visits through 1979. Cornell Capa invited Salzmänn to show the work at the International Center of Photography in New York, which led in 1983 to its publication with Doubleday as *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* (**Figures 58–74**).<sup>46</sup> It was accompanied by a film, *Song of Rădăuți*, which was broadcast nationwide on PBS. *The Last Jews of Rădăuți*, and its companion work *La Baie/Bath Scenes* (discussed later in this book), remain among Salzmänn's best-known works.

The 1970s–1990s saw several notable projects on “last” or “final” European Jewish communities—small groups of Jews managing to hang on with some measure of dignity and tradition a generation after the Holocaust. These projects included Chuck Fishman's 1977

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<sup>46</sup> In 1980, *GEO* magazine commissioned Salzmänn to return to Rădăuți to do an update, specifically looking into Jewish youth in the town. The piece that was published, including a text by the Philadelphia writer Dan Rottenberg, mostly included earlier photographs. Salzmänn recounts that he returned to Romania once again in 1984–1985 to accompany the French Jewish photographer Frédéric Brenner. As he had done from the beginning, Salzmänn sought the approval of the Chief Rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen, but Rosen proclaimed that Salzmänn was not welcome to continue. “It is not time to say kaddish [the prayer for the dead] for the Jews of Rădăuți,” Rosen told Salzmänn. Meanwhile, according to Salzmänn, it was well known that Rosen took \$10,000 from the Joint Distribution Committee for every Jew he helped emigrate from Romania to Israel.

<sup>44</sup> By tradition, a quorum of ten adult Jews is required to conduct public worship, including the reading of the Barechu, the Kedusha, the repetition of the Amidah, Torah portions, and the Kaddish; in Orthodox practices only men can constitute a minyan, while in non-Orthodox practices women are also counted.

<sup>45</sup> Austrian rule in Bukovina began in 1774, two years after the first partition of Poland, and extended to 1918, when it was taken over by the Romanians. Following the Second World War, it was partitioned between the Soviet Union and Romania, and is currently divided between Ukraine and Romania.

*Polish Jews: The Final Chapter*; Malgorzata Niezabitowska and Tomasz Tomaszewski's 1985 *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland*; Edward Serotta's 1991 *Out of the Shadows: A Photographic Portrait of Jewish Life in Central Europe Since the Holocaust*; the ethnomusicologist Yale Strom's photographic archive made during four decades of travel and research in eastern Europe (1981-2020); and Rita Ostrovskaya's 1996 *Jews in the Ukraine*.<sup>47</sup> The ur-project for these works is Roman Vishniac's iconic prewar documentation of Polish Jewry, published in 1983—the same year as Salzmann's book, in the middle of the period of publications of its type—as *A Vanished World*.<sup>48</sup> Vishniac's work is a classic example of a body of photographs changing its meaning over time, acquiring an intensity of historical witness because of events that framed it retrospectively.<sup>49</sup> Intensely nostalgic, Vishniac depicts the Jewish world that the genocide destroyed as pious, persevering, long-suffering, full of sorrow and spiritually indomitable—a holy world of holy people who in his images are given a measure of posthumous life beyond their evil destruction.

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<sup>47</sup> An early variant of this type of project is Leonard Freed's *After the War Was Over: Jewish Life in Amsterdam in the 1950s*, Schilt Publishing, 2015, though it is not quite framed as a "final chapter" work, in the mold of the eastern European works. Variants of this kind of work also exist in the US context, for example Arnold Eagle's 1938 photographs of Jewish religious life on New York's Lower East Side, published in 1992 as *At Home Only with God*, and Jack Kugelmass's *The Miracle of Intervale Avenue*, a work of cultural anthropology actively incorporating Kugelmass's own photographs made while conducting research. And related projects continue to emerge, for example the contemporary Belarusian-Jewish photographer Sasha Litin's fascinating long-term project *Places and Memory*, which combines searing portraits of mostly older Belarusian Jews with studies of genocidal places across Belarus. Litin's project remains unpublished; I got to know it after meeting him in Mogilëv, Belarus, in 2019 while working on my book *Alive and Destroyed: A Meditation on the Holocaust in Time*.

<sup>48</sup> Parts of Vishniac's work appeared in 1947 as *Polish Jews: A Pictorial Record*, and in the bilingual collection *Die Farshvundene Velt: Idishe shtet, Idishe mentshn / The Vanished World: Jewish Cities, Jewish People*. For a related body of work on Ashkenazi Jewish life, and like Vishniac's, published decades after it was made, see Arnold Eagle's *At Home Only with God: Believing Jews and Their Children*, Aperture, 1992.

<sup>49</sup> It is also a classic example of a book whose biases have proven difficult to contend with, precisely owing to the sanctity of memory to which it so closely attaches itself. Vishniac's work sits beside other contemporaneous visual works that have yet to become as iconic, but are also sophisticated, and show pre-Holocaust Jewish life in eastern Europe differently; among others, I am thinking of the work of Alter Kacyzne, Menachem Kipnis, Solomon Yudovin, Zalman Kaplan, and Zeew Aleksandrowicz. See Roman Vishniac, *A Vanished World*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983. For a thorough reconsideration of Vishniac, see Maya Benton, *Roman Vishniac Rediscovered*, Prestel, 2015. For a somewhat more critical view of Vishniac, see my own essay "Diasporic Investigations," in my book *Far from Zion: Jews, Diaspora, Memory*, Stanford University Press, 2006.



FIGURE 58

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
THE FRANZ JOZEF SYNAGOGUE, ALSO CALLED THE BIG SYNAGOGUE,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

Salzmann's book, especially in its initial publication, shares broad thematic priorities with contemporaneous projects, in two ways. First, Jewish culture is strongly linked to Jewish religion. Some 45 percent of the photographs in the original edition of *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* depict Jewish religious activity of one form or another, and the book leads with a chapter on religious life. This is not to say that Salzmann essentializes culture as religion; rather, he asserts that religious practice was essential to local Jews' own understanding of the Jewish community they shared at that time.<sup>50</sup> Most of the book's photographs of religious life depict one of two small prayer houses still functioning in the town, older men in suits and ties standing and sitting in prayer together in deep camaraderie and ever-present shadow. But it is a photograph that Salzmann made during

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<sup>50</sup> Insofar as most of the people Salzmann comes to know intimately are middle-aged and older, their religious observance is not an aspect of their Jewishness per se.

Yom Kippur services in the Main Synagogue—heretofore unpublished—that moves my imagination toward what the Jews of Rădăuți meant by their spiritual lives (**Figure 74**). The settled-in stillness of the prayer house has given way to a more migrant stillness in the main synagogue, and black and white has given way to color.<sup>51</sup> Two men at prayer carry Torah scrolls on their shoulder, a distinctive form of carrying that is part cradle and part hoist, which is a response to the sheer weight of the scroll and the desire to hold it not on the body but into it. We see these men from behind and below as they stand on the bimah, likely facing the open Aron HaKodesh, the ritual ark used to house the scrolls. It is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, the Day of Atonement, the day of self-reckoning, intensive self-scrutiny, judgment and forgiveness. Following tradition, the men are wearing kittels, white robes that symbolize purity and equality in death, and tallises—striped prayer shawls with ritual fringes. Above their heads, a great chandelier marks out a circle of light, its bulbs rhyming with the tallis’ decorative knots of the figure at right, illuminated by a burst of sunlight. The synagogue’s high windows to the sky make a perforation in the division between the lower and higher worlds. The photograph seems to touch a moment of collective arrival, which is also a moment reaching-forth and reaching-beyond.<sup>52</sup>

Second, Jewish life is depicted in relative apartness from the peoples and cultures around it, more or less insular and self-referential.<sup>53</sup> Salzman’s approach is not without reference to the larger political and economic realities of 1970s Romania. The accompanying text by Salzman’s wife, the anthropologist and archaeologist Ayşe Gürsan-Salzman, does regularly make reference to austerity, shortages, and the double economy that existed under Communist rule—not to mention the biting sense of humor that accompanied it all. But the book does not situate Rădăuți as a place in the grip of one of the world’s most repressive totalitarian regimes, notorious for its corruption, widespread human rights abuses, brutal suppression of political opposition, and

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<sup>51</sup> Salzman mostly photographed in Rădăuți with black and white negative film, and to a much lesser extent with color slide film. The color work was not included in the original publication of *The Last Jews of Rădăuți*, but took shape later in a gallery on Salzman’s website, under the title “I Remember Them Now.” Against the bias that reads color photographs as more contemporary than black and white photographs, Salzman’s color work for this project seems to me much more nostalgic in tone, partly owing to the warm and slightly faded palette, and partly to the more posed and formal quality of many of the images. A similarly nostalgic feeling is present in the color and posing of a minor work of Salzman’s from the early 1990s, titled “A Year in the Life of Rittenhouse Square,” a series of portraits of people in one of Philadelphia’s central urban parks. Salzman’s film, *Song of Rădăuți*, is in black and white, and seems to me to be dated in its feeling compared to his black and white photographs, though without the quality of nostalgia that the color pictures recruit.

<sup>52</sup> To make this picture, as with nearly all the photographs depicting religious services, specifically those conducted on Shabbat and holidays, Salzman violated the prohibition against work observed in traditional and Orthodox practice. According to Salzman, only one person objected, but his objections “were overruled by the larger community.”

<sup>53</sup> Having looked into Salzman’s work in Romania at a granular level, including all of the 35mm and 120 negatives he made—I studied these directly through a loupe on a lightbox in his studio—it is clear to me that he photographed far more broadly than the original publication indicates. *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* represented Salzman’s project rather than embodied it. In fact Salzman did not photograph Jewish life as if it were stranded in time and space, an island unto itself. On the contrary, he understood the Jews of Rădăuți as part of a shared Jewish-Romanian lifeworld, and he photographed the intersectionality of that shared life-world, as well as many aspects of ethnic Romanian life as it did not intersect with Jewish life in the town. *Continues on page 110*

heavy-handed cult of personality surrounding its leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu. These realities are not described. The anchoring point of historical reference for Salzman's Rădăuți is not the Communist present but the Second World War. Gürsan-Salzman is quick to make this clear in her introduction. To arrive in Jewish Rădăuți, we must walk through the Holocaust door. What is. . . is an image of what is no longer, and what is no longer. . . is constantly subtracting from the image of what is. The 8,000 Jews of prewar Rădăuți comprised about half the town, of whom some 2,000 returned after the war, most from the camps in Transnistria where the German-allied Romanian government deported the Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia. Heavy postwar emigration eroded this number, and the community comprised about 240 people in the mid-1970s, of a total population of 22,000.<sup>54</sup>

However, even as it shares certain editorial approaches with other works of its time, *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* departs from them in significant ways, which together begin to explain why it remains the deepest and most penetrating work of its kind. None of these other works is anywhere near as devoted to a single Jewish community.<sup>55</sup> Salzman went to Rădăuți and stayed for two years. He not only immersed himself in the community, but became a part of it, and through the community found himself discovering his own heritage with far more depth than his American Jewish upbringing afforded him.<sup>56</sup> He came to know seemingly everyone in the Jewish community, and set about communicating his knowledge and feeling for them not just with sensitivity, but specificity. In the combination of Salzman's pictures and Gürsan-Salzman's

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<sup>53</sup> Salzman's photographs of ethnic Romanian life in Rădăuți take us into family homes, marketplaces, churches and ceremonies. One of the most important topics of his work in the town was the communal bathhouse, shared by Jews and Romanians alike—a group of photographs that is partly included in the original publication, but that became a separate work, *La Baie/Bath Scenes*. As of this writing, with my assistance Salzman is planning a new edition of *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* that will for the first time present an integrative vision he actually had of Rădăuți, and the true scope, expansiveness and ambition of his project. At the same time, this revision raises a series of questions for future interpreters of Salzman's life's work. On the one hand, Salzman has made his archive available for study in perpetuity, which means potentially that just as I myself saw a new book of old work while studying his negatives, others will hopefully make new discoveries and maybe even see entirely new artistic works by Salzman that Salzman himself did not see. Some may do collaborative works with Salzman's legacy that dialogically push his work in new directions in interesting ways. It is fair to Salzman and his legacy that what he made should be available to creative research and artistic practice. On the other hand, every artist has a right to determine what of his or her output is successful and what is not, what should be understood as the work itself and what is auxiliary to it, i.e., a right to be respected in the knowledge that he or she earns, namely that a great deal of failure is required for any success.

<sup>54</sup> In 2003, the community had shrunk to 63, and is today likely far less than that. In 2011, the Jewish population of the town was so minuscule that it does not appear in summary demographic information from that year's official census.

<sup>55</sup> Again I wish to call attention to Salzman's language skills, and the important role these played in making his work possible. Beyond German, he quickly became fluent in Romanian, no doubt aided by his fluency in Spanish and French.

<sup>56</sup> Salzman begins his book with an account of how the community reintroduced him to his ancestry, in effect to himself as a person who had received an inheritance he did not fully understand until that point. He summarizes his feeling of personal closeness to the community not by saying that he felt like one of them, but the reverse: "The Jews of Rădăuți used to say to me 'Du bist einer von unsers' ('You are one of us')."



FIGURE 59

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
 MOSES LEHRER, VIZNIZER SHUL,  
 FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
 RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

texts, we feel we come to know the Rabbi Josef Tirnauer and his wife Esther and daughter Bertha, the Jewish Committee chairman Jacob Kamiel, the shoe repairman Abraham Kern and his wife Itta, their son Isaac and his wife Leah. We come to know the chicken seller Roza Wiener, the framer Moses Lehrer and his wife Zile, the hatmaker Moke Steiner and his wife Hortensia, the lawyer Samuel Dankner and his wife Roza, the beer factory owner Abraham Zwecker and his wife Helen, the bar mitzvah boy Willy Clipper, the dentist Dr. Glatter, the furrier Srul Beer, the chauffeur Herman Gelber. We come to know Frau Weinstein, Fräulein Grünklas, Frau Dr. Rath, and the poet Relly Blei, some of whose poems appear in the book in the original Yiddish, with English translations.

The result is not a portrait of a community in some empathic but general sense, but rather of individuals *in* community with each other—people whose distinct characters, idiosyncrasies, and

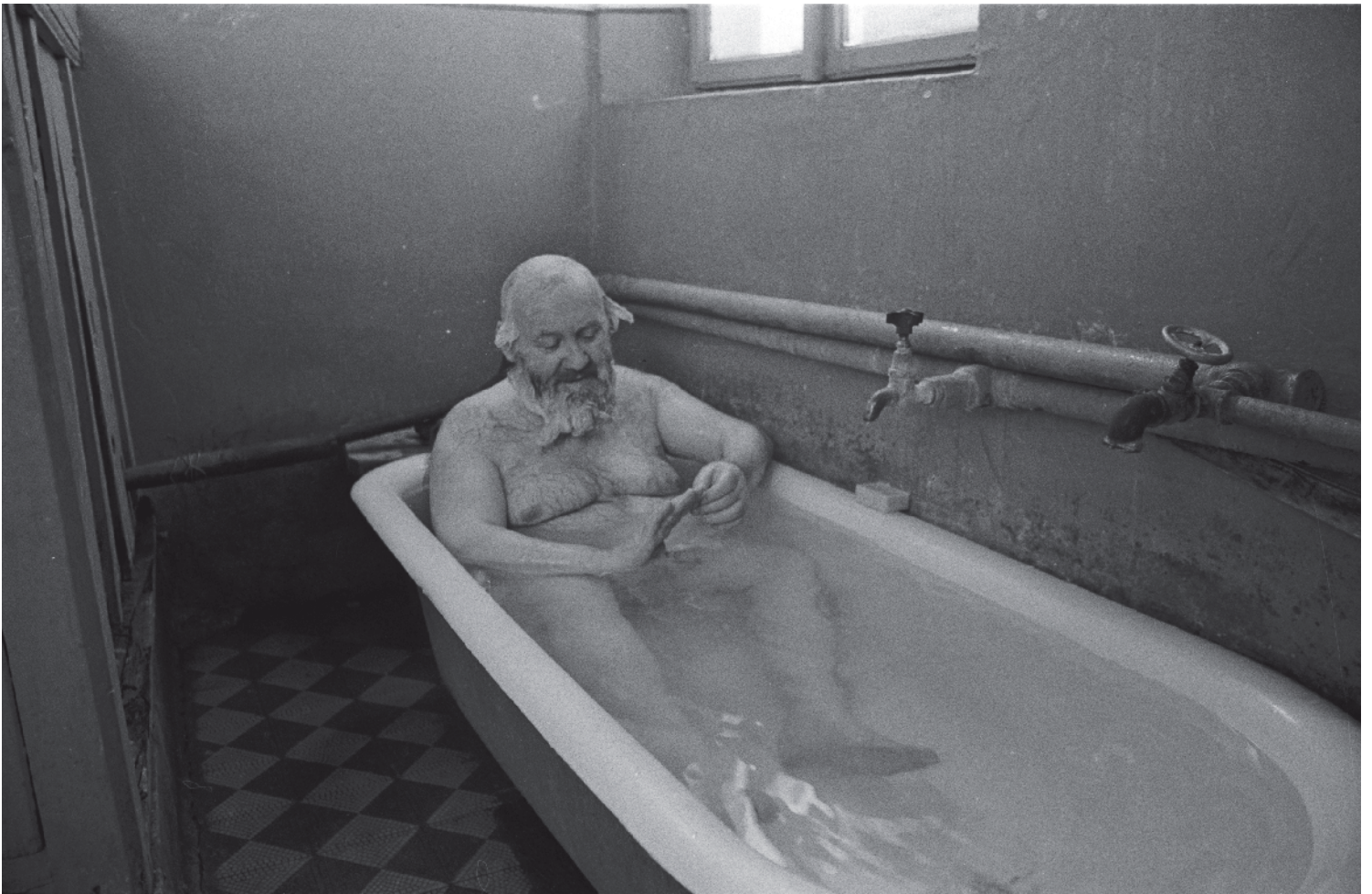


FIGURE 60

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
RABBI JOSEF TIRNAUER AT THE JEWISH BATHS,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



relationships we come to understand. In effect, Salzman became a member of the community, of a certain uncommon sort: the outsider accepted as an insider not despite being but because he is an outsider. As an outsider, he is granted license to ask searching questions, and as an insider he is permitted to receive answers. As an outsider, he is allowed the prerogative of trying to see the whole, and as an insider he is granted access to the details. I cannot imagine, for example, any other photographer of Jewish life picturing the spiritual leader of the community naked in his bathtub (**Figure 60**). And this is not just any rabbi: Josef Tirnauer is a venerable man, commanding the respect of Jews and Romanians alike (we are told many times that Romanian Christians regularly seek his counsel and wisdom), and a deep man, not humorless but serious, not given to casual conversation. Salzman receives these qualities in the portrait of Tirnauer that formed the cover image of the book's first edition (**Figure 67**). "He was known," Gürsan-Salzman writes, "to be a loner. His family tiptoed around him." In photographing Tirnauer in his bath, Salzman reaches forward to meet him on his terms, not in his roles and duties in life but as he seems to be to himself and for himself apart from the dimensions of self-knowing that arise from his profound responsibility to others. Salzman was clearly drawn to Tirnauer, and he is the subject of many of Salzman's best portraits, including a double portrait with his daughter Bertha, made a few months before her emigration to Israel, never to see her parents again (**Figure 68**). It is a picture at once restrained and brimming over, almost aching with pride and also incipient sorrow. I might even say it encapsulates two types of human presence we see across Salzman's archive: the winsomeness of the subtle backward leaningness of the rabbi, the strands of his beard as if beginning to catch wind, and the querulousness of his daughter's forward leaningness, one shoulder pressed to her father and one leaning forward into space.<sup>57</sup>

Likewise I know of no other photographer of this era of Jewish life in Europe invited to be present during the ritual preparation of a corpse for burial, through all the stages of washing and dressing the body, and the raw grief of family members alone with the body—alone except for Salzman—in the last hours before interment. Salzman and Gürsan-Salzman attended at least fifteen funerals during the two years he lived in Rădăuți, not as reporters or detached participant-observers of anthropological training, but as people who had earned trust. Salzman's photograph of the horse-drawn hearse and driver at the gates of the Jewish cemetery in winter—the "statement" picture for the whole project and a photograph that could also stand for all the "last Jews" projects of the era—is a tour de force of pathos, visual economy, and foreknowledge of events (**Figure 70**). The celebrated Israeli poet and Holocaust survivor Dan Pagis (1930–1986), who was born and raised in Rădăuți, encountered Salzman's Rădăuți photographs in an exhibition in Jerusalem, and wrote the following prose poem as an ekphrastic response:

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<sup>57</sup> I use the word "leaningness" here as a token of the difficulty of finding language to express the blend of informational and qualitative content that photographs by their nature task us to understand.

## The Souvenir

The town where I was born, Radutz, in the country of Bukovina, threw me out when I was ten. On that day she forgot me, as if I had died, and I forgot her too. We were both satisfied with that.

Forty years later, all at once, she sent a souvenir. Like an unpleasant aunt whom you're supposed to love just because she's a blood relative. It was a new photograph, her latest winter portrait. A canopied wagon is waiting in the courtyard. The horse, turning its head, gazes affectionately at an elderly man who is busy closing some kind of gate. Ah, it's a funeral. There are just two members left in the Burial Society: the grave digger and the horse.

But it's a splendid funeral; all around in the strong wind, thousands of snowflakes are crowding, each one a crystal star with its own particular design. So there is still the same impulse to be special, still the same illusions. Since all snow-stars have just one pattern: six points, a star of David in fact. In a minute they will all start melting and turn into a mass of plain snow. In their midst my elderly town has prepared a grave for me, too.<sup>58</sup>

If from Salzman's plaintive call comes Pagis's mordant reply, Salzman himself turns toward and not away from death in Rădăuți when it crosses his path—turns with great humility toward natural death in the place of Jewish annihilation. Salzman's equipoise in such moments is to my eyes an important indicator of the ethical seriousness at the heart of his artistic conscience. At the death of one of the members of the community, Leizer Cohen, whom Salzman had come to know, Salzman remains with the grieving members of the man's family (**Figure 72**), before his own reckoning of the corpse itself. Salzman's encounter with Cohen in death yields image that seems to me an intercession with the sublime (**Figure 69**), one of the most significant pictures in Salzman's career. Cohen's body lies in its pine box, bent sinister in the photographic frame. It has been fitted into a simple shroud that gleams brightly in the confrontation with Salzman's flash. A prayer shawl missing its ritual fringes is tucked behind Cohen's head—presumably his own prayer shawl, used during his life to help him feel clothed in nearness to God, now to accompany his body into the ground. The cotton hood for Cohen's head has not yet been tied—it is presumably near the moment of tying—just after Cohen's eyes and mouth have been covered with the shards of a smashed clay pot. It is not a mask that Cohen wears—it protects him from nothing, conceals nothing, disguises nothing. But the voiding of the human face is subtly shocking—eyes and mouth

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<sup>58</sup> Dan Pagis, *The Selected Poetry of Dan Pagis*, trans. Stephen Mitchell, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 9.



FIGURE 61

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
SRUL BEER & MR. WEINSTEIN,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

appearing goggled and gagged, or recast as hardened-over cavities.<sup>59</sup> Like other works of its era, *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* is not just a report but a tribute and an elegy, a meditation on the living remains of a European Jewish civilization that genocide wrecked. Unlike Vishniac, who did not make his work as an elegy but later fashioned it into one, Salzmann and his contemporaries were forced to confront a wrenching contradiction as they were photographing. Salzmann's task,

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<sup>59</sup> Another such image arises in Salzmann's Miorița project on Romanian shepherds, in which Salzmann stands over the body of a dead calf, its blood pooling on the hard earth, its head touching the boot of the shepherd, its body not quite in the long shadow of his leg (**Figure 85**). As with the photograph of the corpse of Leizer Cohen, the body is expressive in death—an expressivity which is also a non-expressivity, so that the photograph lands as death's mystery given a right of return, a chance to appear also as life's mystery.



FIGURE 62

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AFTER THE PRAYER SERVICE,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

as he gave it to himself, was to render a world perched between what was lost with the Holocaust, and what will be lost when his subjects themselves give way to disappearance. In this sense, the deep subject of Salzmann's work is not the visible world of a Jewish community, but the invisible force of history whose effects are the visible world—or at the least, the dialectic between the everyday and the historical, which photography as a medium is uniquely poised to stage precisely because of the paradoxes of its ontology. In approaching the everyday world in the mode of a documentarian, Salzmann also approached it in the mode of a historical witness—which is, as I have suggested, one definition of poetry: what else you end up saying when you say just what you mean. It is to Salzmann's credit that he avoided what Vishniac desired: a rhetorical mode of



FIGURE 63

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FRAU DR. RATH,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

tragedy that added *shmaltz* and nostalgia to the image of genocidal loss.<sup>60</sup>

The document that begets the unsentimental elegy also begets something else, however: the memorial, which Salzmann leaves as an open rather than a closed problem. Because he understands photographs as thresholds between present, past and future, and between actuality and the imagination it prompts—portals through which the invisible passes into visibility and vice versa—it is, to me, completely insufficient to say that his pictures memorialize by holding on to or

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<sup>60</sup>The degree of vision and determination required for Salzmann to pursue this subject may be difficult to appreciate today: the Holocaust, even as late as the 1970s, was still not widely embraced as one of the defining events of the twentieth century. Salzmann recognized intuitively that the Holocaust is the sort of historical trauma that takes decades and generations to appear in collective consciousness. It remains extraordinary that he had the perspicacity to focus artistically on the problem of what lives in and against that trauma, and that he had the courage to do so by jumping the Iron Curtain to go live independently in Communist Romania.



FIGURE 64

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
THE HAND OF FRAU DR. RATH,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

capturing the world they show. Rather, we should say that his pictures function as a memorial to the extent that they serve as a site for grappling with the problem of giving-image to post-genocidal memory in the first place. They become a memorial to the extent that they release in us a recognition that the meaninglessness of the Holocaust—more and more meaningless as we come to know its details more and more precisely—the nothing that the Holocaust birthed is something the living world can endure but not conquer. The living Jewish world, inasmuch as it defies the



FIGURE 65

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FRÄULEIN ZIELE GRÜNGLAS,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

Jewish nothing, makes itself a placeholder for it. And if so, then Salzmänn's accomplishment hands us an experience of historical consciousness in a double helix. As historical documents, his pictures are true, accurate, faithful—because he made them this way, endowed as all reporters are with the power to falsify. As memorial they are neither true nor false, neither accurate nor deceptive, neither faithful nor faithless, because at that level they are not a representation. Rather, they are what manifests when actual images manage to dislodge the impulse to fix images into outcomes, conclusions, avowals.



FIGURE 66

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ABRAHAM KERN,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.





FIGURE 67

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
RABBI JOSEF TIRNAUER,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 68

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
RABBI JOSEF TIRNAUER WITH HIS DAUGHTER BERTHA,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 69

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MR. LEIZER COHEN'S BODY PREPARED FOR BURIAL,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 70

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MR. THAU'S FUNERAL,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 71

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FRAU BEATRICE WEINSTEIN,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 72

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
THE FUNERAL OF MR. LEIZER COHEN,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 73

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AT PRAYER,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 74

ROSH HASHANA IN THE BIG SYNAGOGUE,  
FROM THE LAST JEWS OF RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.





# MIORIȚA

In 1981, Salzmann arrived in the village of Poinana Sibilui in the Transylvania region of Romania, with a burgeoning interest in animal husbandry, specifically transhumance—the seasonal walking of livestock between grazing grounds. Transhuman shepherding is an ancient tradition across the world, at least a thousand years old in Romania, and is an occupation—for example, cowboys in the American West—perched midway between intense work and pastoral wandering.

Salzmann spent a year with these shepherds, photographing them both at home in Poinana Sibilui, and on their walking journeys all across Romania, from Banat to Dobruja to Maramureș (**Figures 75-86**). On some primary level, Salzmann seems to have been motivated by the pastoral as an aesthetic experience—an urge I find even in his juvenilia, for example a 1966 photograph from rural France (**Figure 75**) showing peasants on a country path between orchards and a stone cottage, in colors that recall the autochromes of the early twentieth century, and the gauzy rigor of the post-Impressionist paintings that Salzmann encountered in childhood visits to the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia.<sup>61</sup> And pastoralism as an aesthetic has remained present across the decades of Salzmann’s career: there is a clear arc linking his early photograph in France to, for example, his late works in Peru (**Figure 122**).

But the aesthetic of pastoralism was not enough for Salzmann. The aesthetic of pastoralism without social or ethical depth is, at the least, pictorialist effect, and worse, can veer into romanticization of the hard realities of rural life. Salzmann detected something socially, ethically and artistically salubrious in the pastoral, and set out to follow it. What he wanted, as I discern it, was to join living, seeing, and picturing rural lifeways into a single artistic/non-artistic experience. He wanted to join into country life he was photographing as his subjects were themselves joined into it. When out on the land, he wanted to tune his work to their own patterns of work and rest. Moving sheep across long distances is a 24-hour-a-day job, requiring living outdoors, forgoing home comforts for months at a time, sleeping in makeshift huts, doing without toilets, electricity and running water. Moving animals involves not only managing herd behavior over a changing terrain, but being alert to the threat of predators—wolves and bears that roam freely also—and controlling the dogs used to help superintend the sheep. And of course the shepherd’s

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<sup>61</sup> The Barnes Foundation is not only one of the premiere collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and Modernist art in the world, but in its original location in Merion, Pennsylvania, was one of the most idiosyncratic in its philosophy of what it meant to experience art. At age fifteen, Salzmann enrolled himself in the Foundation’s educational activities, taking classes that turned out to have a lifelong resonance.



FIGURE 75

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA VENDANGE (THE GRAPE HARVEST),  
NEAR TO BORDEAUX, FRANCE, 1964.

life involves constant attention to the needs of individual animals, their feeding and shearing and milking and birth-giving. Salzmänn photographed all of this with diligence and perspicacity. When not out on the land, he photographed shepherd peoples' ways of home just as assiduously—their religious rituals, their cultural activities, their family lives. To these pictures he joined studies of the land to which they were connected—forests and grasslands, mountains and rolling hills at once wild and familiar. The result of this work was the book *Miorița* in 1999, and an exhibition at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest in 2001.



FIGURE 76

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.

Or to put a single word to it, Salzmann set out to photograph what phenomenology calls a lifeworld: the whole of a physical environment and social experiences as they form a subjective givenness, what is self-evident for subjects who share a material and cultural everyday, a commonplace.<sup>62</sup> To regard a lifeworld is to pursue it not as an object of social-scientific inquiry, but

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<sup>62</sup>The concept of the lifeworld is strongly associated with the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, who sought to describe the ways that consciousness is already embedded and operating in a field of meanings and judgments that are socially and culturally constituted. For Husserl, to articulate this type of consciousness is to address both the ways that the personal is contextually determined in the intersubjective, and the ways that the intersubjective is contextually specified in the personal. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, Northwestern University Press, 1970.

as an integration of experience and perception, made of the situational truths of individual and collective living.<sup>63</sup> Earlier projects of Salzmänn's already show tendencies to position documentary as lifeworld description, a move that trades on the reception of the photograph as a form of entry into something—rather than looking at something—and then on perceiving the photograph as a form of continuing presence of what it shows.<sup>64</sup> The work especially shares a sensibility with *Tlaxcalan Sketches*, in effect carries forward Salzmänn's concerns from a decade earlier. Two things have changed, however. First, in Salzmänn's Santa Isabel Xiloxotla, rural life is not figured either with or against tradition—seems apart from the categories of traditional and modern—whereas in rural Transylvania, the lifeworld of the shepherds appears under the sign of living tradition. Second, Salzmänn's purpose in Transylvania is less to regard the everyday as a kind of membrane through which we see time illuminating history from behind (as it were), and more an effort to regard the everyday as a membrane through which myth illuminates history. The final form of the work, "Miorița," positions the photograph as a zone of interchange between legend and lifeworld.

Miorița (in its proper Romanian spelling; in English, "The Little Ewe") is a famous folk ballad in Romanian culture, probably the most famous, short and widely memorized.<sup>65</sup> Salzmänn learned its most common version from Mama Leone, an old woman in Poinana Sibilui whom he lived—she would recite it on cold winter nights. It became obvious to him that the poem's cultural prestige, pastoral symbolism and spiritual depth made it a companion to his images, and led him

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<sup>63</sup> It would have been quite possible, and in its own way compelling, for Salzmänn to frame his work—as he did in Ciudad Juárez in the 1960s and in Rădăuți in the 1970s, and as he would in Turkey in the 1980s and in Mexico in the 2000s—to profile the people he comes to know. It would also have been possible for him to emphasize the ironies of the political context of the time, which he notes in passing in his afterword: "They somehow managed to have ownership of their flocks despite forced collectivization of everything around them. They seemed to be able to outfox the authorities in navigating the paths back and forth between their summer and winter pasturages at the far ends of the country." Moving the final work's focus away from these kinds of presentations was Salzmänn's considered choice, not an oversight.

<sup>64</sup> In the case of Jewish Rădăuți, the illusion of continuing presence is already complicated, as I have described above: Salzmänn sees the living presence of his subjects as inherently mixed with unrecuperated historical absence, and also anticipated absence, which could be understood as an effort to describe a memorially weighted lifeworld, or is perhaps an undoing of the coherence of the concept of the lifeworld in a post-genocidal reality.

<sup>65</sup> The ballad tells the story of three shepherds from three regions of Romania—a Moldavian, a Transylvanian and a Vrancean—who meet while tending their herds. A clairvoyant and devoted ewe of the Moldavian tells him that she has learned the other two are plotting to kill him to steal his flock. The shepherd and the faithful ewe fall into profound conversation. With serenity and lucidity, he instructs her what to do if this should happen: he should ask his killers to bury his body by the sheep's pen, then tell the other sheep not that he had died, but that he had married a princess—"the world's own bride"—with all the elements of nature in attendance as his witnesses, the wedding sealed by the falling of a star; when his mother asks, she should repeat the story but without mention of the star, as his mother will immediately understand his fate. The poem's power seems to me to lie in its de-linking of death and mourning, its refusal to bend toward grief as a response to the shepherd's death (whenever it should come and by whatever means), instead breaking the barrier between life and death, and folding death into a vision of the greater ecstasy and omnipresence of life's force.

to couple documentary photographs with a poetic text, in a bilingual Romanian-English edition with a new translation by Ernest H. Latham, Jr.<sup>66</sup> The poem appears in a slow drip of lines, opposite large color reproductions, so that the images made by the photographs and the images made by the words move in rhythm with one another. The effect is a double vision of freedom: it seems that Salzman never felt more transported, more humanly free than when communing with the freedom of the shepherds, and the already sublime symbolism of the poem seems to acquire a measure of extra transcendence when it reaches down to touch the shapes and colors of the Romanian land.

The photograph that I find most emblematic of the whole does not appear in Salzman's book (though a variant does): in a muted, almost monochrome palette of browns, ruddy oranges and creams, we pace a shepherd and his flock from behind as they make their way through a leafless forest on an overcast day (**Figure 79**). The flock separates and rejoins as it moves around the trees, as if a clapping, dusty version of the way a river flows around large stones in its path. Anchoring the picture's lower right corner is a black sheepdog, weary and on patrol from his rear station. At the picture's left is the shepherd, dressed in a full-body pelt of long fleece, his physique powerful and wide and his gait in step with the animals. He seems a new, strange kind of bovid creature: part presiding human, part glorious ruminant, part mythic hybrid transcending the given taxonomies. It also overruns the given etymologies. "Transhumant" comes to English by way of French, from the Latin *trans* (across) + *humus* (ground). When this word meets Salzman's picture, immediately it begs to drop its final "t," to become "transhuman"—the human as it traverses *all* the human, the human as it surpasses the merely human. In this photograph as in the work as a whole, the transhumant adjoins the transhuman, one the lyric fathom of the other.

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<sup>66</sup> *Miorița* is the most significant work of Salzman's that directly combines his photographs with poems, but not the only example. In 1983, the poet Keith Wilson chose many of Salzman's photographs from Romania to accompany his collection, *Stone Roses: Poems from Transylvania*, published by Utah State University Press. Further, I would consider many of the texts by Thomas Payne that accompany Salzman's photographs in *The Family of Luis* to be prose poems, or at least to veer in that direction; however, that work is not overtly constructed as poem + image.



FIGURE 77

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 78

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.





FIGURE 79

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 80

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 81

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 82

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 83

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 84

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 85

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.



FIGURE 86

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MIORIȚA,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983-1984.





# ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS

In 1984, Salzman received a letter from Turkey's Chief Rabbi David Asseo, at the urging of the Beth Hatefutsoth Museum in Tel Aviv ("The Diaspora House," formerly the Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora). Asseo and Beth Hatefutsoth invited Salzman to create a photographic record of Jewish monuments remaining in Turkey, to supplement the museum's already existing archive of the material traces of Jewish life around the world. It was planned as a two-month project that Salzman would undertake with Gürsan-Salzman, a secular Muslim born and raised in Istanbul, who had some acquaintance with Jewish life in that city.<sup>67</sup> The project developed into a five-year ethnographic study of Turkish Jews, very likely the most comprehensive ever accomplished on this topic (**Figures 87–97**). It resulted in two books co-authored by Salzman and Gürsan-Salzman, 1991's *Anyos Munchos i Buenos / Good Years and Many More* and 2011's *Travels in Search of Turkish Jews*, plus the 1985 documentary film *Turkey's Sephardim: 500 Years*. An exhibition of *Anyos Munchos i Buenos* was launched to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Alhambra Decree, and eventually traveled to museums in 22 countries.<sup>68</sup> In 2011–2012, Salzman returned to the topic, creating a further set of short films, *Revisiting Turkey's Jews*.

In parallel with documentary work on post-Holocaust Jewish communities in eastern Europe, the latter decades of the twentieth century saw a number of projects on non-Ashkenazi Jewish communities. These include Frédéric Brenner's 1970s work on Iranian Jews, and his 1991 film and photowork on crypto-Jews in Portugal, *Les Derniers Marranes / The Last Marranos*; Morrie Camhi's 1992 *Faces and Facets: The Jews of Greece*; Doron Bachar's 1991 photographic work on

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<sup>67</sup> Their work in Turkey would be the most sustained collaboration between Salzman and Gürsan-Salzman during Salzman's career. Gürsan-Salzman was a key contributor to Salzman's work in Rădăuți, but was with Salzman in the town for perhaps one quarter of his time living there. Gürsan-Salzman was responsible not just for the textual component of the project, but for a great deal of the behind-the-scenes work, including in-situ translation and the informal socializing necessary for successful interactions. We see her these roles in the film, *Turkey's Sephardim*. Salzman and Gürsan-Salzman's daughter Han also played a role as a young child accompanying her parents in their work—softening and lightening the atmosphere of the interactions—something we also see in the film. The family photographs that Salzman made of his wife and daughter and sometimes himself during the five years the family lived in Turkey repeatedly show Salzman's heart waxing in tenderness, and could have been a work of their own.

<sup>68</sup> Issued on 31 March 1492, the Alhambra Decree was the royal edict ordering the expulsion of practicing Jews from Spain. In response, Sultan Bayezid II welcomed Jews to the lands of the Ottoman Empire, leading to the establishment of Sephardic Jewish communities throughout what is today the Republic of Turkey. The Spanish government formally and symbolically voided the Alhambra Decree in 1968.

the Jews of Albania; and Zion Ozeri's 2005 *The Jews of Yemen: The Last Generation*.<sup>69</sup> Historical rupture is the point of departure for these works, not genocide but the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, which precipitated massive emigration from Sephardic Jewish communities around the Mediterranean and Mizrahi Jewish communities across the Middle East.<sup>70</sup>

Turkey's Jewish population in the mid-1980s sat at approximately 22,000, most of whom lived in Istanbul, with about 2,000 in Izmir, a sizable community in Ankara, and small numbers scattered throughout the rest of the country. Salzman and Gürsan-Salzman set out on the road, eventually visiting 32 cities and towns from Thrace on the European side of the Sea of Marmara to Troad and the Aegean coast, along Turkey's Mediterranean shoreline to southeastern Anatolia along the Syrian border. Their travels also included, to a lesser extent, eastern and central Anatolia, and the Black Sea coast. The work in the smaller locations combines mostly (though not uniformly) ruined synagogues and neglected cemeteries, with oral histories taken from Jews who may have remained, or local Muslims with long memories. To my eyes, there are two continuums that define most ruins photography:



The ruin as fragment is self-explanatory: the image presents a fragment displaced from a prior whole, which stands at least partly to be reconstructed in the imagination by way of the image. The ruin as whole is the reverse: the fragment makes no claim over the imagination of a whole, but rather seems a whole unto itself, albeit a beguiling and confusing kind.<sup>71</sup> The ruin as sublime imputes a magnificence or eminence to the destruction and loss that the ruin embodies, in classical analyses a combination of fear and attraction, often linked to the seductive power of that which is terrifying.<sup>72</sup> The ruin as banal does not impute grandeur to ugliness, avoids the

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<sup>69</sup> Brenner's photographs of Iranian Jewish life appeared as part of his *Diaspora: Homelands in Exile*, HarperCollins, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> It is unclear to me why Beit Hatefutsoth conceived the commission as a work about monuments and not communities—why Salzman himself had to bend the concept (necessitating years of further fundraising from other sources). While the museum's mission is and was to profile millennia of Jewish history around the world, I smell a tacit Israel-centric bias in the way the commission was framed, as if to say that Turkey itself was to be studied for the past of Turkish Jewry, whose present was to be found in Israel. Salzman and Gürsan-Salzman's work gives the lie to that kind of easy partitioning.

<sup>71</sup> For a consideration of the ruin as a whole with regard to Jewish patrimony in eastern Europe, see my essay "The Jewish as Ruin," <http://jasonfrancisco.net/the-jewish-as-ruin>, September 2017.

<sup>72</sup> See Edmund Burke's 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*; and Immanuel Kant's 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*.

visual rhetoric of shock and hideousness, but rather describes the ruin as a plain if hard-to-like state of affairs. Crossing these two continuums, we arrive at four intersectional positions. The first offers the ruin as an exercise in supersessive imaginative toward an encounter with sublime loss. The second offers the ruin as a self-sufficient annunciation of a wholly presented sublime. The third offers the ruin as an activated source for imagination of banal disappearance. The fourth offers the ruin as a frank, non-mysterious, unadorned account of banal change.

To my eyes, Salzman's photographs of Jewish ruins in Turkey are mostly in position four, though some of them manage to touch all four positions, for example his visual account of the Grand Synagogue of Edirne (**Figure 87**). Opened on the eve of Pesach in 1909, it was built following the city's devastating 1905 fire that destroyed thousands of houses and several synagogues, leading to the sultan's edict to construct a new central house of worship for the city's 20,000 Jews. The building was designed in the Moorish Revival style after the Sephardic Leopoldstädter Tempel in Vienna, and on completion was the largest synagogue in Turkey, and the third largest in Europe.<sup>73</sup> Salzman's photograph situates us partway into the sanctuary, facing the Hekhál (Aron HaKodesh), with a view that extends up to the balconies, and encompasses the circular window behind the Aseret HaDibrot (tablets representing the Ten Commandments). It is a rigorously symmetrical composition, the vertical center of the building placed at the horizontal center of the frame, and the vertical lines of the architecture aligned with the sides of the frame as much as the lens will allow.<sup>74</sup> The synagogue has no interior illumination—the ropes for the chandeliers hang loosely, and there is no Ner Tamid (Eternal Light)—but the day is bright, and sunshine pours through the windows, even picking out a spotlight on the floor in front of the ark. The image stages a dramatic contrast in light, color and physical condition between the building's splendor and its depredation—perhaps even a contest. These qualities or forces are separated into the upper and lower halves of the frame (something that becomes especially clear by covering each half and seeing it separately). Looking into the picture, we imagine an arc of change ravishing the structure in time, pushing it step by step toward entropy (position one), until we seem to stand before a truth of chaos and voidedness strangely endowed with the same holiness that the building's beauty and grandeur pronounce (position two), from which we imagine the conversion

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<sup>73</sup> Completed in 1858, Vienna's Leopoldstädter Tempel became the model for numerous synagogues, including the Zagreb Synagogue, the Spanish Synagogue in Prague, the Tempel Synagogue in Kraków, the Choral Synagogue in Bucharest, the Great Choral and also the Brodsky Choral Synagogues in Kiev, the Dohány Synagogue in Budapest—currently the largest in Europe—and not least for Salzman's oeuvre, the main synagogue of Rădăuți, Romania (**Figure 58**).

<sup>74</sup> My guess is that Salzman used a 50mm Zeiss Distagon lens on his Hasselblad medium format camera.



FIGURE 87

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
THE MAIN SYNAGOGUE OF EDIRNE,  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
EDIRNE, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



FIGURE 88

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
KAL DE LOS FRANCO, (ITALIAN SYNAGOGUE),  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984-1989

of impermanence to sheer loss, so complete that we cannot even trace disappearance (position three), leaving us with a bare and humble statement of ordinary breakdown (position four).

Salzmann made the picture not long after the building was abandoned in 1983, most of the city's Jews having left the city. By 1997, its roof and one of its walls had collapsed. In 2008, Edirne's mayor announced a plan to rebuild the synagogue, and the restored synagogue reopened in 2015 under a banner reading, "Welcome home, our old neighbors." And neighborliness is precisely what emerges from Gürsan-Salzmann's in-depth interview with Yasef Bayar, a 72-year-old Jewish physician who emigrated from Edirne to Israel in the early 1950s, only to return five years later, missing his patients, and the place of trust and warmth he occupied in the (mostly non-Jewish) community. And indeed, the strength and relative harmony of Turkish-Jewish relations historically and into the present-time of the work itself is a leading through line of the project.<sup>75</sup>

Turkey's Sephardim as Salzmann and Gürsan-Salzmann represent them are the inheritors of centuries of peaceful co-existence sitting on top of millennia of Jewish life in Asia Minor, the diminishing size of the community not the result of historic Jewish-Muslim conflict. The depth and extent of Jewish assimilation into Turkish culture is baked into the project. We see and learn that Turkey's Jews share with non-Jewish Turks everything from customs to food to dress to the Turkish language, leaving mostly religion and to some extent the Ladino language (the Judeo-Spanish as it had endured over the centuries) as the main elements of Jewish distinctness. Salzmann's photograph of Istanbul's Kal de los Francos (the Italian Synagogue) gives image exactly to this assimilation (**Figure 88**). In a wide-angle street view, we look across and down a city street simultaneously; a promenade of pedestrians below answers an architectural promenade above—a feral geometry of windows, bays, lintels, arches and columns in crisp winter light. The synagogue stands shoulder to shoulder with the other structures. It is of no special importance to the passersby, and even Gürsan-Salzmann—standing in front of its gate with her hands in the pockets of a quilted winter coat—does not signal its presence. I see this picture as an allegory of assimilation: just as the street seamlessly incorporates the synagogue even as it stands somewhat recessed and behind a gate, Turkish Jews are deeply integrated into Turkish society while keeping their spiritual lives back from the surfaces. A good part of Salzmann's achievement with this project is his ability not to weight the scale either on the side of Jewish assimilation or Jewish difference, as if one were more essential than the other, but rather to keep them in balance throughout.

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<sup>75</sup> A notable exception to this harmony is the series of attacks on the Neve Şalom synagogue in Istanbul in 1986, 1992 and 2003. Salzmann was living in Istanbul at the time of the first attack and photographed its aftermath, which is included in the project.



FIGURE 89

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
THE AHRIDA SYNAGOGUE AT PURIM,  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
BALAT, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



Through Salzmänn's later films, we come to learn how he worked, and we see him at work—a systemless process of feeling and expressing genuine interest in people, who receive this warmth intuitively, want to spend time with him, and to pass him from hand to hand.<sup>76</sup> In Istanbul, his base was the old Jewish neighborhoods of Balat and Hasköy, where Jews would return for religious services. He made himself a regular at certain synagogues, for example the one in Kuzguncuk, from which he would receive invitations to attend all manner of Jewish holiday dinners and parties, bar mitzvahs, brit milahs (ritual circumcisions), weddings and funerals. He and his family spent several summers on the island of Büyükkada, where many Jewish families would vacation, and so deepened his ties. He made the rounds to Jewish schools and, with great diligence, to Jewish businesses and workplaces. Across the project we meet Jews in all manner of occupations—fish sellers, bakers, matzo makers, manufacturers of brushes, photographers, perfume makers, and most of all people in the textile business, from cloth dealers to button makers and shopkeepers large and small. There is a pronounced informality or perhaps a certain lapsed formality about his portraits, a looseness and familiarity in the way his figures pose for him—and they do pose for him, rather in the manner of people officially sitting for unofficial portraits.

Just as much as the final prints of this work, I have always been drawn to the 5×7 inch workprints that Salzmänn made in the development stages of this work, in which he leaves room for his own notes (**Figures 96—97**).<sup>77</sup> In these prints, the decidedly community-specific character of this ethnography shines. It is girded by anthropological discipline, but finds its true meaning not as an extraction from the community, but when it becomes part of the community itself. It is an ethnography that seems most of all to belong in the hands of the people—quite literally in the hands, photographs made not for walls or archives but to be passed from person to person around a table, prompting further stories and conversation. The effect is not a distillation-cum-dramatization of a community's ways of life (as, by contrast, we see with Camhi's photographs), but an erasure of the distinction between presenting and representing. To represent, as Salzmänn's Turkish project gives it to us, is to be-present-with-for-awhile, to be in the world seen and not above it, without any more perspective, foresight and hindsight than we ordinarily have.

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<sup>76</sup> I have gone out photographing with Salzmänn many times in Philadelphia over the years in all kinds of neighborhoods, and there is something in his manner that has always struck me as extraordinary: a quiet, understated affability and an unprepossessing style of curiosity that often starts with small comments or asides, which he allows to develop into deeper questions and bonding interactions. His ease with himself and with others is so natural that when he begins to photograph in the midst of these interactions, it seems utterly unremarkable.

<sup>77</sup> In this particular case, the handwritten text reads: "Izzet Bana stands behind his uncle Samuel + father Abraham—They have a small business where they make cigarette filter holds which are sold throughout Turkey. Never I however saw anyone using one. Copyright Laurence Salzmänn 1986." It is possible that because he copyrighted and signed some workprints, he meant them to double for reproduction purposes.

Bending representation to the terms of experience in this way is something that Salzman would develop more and more deeply in his work in Mexico in the 2000s and in Peru in the 2010s.<sup>78</sup>

Or to put the point differently, Salzman's work in Turkey builds a complex articulation of what happens when historical consciousness enters the condition of an image. On the one hand, the photograph can designate something having emerged into consciousness as belonging to history—gives form to that emergence, that having-emerged. The recognition can be composed or spontaneous, dramatic or banal, factual or allegorical, and we see all of these forms of recognition in the Turkish work. On the other hand, the photograph can designate something still in the process of emergence, not-yet-having emerged as belonging to history, a transitional zone between the everyday as simply that, and as it designates a way of life seen from an appreciative distance. The sense of a world both having come to be and in a condition of becoming is precisely the effect when Salzman incorporates portraits into portraits, as in his portrait of Bulisa Sađlamlar of Bergama and her grandson holding between them a photograph of her father, Aron Navaro (**Figure 92**). In a portrait of two bodies, three faces and four hands, Salzman gracefully links the everyday with historical consciousness by separating and then rejoining our awareness of the difference between what the photograph shows and what it introspects.

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<sup>78</sup> Two minor works from Salzman's archive deserve mention here: his 1995 series on Lithuanian Jews, *Lithuanian Memories*, and his last Jewish-themed project, 2013's *The Jews of Colombia* (**Figures 98 and 99**). Both of these works are properly called sketches for projects rather than projects per se—the first stages of what could have become more fully blown projects, but for various reasons did not. In Lithuania, Salzman spent time with mostly older Lithuanian Jews, making their portraits as aspects of meeting and hearing something of their stories—pictures that frequently incorporate his subjects' family pictures, in the manner of Figure 92. In Colombia, Salzman's photographs of the nascent Jewish community recall the ethnographically inflected intimacy of his work in Rădăuți. I have chosen two of the illustrations specifically to complete an arc that Salzman's work makes across the decades: the lighting of the candles for the beginning of Shabbes in Salzman's first Jewish project (Romania, **Figure 71**) as it touches the lighting of the Havdolah candle marking the end of Shabbes in Salzman's last Jewish project (Colombia, **Figure 99**).





FIGURE 90

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
BECKY COHEN ON WAY TO HER WEDDING,  
KULEDIBI, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



FIGURE 91

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
YANBOL SYNAGOGUE,  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
BALAT, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984-89.



FIGURE 92

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
BULISA AND GRANDSON, BERGAM  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
BERGAMA, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



FIGURE 93

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FIESTA DE FAŞADURA HELD IN HONOR OF  
THE EXPECTED BABY OF ECE MIZRAHI,  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
BÜYÜKADA, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



FIGURE 94

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PLAYING RELANS AT HOROZLU GAZINO,  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
BÜYÜKADA, TURKEY, 1984-1989.





FIGURE 95

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



12200 Bazaar stands behind his uncle Samuel & father Abraham - They have a small business where they make cigarette filter tins which are sold throughout Turkey. David however, saw cigarette tins one - copyright Laurence Salzman 1986



Pelin Ovardis is helped by an aunt who makes a last minute check on the gown she will be married in later that day.

© Laurence Salzman

FIGURE 96

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
 ANNOTATED PRINTS,  
 FROM ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS,  
 BÜYÜKADA, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



FIGURE 97

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ANNOTATED PRINTS,  
FROM ANYOS MUCHOS I BUENOS,  
ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984-1989.



FIGURE 98

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PURIM, BELLA, FROM THE JEWS OF COLOMBIA,  
MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA, 2015.



FIGURE 99

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PURIM, BELLA, FROM THE JEWS OF COLOMBIA,  
MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA, 2015.



# FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS

In the early 1990s, Salzman turned his attention to the intercommunal history between Jews and African Americans in the United States, picking up a topic that was at the center of his work twenty years earlier, in *City / 2*. An initial version of the new work was a collaboration with Salzman's lifelong friend, the Philadelphia photographer Don Camp, resulting in a 1994 exhibition at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, in conjunction with the exhibition "Bridges and Boundaries" being shown at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. In 1995 Salzman published his own work for the project as a book and film titled *Face to Face: Encounters between Jews & Blacks* (**Figures 100–107**).

The impetus for the project was a self-reckoning. Salzman was raised by a Black woman from Virginia by the name of Zenora ("Nora") Carter, who while still a teenager began to work as a maid for Salzman's grandmother, and "came along as part of the dowry, so to speak" when Salzman's mother married (**Figure 101**). She worked for Salzman's family for her whole life, was part of all family activities, became the primary caretaker for Salzman and his two siblings, did all the family's cooking (including traditional Jewish foods), ate with the family, ran the house with an iron hand, and was valued for her sensible and sage advice. She lived alone in North Philadelphia, where she was an active member of her church, but never had a family of her own. "We thought of her as a member of the family," Salzman writes in the introduction to his book, beneath a photograph of a birthday party for his brother Jacob, c. 1951, made by Reuben Goldberg (**Figure 100**). The photograph shows a teenage Jacob and family, lit by the candles on his cake, with Nora standing by him smiling, her hand grasping his shoulder. The gazes of all the other figures crisscross the scene; only Jacob and Nora train their attention on the camera, and the photograph seems to be a portrait of a special togetherness they share in the midst of the family's celebration. The picture bears out what Salzman says in the introduction to his film, "I really loved her a great deal, as did my brother and sister."

At the same time, by midlife Salzman had come to see what he called "my own racism, which I found to be increasing day by day." To his dismay, he found himself connecting his own personal experiences with crime in Philadelphia with pervasive negative media stereotypes of Black men. He began asking himself why at age 50 he did not know a single Black person in his Philadelphia neighborhood except his mailman—a neighborhood that was three-quarters African American. He began to question why he never learned more about Nora Carter's life and



FIGURE 100

REUBEN GOLDBER,  
BIRTHDAY OF JACOB SALZMANN,  
BROTHER OF LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1951.



upbringing before she died. In short, he began to question the fractious and corrosive ways that race in America had shaped his own consciousness.<sup>79</sup>

*Face to Face* is the most auto-referential of all of Salzman's works, positioning Salzman himself within the circle of inquiry. It is also the most language-centric of his works.<sup>80</sup> The soul of the work and I would say its *raison d'être* is the series of interviews that Salzman proceeded to hold with approximately fifty Philadelphians, half of them American Jews and half African Americans. Salzman's photographs support these conversations rather than drive them, even as the book design gives equal weight to pictures and words. As a photowork, *Face to Face* depends more explicitly on the book as its vehicle of delivery—as against other projects, which often exist in multiple forms with no hierarchy between them, including prints, books, and online galleries.<sup>81</sup> In the double page devoted to the poet Lamont B. Steptoe, Salzman photographs Steptoe in front of a mural inspired by Walt Whitman, based on a painting by the Philadelphia-based American Jewish artist and teacher Sydney Goodman (**Figure 104**). Opposite is a brief but searing account, in Steptoe's own words, of his mother's years working for a Pittsburgh Jewish family, through which we see a broad similarity between Steptoe's mother and Nora Carter. Steptoe and Salzman, in other words, grew up on opposite sides of the domestic worker economy, joined as non-brothers according to the social illogic of that system (**Figure 103**).

The work makes its way through a complex set of problems with cogency and economy, presenting a range of viewpoints that alternately harmonize and contradict one another. The diversity and sometimes provocativeness of the comments are offered as the basis of constructive dialogue, in the spirit of the book's epigraph, from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s statement: "People fail to get along with each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because

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<sup>79</sup> In certain respects, Salzman's midlife inquiry into his own childhood parallels that of Sally Mann, also raised by a Black nanny, Virginia ("Gee-Gee") Carter, whom she loved deeply, immune until midlife to the ways that deep racial inequities were encoded into her own family life. Mann's racial awakening formed the curatorial pivot of her acclaimed retrospective, *A Thousand Crossings*, featuring a remarkable double collection of snapshots from Mann's and Carter's families. The juxtaposition shows Virginia Carter moving between the two, her own family forced to share her with the family of her employer, who were also a second family in her heart. While full of candor and honest about the ways that this awakening shaped the second half of Mann's career—her exploration of the American South as a traumatic landscape of racial hatred and violence—Mann's exhibition does not address Virginia Carter's absence from "Immediate Family," the photographs that first brought Mann acclaim.

<sup>80</sup> Salzman is in general not an autobiographically motivated artist, and the confessional statements in *Face to Face* are unique in his oeuvre. This is not to say that Salzman absences himself from his work; on the contrary, most of his texts are written in the first person, and his films regularly include his voice and sometimes his image. But he consistently avoids his own subjectivity as a subject of his inquiries, and he has never made a work that focuses on his personal or family life, even as there is a great deal of autobiographical visual material scattered through his archive, including remarkable portraits of his wife Ayşe and his daughter Han.

<sup>81</sup> Salzman's book design is derivative of a page of Talmud: a large text presents a direct quotation from the subject, bracketed by commentary written in Salzman's voice, in smaller typeface. Opposite the text is a photograph of the subject, bled fully to the edge of the page. The quotations are taken directly from the interviews, which are presented at greater length in the film version of the work. It is here, in listening to the interviews—in the speech of the subjects themselves—that the work seems to reach its fullest bloom.

they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other." In fact the work is a double inquiry: Black-Jewish relations on its own terms, and as an aspect of Black-white relations. As such, the work rides on two separate but related sets of problems: the special relationship between Jews and Blacks historically, and the historic shift in American Jewish racial identification and self-identification as white Americans, i.e., the full conferral on American Jews of racial whiteness in all its privileges and blindneses. Salzman's inquiries position the Black-Jewish relationship as a microcosm of Black-white relations, and at the same time as a vanguard that stands potentially to spearhead broader change and reconciliation.

Thus many of the interviewees make reference to the shared history of oppression, discrimination, violence and trauma between the two groups, notwithstanding the different shapes of this trauma. Jews historically fled poverty, disadvantage and violence elsewhere, most of all in Europe, to immigrate voluntarily to the United States, where they continued to encounter certain forms of prejudice, especially before the Second World War.<sup>82</sup> African Americans historically were, of course, involuntary immigrants whose enslavement, oppression and subjection to legal discrimination and extralegal violence belongs entirely to the American experience, and indeed is one of its foundational elements. Many of Salzman's interviewees speak of the special kinship that arose between the two groups in America—one whose central mythical narrative remembers biblical liberation from slavery as a lesson for eternity, the other whose liberation here and now remains palpably and urgently incomplete.<sup>83</sup> And this kinship was not merely notional: in Philadelphia as in cities across the United States, Jews often found it easier to do business in Black communities than in white communities, and built strong relationships in Black communities. As Jews collectively leapfrogged across American cities from generation to generation, it was African Americans who disproportionately bought Jewish properties, reshaping Jewish neighborhoods into Black neighborhoods.

Part of Salzman's accomplishment with *Face to Face* is to bring Black-Jewish relations out

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<sup>82</sup> My own grandfather, for example, aspired to become a physician, but could not gain admission to the medical school at the University of California in the late 1920s, owing to quotas on Jewish students. Anti-Semitic practices were likewise commonplace at elite American universities for much of the twentieth century, including Emory University, where I teach, which in 2012 finally admitted that from 1948 to 1961 its dental school followed a clandestine policy that wrongly flunked Jewish students at very high rates in a (successful) effort to drop Jewish enrollment.

<sup>83</sup> It is not accidental that Jews were greatly disproportionately represented among non-Black activists in the Civil Rights Movement, and were major financial contributors to it, mirroring heavy Jewish participation in progressive political causes of many sorts—the labor movement, women's rights, antiwar activism, among others. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s friendship and comradeship with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel is perhaps the emblem of Black-Jewish solidarity during the Civil Rights movement, along with the 1964 murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner. Less well remembered is the activism of Rabbi Joachim Prinz, who was given the role of speaking immediately before Dr. King at the 1963 March on Washington, and who directly linked the memory of the Holocaust to the struggle for civil and human rights in the United States. Much less remembered is Stanley Levison, the activist lawyer who was by many accounts Dr. King's closest advisor, and mentor to Clarence B. Jones, Dr. King's close friend and speechwriter.

of the realm of generalization and into the realm of actual relationships, of material culture, and of the body. The first interviewee in Salzman's book, Willie "Junior" Baker is a Black man who makes and sells Jewish pickles—a type of pickle that he learned to make while working with a Jewish pickle maker, Morris Shupak. Baker muses that you can tell the difference between Jews and Blacks by the way they like their pickles: "Most Jewish people, they like them half green, and most Black people like them well done; that's pickles." And it seems fitting enough that a Black pickle maker should frame what unfolds in *Face to Face*: the pickle of Black-Jewish relations over time, marked by closeness but also the structures of systemic racism, which eventually allowed Jews advantages because of the color of their skin. "A man is only as good as his word," Baker observes, "[but] if I was white, I would be much further along in life." Salzman's interviewees often speak candidly about the historic tensions within the Jewish-Black relationship. Several speak of the asymmetry that came to exist between the economic and racial advantages that Jews grew to enjoy, especially after the Second World War, and Jews' self-image as historical victims. Some speak of a betrayal, of Jews opting for whiteness over loyalty and solidarity with African Americans. Some speak of an unfortunate competitive victimhood between the two groups. Several speak of or allude to the taboo topics of Jewish racism and African American anti-Semitism. On the former, Salzman in the film speaks of his own mother routinely calling Nora her "girl"—and when he confronts his mother over this habit, she fails to understand the problem. We meet other Jews who mouth stereotypes of Black turpitude. On the latter, some of Salzman's interlocutors allude to Jews collectively as cheats and manipulators—criticism of Jewish business practices in Black communities as it met classic anti-Semitic stereotypes of an extreme and extremely devious Jewish desire for money and power.<sup>84</sup> Jewish support for Israel and African American identification with the Palestinian struggle also emerges as a point of Jewish-Black conflict.

Through all of this, Salzman offers a vision of durable Jewish-Black partnerships, friendships and relationships. We meet Larry Pitt and Lana Felton-Ghee, who created a "Philadelphia to Philadelphia" project, bringing 2,000 schoolchildren from Philadelphia to Philadelphia, Mississippi, to teach civil rights history. We meet Isadore Hoffermand and Nellie Parker, who with obvious and playful affection hold each other arm in arm, 25 years into their friendship. We meet two lawyers, Eleanor W. Myers and Muriel Morisey Spence, who pose with their sons in and around a single tree that seems to grow from their fellowship and togetherness (**Figure 102**). We meet Leslie and Steven Field (**Figure 107**), a Jewish American couple whose adopted son Harry is Black; Salzman photographs the family with Ethel Pugh,

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<sup>84</sup> Though Malcolm X during his days with the Nation of Islam regularly made anti-Semitic comments, and by the time of Salzman's book, Louis Farrakhan had taken the mantle of the most notorious African American anti-Semite, there remains controversy about whether the anti-Semitism of militant Black nationalism had penetrated widely into the Black community. Several scholars have contested the evidence that the urban riots of the 1960s were motivated by anti-Semitism, even though they often occurred in Jewish-dominated business districts. See for example Jonathan J. Bean, "Burn, Baby, Burn: Small Business in the Urban Riots of the 1960s," *The Independent Review*, vol. V, no. 2, Fall 2000, pp. 165–187.

whom they have hired to help care for the boy, and who as a nurturing grandmother figure will help keep him in touch with his Black identity. We meet Carol Rosenbaum Caleb and J. Rufus Caleb and their daughter Sarah Elizabeth Caleb, a mixed race family who speak movingly of the love that their respective families have gained for one another.

From within a firm commitment to weighing difficult questions, Salzman deftly puts his finger on the scale—on the side of encouragement and healing. He does so as a challenge. In Jewish terms, it is a challenge to engage in *tikkun olam*—the repair of the world through humility, thoughtfulness, the pursuit of justice and the making of peace, which are the spiritual demands of the Jewish prophetic tradition. Just as deeply, it is a challenge that resonates with the lifeways of African American survival and resistance, and the ethical leadership of America that Black collective wisdom has long sustained. A quarter-century after its completion, in an era of deep cultural and political division, Salzman's challenge remains acute and prescient.



FIGURE 101

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ZENORA CARTER,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1980.

*Lamont stated that he is a searcher for truth and justice. He once worked for a local TV station as news editor but quit because he felt the news they presented distorted the truth. His latest book of poetry, "Dusty Road, a Vietnam Suite," is about his experiences in Vietnam.*

**Lamont B. Steptoe:** My mother, God rest her soul, worked for a prominent Pittsburgh Jewish family for twenty years. They lived in a very exclusive area of Pittsburgh called Squirrel Hill, which is predominantly Jewish.

My brother-in-law discovered that her employer was not paying Social Security for her and they had to be legally made to do so. We were very, very poor.

Mother would bring home *gefilte* fish and *matzo* balls and we would eat Jewish foods. Talk among the domestics was, it was understood, that this was one way as a group of people they, rather than give you physical dollars, would give you food and used clothing. On one level it could be understood as an act of philanthropy; on another, a kind of very clever manipulation.

*Lamont is much inspired by Walt Whitman whom he considers to be a "mediummistic poet"—a poet inspired by the muses. That is why it was only appropriate that he be photographed standing in front of a wall on which was written Whitman's words, "I am large, I contain multitudes." The mural, based on a painting by Sydney Goodman, was painted by the Anti-Graffiti Network.*

FIGURE 102

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LAMONT STEPTOE TEXT PANEL,  
FROM FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS, 1994-1995.



FIGURE 103

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LAMONT STEPTOE,  
FROM FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS, 1994-1995.



FIGURE 104

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ELEANOR W. MYERS & MURIEL M. SPENCE,  
FROM FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS, 1994-1995.



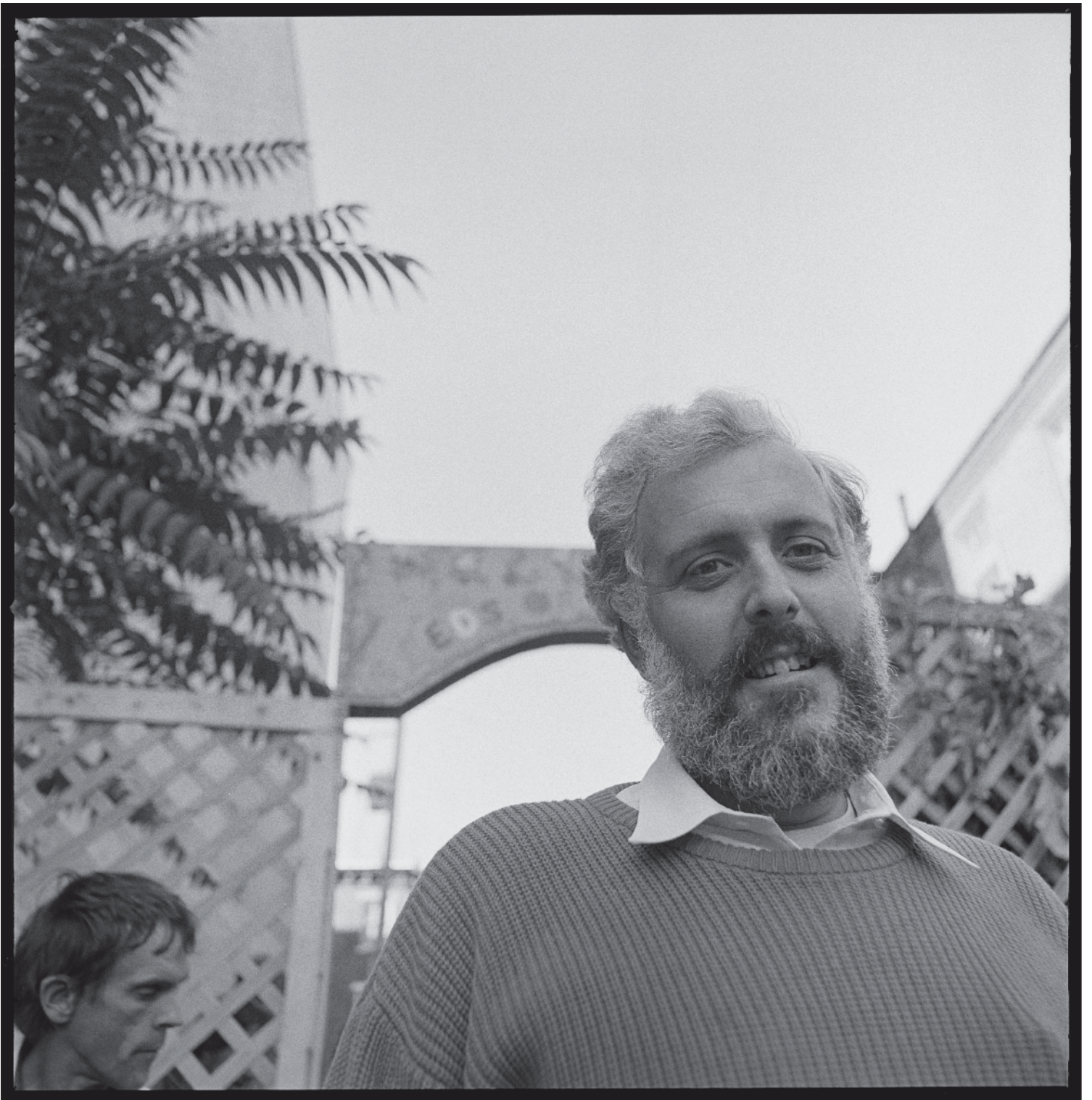


FIGURE 105

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
RABBI BRIAN WALT,  
FROM FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS, 1994-1995.



FIGURE 106

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
WILLIE BAKER,  
FROM FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS, 1994-1995.



FIGURE 107

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LESLIE FIELD, STEPHEN FIELD, ETHEL PUGH WITH THEIR SON HARRY,  
FROM FACE TO FACE: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JEWS & BLACKS, 1994-1995.



# ÉCHELEGANAS: A LIFE LEFT BEHIND

In the early 2000s, Salzmann came to know a group of Mexican immigrants to Philadelphia from Sierra Norte de Puebla, a rugged mountainous region in the northern part of the Mexican state of Puebla. Most of them were manual laborers, some skilled and some unskilled, who had come to the US without documentation, committed to some number of years of intensive work and communal living, in order to be able to send money back home while saving everything they could, with the intention of returning with the means to build a more prosperous life in Mexico after some years. Salzmann became interested in the life they left behind, and between 2005 and 2008, made several trips to the home villages in Sierra Norte of his friends in Philadelphia (**Figures 108–121**).<sup>85</sup>

Rural lifeways had preoccupied Salzmann from the earliest years of his career, and there is a through line running across his decades of work, going from Tlaxcala to Transylvania to Sierra Norte and later to Peru's Sacred Valley, with detours into Anatolia, Santiago de Cuba and Colombia. Even without the personal connections, Sierra Norte is the kind of place that fit the pattern of Salzmann's interests. The area was almost entirely indigenous until the middle of the nineteenth century, and still retains a high percentage of indigenous peoples—principally Nahuas, also Totonacs, Otomis and Tepehua—most of whom remain poor and socio-economically marginalized. The region is known for its traditional handicrafts and textiles, for the preservation of indigenous languages, and for ancient Mesoamerican rituals that are still performed.<sup>86</sup> Were it purely for the sake of ethnography, Sierra Norte would have made a ready destination.

The project that became *Écheleganas: A Life Left Behind* proceeds from a different motive, a not-so-casual shrug at the authority of borders, and the imputed sanctity of us/them, ours/theirs, familiar/strange and other such distinctions. Salzmann proceeded to cross the US-Mexico border and many attending psychological borders for the sake of looking into the complications of Mexican immigration from the Mexican point of view. He went not as a tourist but as a Spanish-

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<sup>85</sup> Salzmann also came to create a Mexican Festival for Philadelphia, much as he was the director and primary fundraiser behind El Festival Cubano, which ran in Philadelphia between 2000 and 2004.

<sup>86</sup> The best example is the *Danza de los Voladores* (Dance of the Flyers), in which dancers climb a 30-meter (100-foot) pole, from which some launch themselves tied with ropes, while one remains on top, dancing and playing a drum and flute.



FIGURE 108

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FAENA (COMMUNITY WORK),  
FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
TONALAPA, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 109

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
CECILIA LEON'S QUINCEAÑERA,  
FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
PLAN DE LA FLOR, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.

speaking American who had befriended and already become trusted by Mexican undocumented workers in Philadelphia, and he went not so much to learn *about* people in his friends' home villages, as to learn *from* them. He took with him the same xenophilic instinct that had already taken him directly into dialogue with social and cultural difference in virtually every preceding work, namely a sense that meeting others on their terms is an act of restorative justice in the world. It is the work of ethical repair to search out and pursue humanist understanding precisely at social fracture points and in the zones of normalized distrust, both of which are other names for political borders, especially the US-Mexico border.

Or to put it differently, Salzmänn began from the question, "where does the practice of hospitality lead?" His concern was not the easy kind of hospitality—to people one already knows—but hospitality to the stranger, specifically the scorned and stereotyped stranger, embodied in contemporary US. culture as the poor Spanish-speaking immigrant.<sup>87</sup> In focusing on the ways that US culture and the US economy impacts Mexican life, Salzmänn's perspective was precisely the reverse of the one that dominates the immigration debate in the center-right (i.e., mainstream) American media, which typically frames the issues in the reactive terms of "what they have done to us," "what laws of ours they have violated," "what jobs of ours they have taken," "what wealth of ours they have siphoned off," etc.<sup>88</sup>

*Écheleganas* takes its name from a common injunction in Sierra Norte, given when someone is doing something difficult, especially between migrants and their families back home, meaning "Do your best" or "Keep trying harder." Like the work itself, the title suggests a political work that is not a polemical work. Salzmänn does not argue what is obvious to him (and many others) through experience—namely, that the overwhelming majority of immigrants, wealthy and poor alike, with documents and without, bring skills, ingenuity, determination, pluck, integrity and community-mindedness to the American cities in which they live and work. In so doing, embody American ideals as much as or more than Americans themselves. Likewise, Salzmänn takes it as a given that questions of assimilation are for immigrants themselves to decide. Immigrants are entitled to the same self-evident truths and inalienable rights to pursue happiness as they understand it that Americans proclaim for themselves.

As with the vast majority of Mexican migrants, the primary reasons Salzmänn's subjects leave their homes are economic. Virtually all development in Puebla is centered on the capital city and surrounding areas, leaving a drastic economic gap between urban and rural areas. To be more

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<sup>87</sup> Lewis Hine's 1904–1909 Ellis Island project began from a similar premise, when the stigmatized immigrant others were Jews, Poles, Russians, Italians, Albanians and others from eastern and southern Europe. This and many of Salzmänn's other projects show him to be Hine's spiritual descendant.

<sup>88</sup> This bias already was firmly in place when Salzmänn made *Écheleganas*, during the George W. Bush presidency, and has taken an even bolder and more vicious form during the Donald Trump presidency, the period in which I am writing.



specific, rural and largely indigenous Poblanos (ethnically Nahua in the areas where Salzman worked) subsist against the internal distortions of the Mexican political-economy, in which small farmers lack access to capital inputs, infrastructure and irrigation, and rural communities suffer from severe underinvestment in education, health care and social services. It is a nexus of disadvantage whose roots extend to the impact of the massive land appropriations of the colonial period, and reflect the deep stratifications of Mexican society historically.

The proximate cause of Mexican migration is, of course, economic globalism. According to the Migration Policy Institute and the Pew Research Center, the Mexican-born population in the US has spiked from 2.2 million in the mid-1980s, when the first of the neoliberal structural-adjustment programs were implemented in Mexico, to 11.2 million in 2017, an increase of more than 400 percent.<sup>89</sup> Rural Poblanos are among the millions of Mexicans who have chosen to move north in response to the “free” market policies of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1994. These policies have pressured the Mexican state into austerity measures for social services, kept wages (attractively) low for Mexican industrial workers, and left Mexican peasant farmers unable to compete with U.S. agricultural imports, not to mention deprived them of their rights to communal lands (*ejidos*), which were abolished under direct US pressure. Although his work is not an exposé, Salzman understands that the influx of Mexican immigrants is the product—not the byproduct—of the advantages that NAFTA has bestowed on the US, and that most Mexican migration can fairly be called forced. “Illegals” are rational people making the difficult decision to uproot themselves for the sake of a small measure of opportunity across a hostile border, in the very country—our own—that has acted to (further) impoverish them at home.

In the film component of Salzman’s work, many of his interviewees testify to this effect. “It’s been about twenty years since people started going to the US from here,” an old shepherd reflects. “If we had strong jobs here, why would we look for them on the other side?” asks a resident as he hauls hay by donkey. “What I was able to save there in five years,” one returnee states, “I wouldn’t be able to save here in ten years.” “There are jobs there,” another resident observes, “and what we need here is money to pay for our children’s schools. . . and for many other things, illnesses that begin in various places and everything else.” As he speaks, we see children in a playing field beside a bilingual rural elementary school.

In one of the most eloquent segments, a sharecropper by the name of Lorenzo Vásquez—

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<sup>89</sup> See <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/mexican-born-population-over-time>; also <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/u-s-hispanics-facts-on-mexican-origin-latinos/>.



FIGURE 110

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PEDRO ALLENDE AND EMANUEL PENIAÑEZ,  
FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
SAN ANDRÉS, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO 2005-2009.

father of ten, several of whom are working in Mexico City and in the U.S.—explains to Salzmänn that if Americans visited Mexico, they would find good people and good things. “Everyone is welcome,” he explains, to share in the beauty of the countryside, the tranquility, the safety, and solidarity of his home. “No one here has harmed you, right?” he asks rhetorically, and adds, “it’s beautiful when people are united to work and come and go. . . the ones there and the ones here.” He looks out over his cornfield and asks what sense it would make to put up a fence between his village, Mirador, and the next village, Tonalapa. “It’s nice that the Tonalapa people come here, and that people from here go to Tonalapa, and that we live and drink a tequila together—that’s how we can have calmness. It’s very nice.” When two villages come to share celebrations and find out about one another, the result is “a lot of peace” (**Figure 118**). This farmer understands that what is good between villages is no less good between nations. Vásquez’s non-oppositional view of immigration, his capacity to see the benefits of mutuality and interdependence, is at the heart of the Mexican perspective.

The filmic and photographic components of *Écheleganas* function on complementary registers. The film that accompanies the book—also available as a set of short films online—is not a conventional documentary, in which the filmmaker uses subjects to present (or at worst, ventriloquize) a narrative that is by turns brought to and extracted from events. Rather, in the style of John Marshall and Tim Asch, Salzmänn’s subjects’ own feelings and experiential awarenesses structure the work’s narrative. I am uncertain, however, whether “narrative” is the correct word for what it is to track interlocking points of view in a sensuous filmic space, so that stories seem to rise like bubbles from a depth of human interconnectedness, imparted by people who know (and are related to) one another in many ways. “Narrative,” in Salzmänn’s hands, is a rich and difficult proposition, filled with the unfinished, open-ended and self-searching aspects of his subjects’ realities. To my eyes, the core intelligence of Salzmänn’s film is his non-didacticism, his unwillingness to forsake the suggestive for the merely explanatory, and his insistence that we respect the lifeworld of those “left behind” for what it is—a non-conclusive form of communal self-understanding that is material, practical and contemplative all at once.

In some contrast to most other projects, in which the films function partly to elaborate what the photographs cannot present, but more than this, serve to further authenticate what the photographs already ground in authentication, the photographic side of *Écheleganas* functions as a distillation of the filmwork, whose interviews are a primary driver of the work. Much as the filmwork in *Écheleganas* gives a face to the active role of the voice as it functioned in *Face to Face*, the photowork in *Écheleganas* brings color and the optically lucid visual description of the medium format camera to the luminousness that characterizes *Tlaxcalan Sketches*. As in that earlier



FIGURE 111

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
CHERY, BRANDON AND FIDEL,  
FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
TONALAPA, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO 2005-2009.

work, the Sierra Norte photographs approach documentary concerns as points of departure more than as points of arrival. The harsh aspects of rural poverty, the persistence of folkways among the older generations, and the changes brought by the villages' increasing dependence on remittances from the US—all of these are visible in varying degrees. Also evident are a thousand dimensions of cultural pride, some broadly Mexican, some indigenous, some old, some new—labors, weddings, celebrations, communal work events, gambling contests, first communions. But it is not for the sake of these things that Salzmänn is moved to photograph, in my view.

Rather, what gets Salzmänn to take his camera off his shoulder is his feeling for the ways that an old world is already built of resilience and adaptiveness, the ways that cultural fortitude and endurance appear as a boldness of quietude, calm and integrity in individuals whose presence seems to emanate forward invitationally. He photographs in response to a certain chatoyant cultural inheritance flashing up in his exchanges with others, in an effort not to abduct what he glimpses and hold it captive in an image, but to make an image that itself flashes the personal-cum-collective spirit he glimpses. In Salzmänn's portrait of Adrián Guevara Martínez (**Figure 117**)—a boy who befriended Salzmänn and became his everyday companion in the village of Tonalapa—the spirit in the boy's face is simultaneously of him, on him, from him, around him, as if he were the mirror of some larger bright spirit. Adrián faces that surrounding brightness, while his dog—stationed just behind him, ears up in the mode of a loyal sentry—closes his eyes. The photograph is emblematic of the temper of the photographs as a whole. As with the suffusive light of the mountains, the pictures are lit from behind with a certain modesty and large-heartedness, whose effect is both to thicken and freshen the ethics of other-centric regard. Where the films remove us into the informational poetics of the everyday worlds of Sierra Norte, the photographs remove us into the flow of compassion and ethical wisdom that comes with the practice of welcoming others authentically in oneself.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> As I write, in the spring of 2020, Salzmänn is preparing a follow-up to *Écheleganas*, titled *Echando Ganas* ("doing your best"), for exhibition at the Slought Foundation in Philadelphia. Over the years, Salzmänn remained in contact with members of the communities of Sierra Norte, many of whose friends and relations ended up staying in the US. The new project brings *Écheleganas* full circle by studying the lives of these immigrants in their adopted city, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 112

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
DON PASACÍO, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
TONALAPA, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO 2005-2009.



FIGURE 113

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AURELIA GALICIA, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
XONACATLA, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 114

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FIRST COMMUNION, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
MIRADOR, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO 2005-2009.





FIGURE 115

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
MIRADOR, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 116

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ENEDINO, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
COSAMALUCA, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO 2005-2009.



FIGURE 117

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
ADRIÁN GUEVARA MARTINEZ, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
MIRADOR, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 118

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LORENZO VÁSQUEZ, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
MIRADOR, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 119

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FESTIVAL DE SAN ISIDRO, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
MIRADOR, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 120

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
TONALAPA, SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.



FIGURE 121

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
DANIELA GUEVARA, FROM ÉCHELEGANAS,  
SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLA, MEXICO, 2005-2009.





# MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE

In 2014, Salzmann began traveling to the Andes, first to La Paz, Bolivia, and then to Cusco, Peru, and further into the Sacred Valley of the Inca. Much as he did with his interests in Romania in the 1970s, he received a Fulbright fellowship to spend a year in 2016–2017 studying traditional folkways in Peru. He returned for prolonged trips each subsequent year through 2020 (**Figures 122–136**). And much as in the 1970s, folkloric research served as a point of artistic departure and return—for straying across the boundaries between art and document. As so often before, his deeper purposes emerged when he allowed himself to wander from his starting purposes, which is one of several qualities that I would call the hallmark of a good artist. (Other such qualities are, as I see it, the ability to affirm one's own curiosity without celebrating it as such, the ability to navigate the anxieties of trial and error without anxiety, also the ability to greet one's own progress as conditional without it being probationary.) And as before, Salzmann received new opportunities as a means also of reaching back to refine old ones.<sup>91</sup>

To put a finer point on it: from his earliest work in Mexico in the 1960s–1970s, to his Romanian work in the 1970s–1980s, to his Mexican work of the 2000s and his Peruvian work of the 2010s, peasant societies have been one of Salzmann's continuous preoccupations. His early study of visual and cultural anthropology sits behind this interest, and anthropological methods have characterized certain aspects of his practice, as I have described. His extensive interviewing process, sometimes morphing into oral history-taking, has appeared in various ways—in his books as text and in his films as voice—and even where it does not appear directly, its influence is important, showing itself as an ethos of trust in his images. However, a research aesthetic such as Salzmann's does not straightforwardly map onto research as academics practice it. Certainly Salzmann's work on peasant societies does not sit comfortably within cultural anthropology understood as a social scientific pursuit, for the simple reason that Salzmann holds to no definition of what for him constitutes a peasant society. Where academics make critical distinctions between peasant societies as social communities, as economic categories, and as folk cultures, Salzmann makes no such operative distinctions.<sup>92</sup> And he does not have to. As an artist, he is fully entitled to a non- or extra-analytic description of the experiential truths of peasant life.

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<sup>91</sup> I offer these remarks with a sense of their provisionality. At the time of this writing, Salzmann has not completed this work, and may well continue to pursue it in the coming years, if history is a guide to the future.

<sup>92</sup> For example, Salzmann's pictures take no positions in academic debates about peasants as communities dependent on larger civilizations as against communities independent of larger civilizations—or the senses in which these larger civilizations are best described as historic, contemporary, or notional. He is likewise not interested in debates about

*Continues on page 202*



FIGURE 122

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017.

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<sup>92</sup> peasant societies as traditional or non-traditional, or about what tradition does and does not mean: peasants as willing inheritors of tradition as against devoted followers of tradition as against creative makers of tradition. There is almost nothing in Salzmänn's work in the way of comparison with non-peasant life: his works do not ask whether peasant societies are elemental versions of urban societies, or how peasant communities differ from urban communities, or whether the concepts of self and individuality take distinctive shapes in peasant societies as distinct from urban societies. And though there is a general sense that peasant life is intimately connected with land—agricultural labor is a recurring subject of Salzmänn's peasant work—Salzmänn's works do not describe the nature of the rural economy. Salzmänn is not concerned to delineate the power relationships that define an economy, landowning as against landholding, tenancy as against squatting, how a peasant controls or does not control land in community or individually, the availability or unavailability of credit, or the ways that any of these shape rural poverty. Academic debates about the distinctions between peasants and proletarians are not Salzmänn's interest, nor are debates about capitalist, pre-capitalist and feudal modes of production in peasant society. I suspect it will be possible for researchers invested in these debates to glean various insights from Salzmänn's work, but I do not see that Salzmänn himself stakes his work to any particular argument within peasant studies.

The center of Salzmänn's attentions came to be two locations between Pisac and Ollantaytambo: the town of Maras and the settlement of Huílloc—the former known for its spectacular ancient salt ponds, and the latter a traditional Quechua-speaking community. In both places, Salzmänn's proximate task was to visualize the events of daily life. To do so, he tacked back and forth between those events that are repeated and ritualized, from labor to commerce to religious observance, and those events that are unique to some moment of personal and communal interaction, from the street corner to the family hearth. In his photograph of a Maras laborer at dawn, we look southwest across a highland landscape helpless before its own aesthetic surplus—a rich palette of dusty browns, ochres, blues and purples with touches of green (**Figure 122**).<sup>93</sup> It is late fall in the mountains. A worker in dark clothing shoulders a bundle of cornstalks half his own size and probably a good part of his weight. He leans slightly forward in mid-step, from which we can infer something of the steady pace and the energy required to sustain it. The husks he hoists rise higher than his head, and hover in the horizon's own wisps, rhyming with peaks partly concealed in trails of morning cloud cover. The world of this work at this hour on this day falls into alignment. The worker seems to support the weight of the whole panoramic vista, and does so almost effortlessly, with a body made nearly transhuman, half legs and half plant fiber, and the third half the spirit of wind and airmass.

The photographs and especially Salzmänn's film on the Huílloc Valley depict these events with a mixture of hunger and ease, a visual drivenness that is every bit as propellant and undiminished as in early observational cinema on mumming in Philadelphia (films that find their later companion in Salzmänn's 2014 film *Corocoro: La Tierra de Chuta*, concerning festivities around the Lenten carnival of a small Bolivian Andes town). Salzmänn's 2017 film *Tales of the Inca* uses the extended interview format to explore the legacies of imperial conquest from the side of the conquered.<sup>94</sup> Salzmänn's method is unwaveringly personal, asking residents of Cusco and

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<sup>93</sup> Color has been present in Salzmänn's photographs and films from the mid-1970s, but until the mid-2000s I would call him a black and white photographer who sometimes chose color rather than a photographer equally at home in monochromatic and polychromatic color spaces. Color emerges as an essential element of his documentary works with *Écheleganas*, and reaches perhaps its apogee with the Peruvian works of the 2010s. There is some argument to be made that Salzmänn's embrace of digital technologies in the late 2000s—both cameras and postproduction software—is in part responsible for this development. At virtually no cost past the initial investment, the technology allows for unending experimentation with color and the ability to refine color far more precisely than analogue processes. Some of the credit for Salzmänn's palette in this period goes to his cameras, but an important part also belongs to W. Keith McManus, a gifted photographer and filmmaker with deep technical expertise across many forms and platforms of lens-based image making. McManus served Salzmänn in many capacities from the mid-2000s, including management and oversight of Salzmänn's archive, photo-editing, postproduction, book design, and scanning. Without McManus, it is very likely that the depth and breadth of Salzmänn's archive would not have come to light and to legibility as it did.

<sup>94</sup> The editor of this film is James Rowland, who edited most of Salzmänn's films from the mid-2010s, often including films of still photographs made from earlier projects. Rowland's editorial style gives Salzmänn's films of this period a distinctly different look than his earlier films, especially in the use of complex video splicing techniques.

surrounding towns not only what they know about Inca history, culture, political dynasties, architecture, civil engineering, language and communications, cosmology, even cuisine, but what any of these things mean to them. Over and over, we discover that ordinary people know a great deal, remember a great deal. And they feel a great deal: respect for and pride in their Inca ancestors and the Quechua language—much of the film takes place in Quechua—and also still-active, centuries-old resentment at the greed and brutality of the Spanish conquest. The film shows how they have made the religion of the conquerors their own, and the Spanish language. Some, like a woman named Honoria, Salzmänn's landlady in Maras, use the language of blood purity to express their feeling of superiority to the Spanish, not recognizing the ideology of racial purity as itself part of the Spanish imperial project.

At the same time, the film is itself an exercise in overcoming stereotypes through mutuality and discourse. The protagonist of the film, an octogenarian resident of Cusco named Felix Olivera, is at first evasive when Salzmänn begins inquiring about his life. Over the course of the film, we see Olivera gradually open up to Salzmänn by way of Salzmänn's gentle persistence, and Salzmänn's friendships with his children and extended family. Good-natured humor and teasing come from the substratum of their interactions, showing the affection that Salzmänn comes to gain. At one point, Olivera finally answers the question that Salzmänn keeps asking everyone, "Tell me about the Spanish." "Damned thieves!" Olivera exclaims. "They came to take Cusco's gold! And they rob! And, they are tall, just like you!" (**Figure 131**).<sup>95</sup> The answer is blunt and it is notable that Olivera unconsciously switches mid-sentence from the past to the present tense, suggesting that the theft isn't over. The exchange comes after Olivera and his son Walter give a lesson to Salzmänn about the savage public execution of the last indigenous Inca king, Túpac Amaru, in Cusco's main square in 1572, which happened in the very place where they are standing. Olivera for a moment sizes Salzmänn up for the outsider he appears to be, and seems to imply a critical relationship to Salzmänn's work, as if Salzmänn's film were bound to be a latter-day form of robbery—and I sense that it is precisely this honesty that Salzmänn is after,

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<sup>95</sup> Salzmänn's physical height appears in inverse form visually in this and his other Peruvian films. Salzmänn does not hold the camera at his own eye level, which would give the effect of looking down at or down on his subjects. Instead he holds the camera at his chest, which is at the eye level of his subjects, and very often below their eye level, so they are slightly aggrandized as we look up at and to them. At the same time, as we look up toward the subject, he or she looks up toward Salzmänn, resulting in a kind of zigurat-style line of stepped-up gazes, with our position being the lowest, and Salzmänn's the highest.



FIGURE 123

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.

using his own presence as a kind of lightning rod. A second later, Olivera breaks into a hearty laugh that spins Walter and Salzmänn himself into laughter, and spins the camera around through the space of the historic crime.

As I read it, Salzmänn's deepest task in Peru is ethnographic on its surfaces, and something else in its depths. It is to visualize a type of collective cultural intelligence which is both anchored in the individual subjective realities of those people to whom it belongs, and which is by its nature transpersonal, belonging to all. I know of no ready name for self-refreshing collective intelligence whose source is tradition but does not construe tradition as something to be obeyed or disobeyed. Salzmänn is interested, as I see it, in what people understand to be self-evidently alive, what is true because it exists collectively. Or to put it differently, his task in Peru is to picture sociality

opened to itself, the tissue of shared human presence as it has emerged into particular moments, anticipating its retreat and re-emergence in new moments. For some—famously John Keats in what he terms “negative capability”—this is a problem of the self, of refining self away from self-consciousness, toward a drawn-down experience of one’s own selfhood that allows identity and faithfulness of feeling with others.<sup>96</sup> For Salzmänn, the problem is not so much articulated in terms of the powers of the well self-diminished self, but the power of circumstance to augment a confluence of unforced self-silencings between strangers—strangers by the description of history and culture—who could just as well be called true companions on the spinning planet. Darkness and interiority are Salzmänn’s best visual predicates for this kind of image. A remarkable series of photographs from Huílloc manages to sustain just such a quality, pictures made in a family’s kitchen, at a hearth of family, neighbors, and children (**Figure 135**). A photograph of Salzmänn made probably by one of his subjects shows him at work and at home in this warm, dimly lit, mud-brick world, a child in his lap and another peering over his shoulder, pots and colanders and the conversation of women around him (**Figure 136**). He is photographing the person photographing him, in a convergence of gazes and minds and affections. He seems to have found something very precious, something he has tracked across decades—exactly the right place to be at exactly the right time to be there. It is as if he sees, in the instant of making a picture we do not see, the depth of the heart he was given, as mirrored in the depth of the hearts he has sought out and pursued.

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<sup>96</sup> In a letter dated 22 December 1818, Keats writes to his brothers Tom and George: “I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.” See Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *The Letters of John Keats, 1814–1821*, Harvard, 1958, pp. 100–104.



FIGURE 124

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 125

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.





FIGURE 126

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 127

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 128

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 129

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 130

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 131

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 132

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.







FIGURE 134

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 135

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
HUILLOC, PERU, 2016-2020.



FIGURE 136

MARITZA MELO,  
MISK'I KACHI RUNAKUNA / SWEET SALT PEOPLE / GENTE DE SAL DULCE,  
HUILLOC, PERU, 2016-2020.



## PART II: SALZMANN AND MAGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

There is no question that Salzmänn sustained a remarkable commitment to documentary initiatives, which gathered texture and momentum through the decades. These initiatives are broadly motivated, I have argued, by the problem of visualizing historical consciousness: the use of images to induce awareness of people living and acting in history—sometimes being acted on by history—and also awareness of history as a force acting in time, sometimes paradoxically giving way to visions of time as it acts on history. Salzmänn’s documentary works are broadly characterized not only by a fierce spirit of editorial independence, but a fiercely dialectical approach to photographic meaning. That method insists on the primacy of the relationships between images, words and sounds, and not on any purported self-meaningfulness of images, much as it insists on hybridizing the insider-outsider position of the photographer. His method crosses informational and poetic forms of authority as a quiet way of expressing a certain wariness toward the authority of either on its own terms. His method refuses to associate critical perspectives with iconophobia and non-critical perspectives with iconophilia—a reflexive move in many academic circles—as it refuses to categorize lens-based images as either trustworthy or untrustworthy, authentic or inauthentic, sincere or manipulative. His method is to identify a conceptual space whose wholeness is precisely unclosed, which is to say open to revisitation and revision, theoretically in perpetuity. Perhaps most of all, his method is characterized by a curiosity about the inferential drift between types of looking: looking-around as it becomes looking-for, looking-at as it becomes looking-into, looking-out-from as it becomes looking-through. In the mode of historical consciousness, these methods operate within a cognitive structure that registers temporal singularities: individuals, communities, events, places, purposes and consequences as severalties in time.

But it would not be enough to say that Salzmänn operates within this cognitive structure only, or even primarily: his visual thinking about historical consciousness has consistently been accompanied by works that operate in the terms of magical consciousness.<sup>97</sup> Historical consciousness in lens-based images, as I have tried to explain, generally trades on the images’ standing in time, which is to say a conception of time as it resides outside of the images themselves, to which the photographs are bound in reference—time as it frames images. And if so, magical consciousness in images trades on the reverse: a positive sense of the unimportance

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<sup>97</sup> In Salzmänn’s case, I do not see that this shift owed to some kind of parallel self-identification as an artist using photography, as against an aesthetically sensitive photographer. *Continues on page 211*

of time, the image unsecured in time and unframed by it. We could pedal through a range of other metaphors to express this de-absolutizing of time as it appears in magical consciousness: time is neither an anchor nor a buoy, neither a mooring nor a guide, neither a ground nor a gauge. To the extent that it figures at all, it figures as a floating nowness, a presentness not fully under the control of any of the agencies shaping it—artist, subject and viewer.<sup>98</sup>

In general, Salzmänn's works of magical consciousness share certain conceptual terms, which I would summarize as follows:

1. In magical consciousness, the image seems to be self-sourcing. The world we see appears to yield itself, with the photograph as the face and the mirror of that self-generation, and the keeper of it. It is a short step from this self-sourcing quality of the image to the sacral quality associated with memory.
2. In magical consciousness, the differences between showing and telling seem heightened, and the language of telling arrives with distinct qualities of contingency or hypothesis. The tellings that accompany the image seem at the same time to express an encompassing inexplicability, a sense that the image retains an elemental vulnerability.

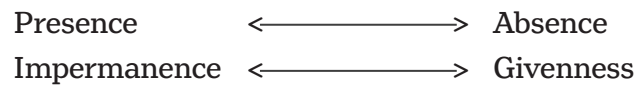
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<sup>97</sup> Experimental photographs—non-, anti-, and para-conventional either in look or in concept—were not a door into “art” for Salzmänn. I simply do not see that he was invested in questions about the status of photography in relation to other media—in making work either to validate photography as “fine art” or to resist the conceits of fine art. Likewise I see no evidence of his interest in defending or refusing to defend any particular agenda for photography as art. There are good grounds to think that this indifference springs from Salzmänn's distance from the artworld: he neither sought nor received representation from a major dealer, and never pursued the standard careerist path in the arts that would build his reputation and commerce in his work. Indeed he often preferred small, local venues which drew non-art audiences invested the topic of his work, and likewise preferred self-publication, in which he maintained complete control of his work. The largest audiences he gathered were not for himself personally but for El Festival Cubano, a major cultural event he ran from 2001 to 2003 in Philadelphia. It is possible to read Salzmänn's attitude as anti-careerist, but more accurate would be to call it non-careerist. What drove Salzmänn was what was in his control: the projects he could do within the framework of the money he could raise independently, and the audiences he could gather through his own legwork. He seems to have regarded cultivating the commercial gallery/museum world and the professional curatoriat as a supplemental rather than a core task of his practice, or at the least, as a task often deferred.

<sup>98</sup> It is not right, in my view, to say that magical consciousness in images describes an imagined reality and historical consciousness describes a “real” reality. Both types of consciousness, strictly speaking, describe imagined realities. The photograph in historical consciousness leads us to imagine the way the world “really” is outside the image, or the photographer's activities behind and before the image, both of them converging in the real experience of the viewer in historical time. That modern and contemporary culture has such an image type at all is one definition of modernity. The photograph in magical consciousness is not tethered to an imagination of realities outside the image, and when the world in its externality appears in magical consciousness, it generally appears as a fictive rather than a non-fictive reality.

3. In magical consciousness, what we see carries a strangely durable impermanence within itself, as if a brevity of existence were indefinitely prolonged, and that prolongation were suffused with a dark grandeur of arisings and fallings-away that we can feel but not see.
4. In magical consciousness, the image continuously redeclares itself: its specificities declare a shift away from certainties, its internal logic declares a fugitive reason-for-being, and we are left in the play of intermittency.

Or to put it differently, the image in magical consciousness defines a conceptual field operating in two continuums, one describing its ontology and the other describing the artist's approach to that ontology, what I would call modality, for want of a better word:



“Presence” is what exists by way of the photograph, what we can call “something” by way of the image, or a something, or the something. Because of the particularities of lens-based imagery, this something—as I have described above—is prone to competing claims of realness that the world, the artist, the technology and contexts bring. “Absence” is what does not exist as the image suggests things, or what no longer exists, what we can call “nothing,” or a nothing, or the nothing. Again, this nothing is prone to competing agencies responsible for it. “Impermanence” signifies a state of transience or emptiness of lasting existence. “Givenness” signifies a state of non-transience, an existing-as-such.

If we cross these continuums, we arrive at four positions: presence in its impermanence, presence that endures, absence in its impermanence, and absence that endures. Salzmann's works of magical consciousness move in the fields of these dynamics, sometimes occupying one position, but more frequently operating by a sense that the image is prone to moving interpretively within and between all of them. It is not that the task of these images is to catalyze such a conceptual structure—the lexicon is my own and I suppose it is incumbent on others to adjust it to their own inner hearings, as usual when speaking of meanings that words make esoteric. But I think that Salzmann made the long series of works that comprise this wing of his artistic life because he was drawn into the mysteries that photographs cannot help but turn us toward, if we have eyes for them.





## SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME

In 1974–76, during the years that he was living in Rădăuți, Romania, Salzman would from time to time make trips to Bucharest, the country’s capital, and other Romanian cities. His work in the city is immediately distinguishable from his work in the town, turning from the personal and intra-communal to the urban and the anonymous. Almost all of his work in Bucharest occurs in public places, under the sign of a type of artistic idling, or purposive loitering—I might call it “luftmenscherie,” to make up a word by crashing the Yiddish “luftmensch” (free spirit, drifting wisdom-lover, sometimes occupationless) and the French “flânerie” (leisurely sauntering, walking connoisseurship of the street). This kind of artistic practice had achieved a certain kind of Modernist nobility in the postwar period, lasting into the 1980s, especially under the imprimatur of John Szarkowski, as I have described. One strain of Salzman’s street work in Bucharest followed from his 1971 work for *City / 2* in Philadelphia, and later found further expression in his 1976–1977 series *Jerusalem’s People in Public*. This collection of Bucharest photographs treat the public sphere as a place of cold passings-through, an innominate place of heavy shadows and structures larger than figures—a place not made for hanging around, indeed in which hanging around seems like it might be vaguely corrosive to the social order. Another strain of city pictures appeared in Bucharest, however, which had no parallel in his street work elsewhere. For reasons I do not know, and perhaps as a turn away from the clutches of self-conscious intentionality itself, Salzman began to walk up to the streetcars of the city as they stopped to let passengers off and on, and made photographs of and through their windows. He did this in all seasons and all kinds of light, eventually titling the series *Souvenirs of a Recent Time* (**Figures 137–143**).

I must admit that the sheer quirkiness of this gesture brings me a certain pleasure. In my imagination, I see the young Salzman, tall and lanky, with a head of thick wavy hair and a good Jewish beard, stepping off the curb to approach the windows of the trams, or standing in the middle of the street, not minding the traffic passing (not too slowly) behind him. I see him drawn into concentration, all but oblivious to the world outside the viewfinder of his 35mm camera. He stands very close to the streetcars, a few feet away, and lingers for as long as they themselves linger. Rarely does he photograph the streetcar’s entire body, or use that body’s own shape for his own purposes—as, for example, Robert Frank does in his famous 1955 photograph, “Trolley—New Orleans,” in which the segregated streetcar seems a metaphor for imprisonment, or as Louis Stettner does with commuter trains in a melancholic New York of the late 1950s. Rather, like the contemporary photographer Michael Wolf in his 2009 series “Tokyo Compression,” for Salzman,



FIGURE 137

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

the windows are primary: they fill his frame from edge to edge, forming natural montages that compound the interior of the trolleys with the outer world that is physically behind Salzmänn, appearing as reflection in front of him.<sup>99</sup> Just on the other side of the glass panes are his people, close to and sealed off from him, their faces and profiles inflected with, half transfigured into the inchoate geometry of the gone-across city. Salzmänn pushes toward what the tram encloses: human beings near enough to touch and, at the same time, be untouchable. The tensions of these brief encounters are barbs that hook the young Salzmänn of my imagining.

For Salzmänn, the windows of the Bucharest streetcars are mediating surfaces that act partly as windows, partly as mirrors, partly as lenses, partly as scopes, perhaps as prisms or crystal balls fitted with wheels. Speaking as a photographer, I cannot help but notice the ways the

<sup>99</sup> There are two further works in Salzmänn's archive which actively use montage, although of differing sorts—not montage as an organic part of the observable world, but an induced montage of photographic invention. In 1994, Salzmänn traveled to Egypt,

windows resemble the screen that sits within all cameras—the ground glass or finely textured clear resin that the photographer sees when looking into the viewfinder, onto which the lens projects its play of appearances. In this sense, the windows manifest freely to the world something akin to what the photographer experiences privately while dwelling in the camera’s viewfinder—a spectacle I would liken to a darkened theater of bright image-flux. And yet, as mediating surfaces the windows are obviously not merely optical phenomena. Breath-fogged, ice-crusting, grime-smearing, they are objects touched as much as seen and seen-through, to the point that it is impossible to speak of a meaningful distinction between haptic marks and spectral events.

The magical consciousness at work in these pictures is, in its primary iteration, the withdrawal of external indices of time and place. If we try, we can perhaps deduce something about Communist-era Romania in the 1970s by way of fashion and style, the ways people dress and perhaps the public demeanor they carry. But this information sits to the side of a more primary dissociation: the dreamlike as it sits within the everyday, and objects of perception as they are distinguishable from states of perception. Salzmann’s photographs pull the recognizable and the nameable toward the uncertain and the amorphous—without fully depositing them there, leaving them in a condition of partial dissolution and loss. This condition is fertile ground for new meanings by means other than logic. I would go further and suggest another order of magical consciousness also: the sense of an inverse relation between perception and presence. The act of photographing the streetcar windows is tantamount to an intervention into their ongoing qualitative evolution—following the audacious thought that a photograph can present or make-present this evolution by extracting it from its own flow, ceasing it into aliveness. But if this is true, this making-present functions by definition to remove us from the presence it responds to. The greater the presence of a photograph, the more removed we are from the presence of what it shows. To some extent this is true about all photographs, but in photographs

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and made a series of double exposures that combine photographs of people in public places—shot from a range of distances—with views of Egyptian antiquities, again photographed from various angles, which became the series *Kings in Stone—Shadows and Rulers* (**Figures 145 and 146**). These are overtly experimental works, both in method and in content. Working with his Hasselblad, he could not see the results of the double exposure until developing his film sometime later. He was working, in effect, through hunches and speculations, and the results are as dynamic and sometimes chaotic—common with this technique. The combination of ancient monuments and living people fused together is also a crashing together of stone and human, dead and living, in which all the elements miraculously seem to survive. In 2010, Salzmann created a series of digitally made superimpositions of his beloved and recently deceased Turkish sheepdog, Garip, and photographs of the archaeological dig at Gordion in Turkey, Garip’s birthplace, in a series titled *Of Tooth and Stone* (**Figures 146–148**). Salzmann over the years made repeated visits to Gordion, the primary site of Gürsan-Salzmann’s academic research, and showed these landscapes as an independent work. (In 1995, Gürsan-Salzmann joined the University of Pennsylvania’s Gordion Archaeological Project, eventually becoming its deputy director, and for years conducted anthropological research into the contemporary socio-economy of nearby villages in order to help interpret the archaeological evidence of the ancient economy of Phrygia, whose capital was Gordion.) Salzmann’s digital superimpositions of Garip+Gordion differ from the Romanian and Egyptian work in the addition of color. The series effectively links the themes of the human-transhuman rapport evident in his Romanian shepherding work, with the dichotomy of antiquity and modernity present in the Egyptian double exposures, though the element of antiquity is not as forthrightly legible as such.



FIGURE 138

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

communicating in and through magical consciousness, the state of dislocation or removal is magnified and owned outright as the terms of engagement into the image. The effect is an expertly calibrated gap between the outer world and poetic imagination. Salzmänn's trolley windows are screens of variance, resisting the clutches of the city's historic and sociologic actualities, and also the clutches of merely subjective invention that would claim those actualities as its derivative. Salzmänn's "souvenirs"—not memories but tokens of memory—existing in a "recent time" perpetually updating itself, are among his most acutely poetic visions.



FIGURE 139

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 140

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 141

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 142

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCURESTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



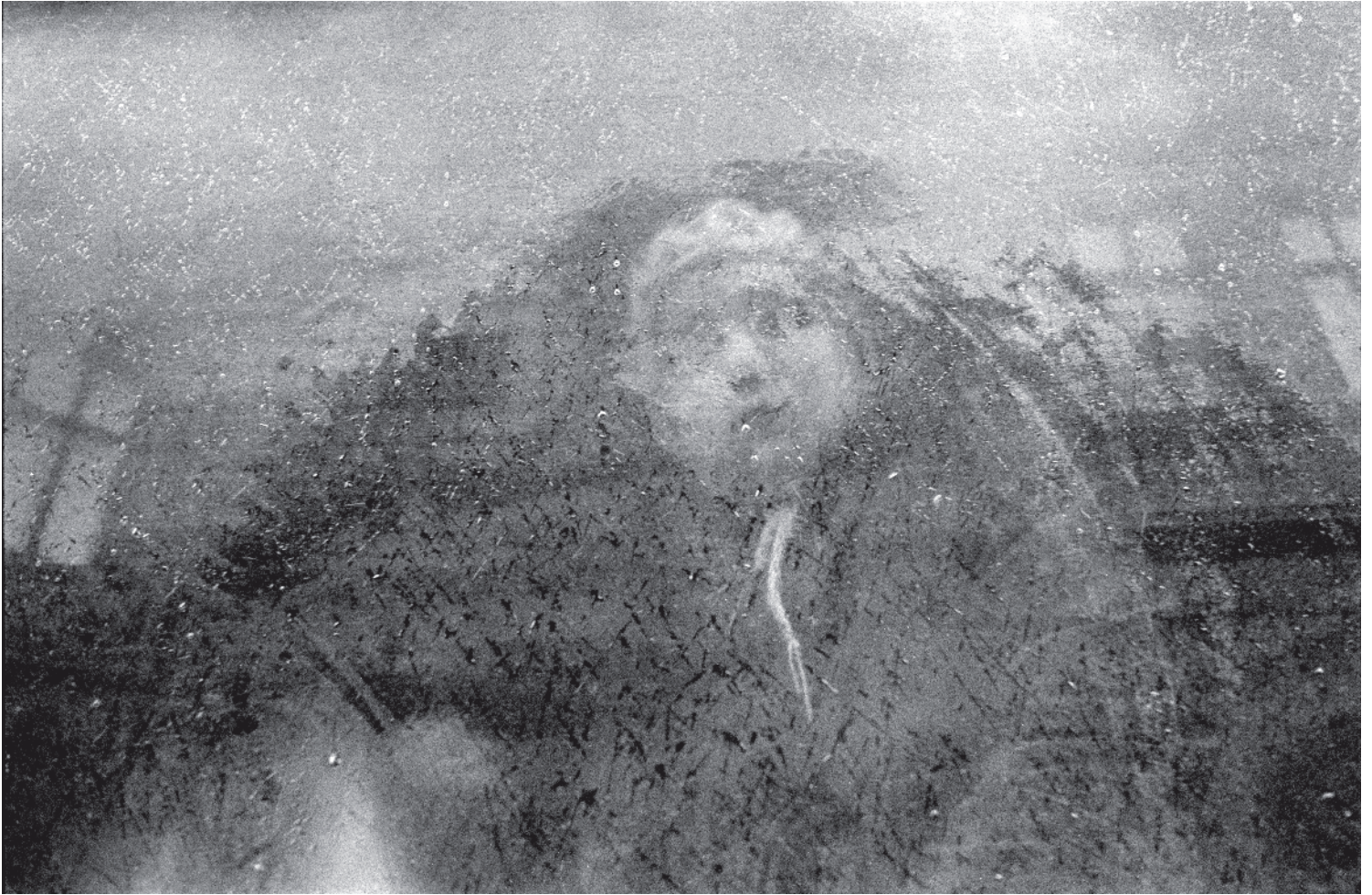


FIGURE 143

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AMINTIRE DIN TIMPUL TRECUT / SOUVENIRS OF A RECENT TIME,  
BUCUREȘTI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 144

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM KINGS IN STONE—SHADOWS AND RULERS,  
EGYPT, 1994.



FIGURE 145

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM KINGS IN STONE—SHADOWS AND RULERS,  
EGYPT, 1994.



FIGURE 146

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
INCUBACIÓN DEL AMOR, FROM OF TOOTH AND STONE,  
PHILADELPHIA-GORDION, 2010.



FIGURE 147

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
INCUBACIÓN DEL AMOR, FROM OF TOOTH AND STONE,  
PHILADELPHIA-GORDION, 2010.



FIGURE 148

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
INCUBACIÓN DEL AMOR, FROM OF TOOTH AND STONE,  
PHILADELPHIA-GORDION, 2010.



## LA BAIE / BATH SCENES

While living in Rădăuți, Romania in 1974–1976, Salzman frequented the town’s Jewish bathhouse, which doubled as a place of ritual observance—it held the community’s *mikvah*—and also a place of recreation, general health and community (**Figures 149–166**).<sup>100</sup> The entire Jewish community used it, women and men alike, and indeed the whole town, Jewish and non-Jewish alike—as all over Europe, in a time when hot running water was uncommon, and the bathhouse was a place to clean, to socialize, to get warm in winter, to relax, to escape. Salzman writes vividly about the place:

The bath house was over 100 years old. . . Very little seemed to have changed since it was first built, except that the wooden buckets which were given out to each bather were replaced with plastic ones. The men filled their buckets with cold water as they walked into the steam room (“arbur”). There were rows of wooden benches as in an amphitheater, the highest one was the hottest, naturally. The cold water in the bucket was used to refresh one’s face and cool off a little as the steam began to get unbearable. A shrill bell rang several times calling the bathers from other parts of the bath house to the steam room. Often, the room was so full that people were literally sitting on top of each other. The bath attendant opened the small iron door of the floor-to-ceiling stove. Cups of cold water were thrown over the red hot stones to let off more steam, and the men on the benches perspired more and more. Warm waves of steam floated about. The more hardy souls sitting on the upper benches would shout out, “Heat up the bath! (“Incalzeste baia).” Then the whole process would start again.

As the room began to cool down, men would beat each other on their backs with clusters of oak leaves which they had brought along with them. The leaves stung the skin, but left a wonderful, refreshing feeling and a sweet smell. In the shower room there were always more people than shower heads. Sometimes a father and son would huddle together under one shower. After soaping up and bathing, the bathers if so inclined, would return for another session in the steam bath. The last station of the bath were the benches in the locker room where the totally relaxed, limp bodies lay down wrapped in coarse, linen towels.

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<sup>100</sup> A *mikvah* is a pool of water, some of it drawn from a natural “living” source, used traditionally by Jews for removal of ritual impurity, for example by women after menstruation and childbirth, by men after ejaculation, in conversion practices, for the pre-burial washing of the dead, and for food-related utensils.



I have written above about the extraordinary degree to which Salzmänn made himself a member of the Jewish community, but in the bathhouse, the trust he earned played itself out at even greater levels. Using some kind of social alchemy that mixed audacity and grace, Salzmänn managed to begin photographing in the bathhouse, not when the women used it, but openly and freely during men's hours.<sup>101</sup> The bath photographs acquired their own momentum and became a focus of intensive work. Some of these pictures are included in *The Last Jews of Rădăuți*, and far more in a self-published work, *La Baie / Bath Scenes*, which still only partially represented what Salzmänn made.<sup>102</sup>

From one perspective, it would be fair to say that Salzmänn's bath pictures sit right on the fulcrum between documentary and non-documentary thinking. Had Salzmänn edited *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* to be more aligned with the way he actually photographed in Rădăuți—as an integrated Jewish-Romanian town—the bath pictures would have stood as the work's crowning example of cultural intersectionality.<sup>103</sup> But even then, the bath pictures would have fallen out from the rest, inasmuch as the intercommunal point they make gives way to a universalism that is indifferent to communal categories, which seem altogether staid and pointless.

The operative issue with these photographs—as with all pictures operating in the terms of magical consciousness—is not what they prove but what they conjure, not what they aver but what they summon. What makes them eidetically vivid is more a matter of semblance than resemblance—what they seem like rather than what they can be said to reproduce. It is a mistake to ask of Salzmänn's bath pictures, “what are they about?”—a mistake I would argue that goes all the way to the earliest emergence of photography. (When Nicéphore Niépce in 1826 made the oldest surviving camera photograph we have, “View from the Window at Le Gras,” showing a roofed blackness beside ramparts casting shadows in two directions created by the light of a thick, opalescent sky, did he make a photograph “about” something?) The actuality of Salzmänn's bathhouse world is different than the actuality of the bathhouse in the world, or any world existing in history: it has little to do with the conditions of objectivity, or a transactional distance between knower and known, or the discourse of verifiable/falsifiable. The actuality of the bathhouse is, instead, a relational actuality, a sharing and circulating of meaning which is participated in rather

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<sup>101</sup> This was not the first time that Salzmänn photographed in public baths. In October 1973, he made photographs in the shower room of the Baños Niagara in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in a series that reads as a preliminary study for what would come in Romania the next year.

<sup>102</sup> The technical challenges Salzmänn faced in making these pictures were considerable. All the interior rooms were dark, especially the steam room, forcing Salzmänn to photograph with a flash, which could only be used a few times before having to be dried out. Steam and water were both menaces, the former for the clarity of the lens, the latter for the mechanics of the camera. Salzmänn's solution required of him a kind of balletic exercise of wiping, toweling, anticipating changes in the heat and humidity of various spaces, and dodging wet and dry.

<sup>103</sup> To follow on from note 102, such an edit would have decisively separated Salzmänn's documentary work from other contemporaneous work on European Jewish communities. Virtually all of these other works are *Continues on page 242*

than proposed, whose truth is evident to itself. Salzmänn's own truth in response to that actuality is likewise inlying rather than outlying, predicated on a not-questioned conviction that the bathhouse itself is not his real subject. Rather, his subject is the bath in its tendencies to yield and yield to the forms that he gives it.

In matters of seeming, there are no pronouncements to be made. Seeming is necessarily a seeming-to-someone, to be hazarded and not professed. With some hesitation I can voice what these pictures seem simply to me. Salzmänn's bathhouse seems to me to belong to a kind of netherworld, a world dislocated from the ones of everyday comings and goings, dwelling in somewhere below the surfaces of things. It seems to me a world of male companionship suspended in its own solitude, imbued with great sensual density and equally great emotional decompression. Salzmänn's figures sit, they wait, they stand, they wait again, they sit for something, sit for nothing, wash, rinse, feel for themselves and for others. All of them are naked and none is nude—none seems to behold the nakedness of the others—and there is no energy for modesty or revelation. An almost trancelike ease swirls around the collective tonus of steam-clouds and steam-moistened bodies. It is hard to say how long these men have been here: some feel to have grown older and have grown younger. It is not easy to confirm that the old man in one frame is not the boy in the next. There is no ready measure of time's passing or failing to pass, no unit of lapsed presence to indicate duration. Salzmänn's figures are settled into the routines of this damp, tenebrous place: they pass each other, clasp one another, lean on one another, support one another, forsake every other kind of task. Or I might put it this way: in this place, they go about the business of being, apart from the demands of becoming.

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<sup>103</sup> not only Jewishly ethnocentrist in one degree or another, but monoethnicist—as if Jewish relations with non-Jews, and the wholesale interpenetration between the communities across all the spheres of everyday life, were somehow less important to “the Jewish” than credal or religious differences that Jews and non-Jews did not share. There is a sharp irony in Salzmänn's use of the bathhouse to make this kind of integrationist statement. The place of Jewish ritual purification does not endow Jews with any apparent purity, distinctness or specialness. Indeed, there is hardly any way to distinguish Jews from Romanians at all. Rather, we are presented with a direct, literally naked view of intercommunal life that seems to show shared peoplehood as much as it does two people living side by side. I would call Salzmänn's bias here diasporist: he pushes aside notions of Jewish essence, and in its place he affirms the reciprocity between Jews and non-Jews, not as a “loss” of Jewish cultural purity but as a celebration of Jewish cultural adaptiveness across time and culture. For an illuminating discussion of diaspora as a Jewish cultural *techne*, see Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora*, Minnesota, 2002.



FIGURE 149

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.

“Life is a vale of soul-making,” writes Keats in the spring of 1819—against the words of his close friend Percy Bysshe Shelley, who despairs of a “dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate.”<sup>104</sup> And Keats asks: how are souls “ever to possess a bliss particular to each one’s individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this?” I cannot find better words than Keats’s for the lyric compression at work in Salzman’s bath pictures. I could believe that the bathhouse Salzman frequented is not actually in Rădăuți; rather it is just as actually somewhere in Keats’s vale. And its spaces are not actually for religious rituals or getting warm in winter, but just as actually they are the very medium in which souls do their making. For all I know, Salzman’s public bath is one of an uncountable number of inner chambers to which those souls and these, mine and yours, return again and again, seeking the bliss of a certain wet release.

<sup>104</sup> See Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, Harvard, 1958, pp. 100-104. See also Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,” line 17.



FIGURE 150

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 151

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 152

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 153

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 154

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



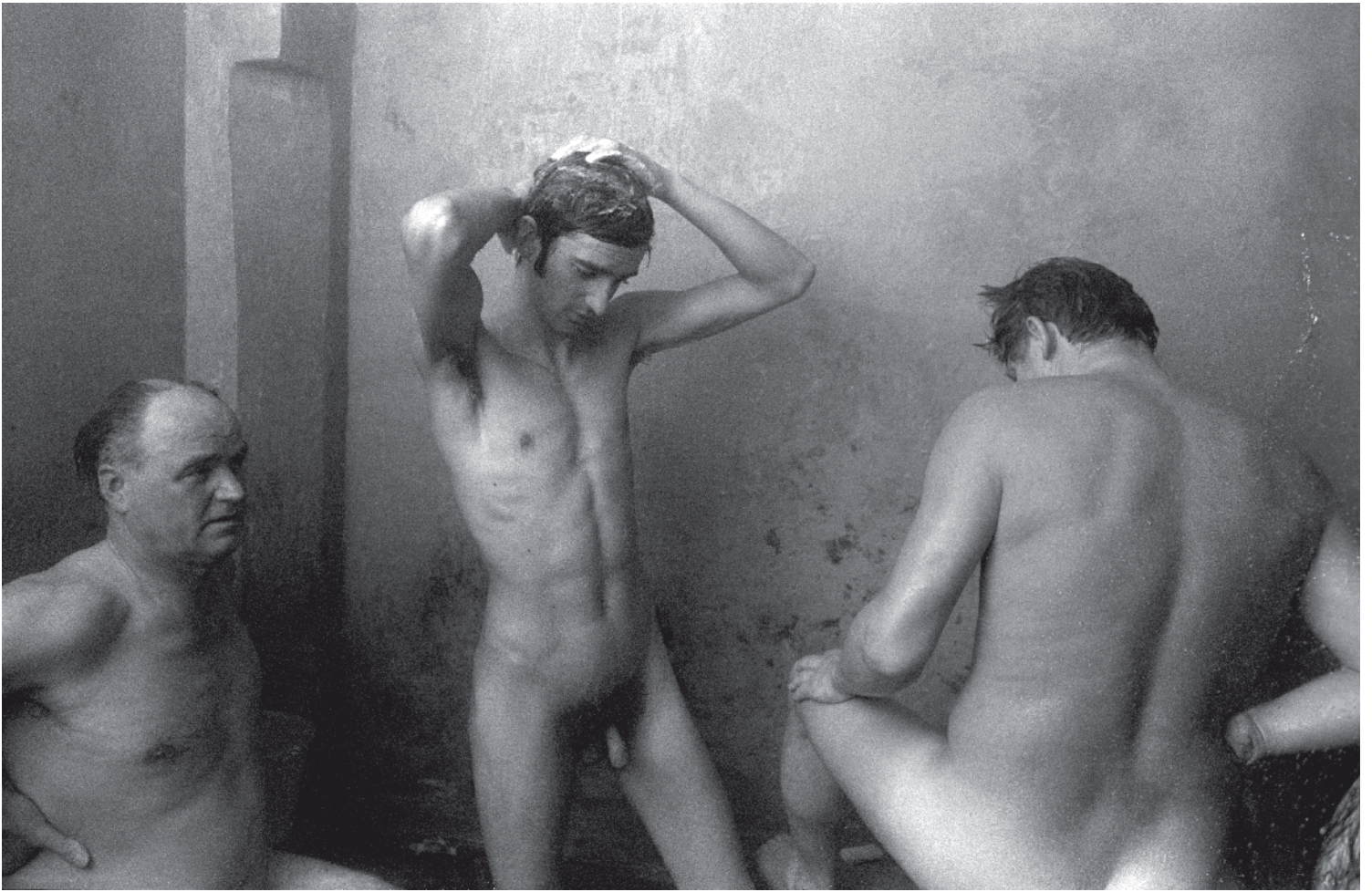


FIGURE 155

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 156

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 157

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 158

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 159

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 160

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 161

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 162

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.





FIGURE 163

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 164

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 165

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



FIGURE 166

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM LA BAIE / BATH SCENES,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1974-1976.



# VENTS

In the early 1980s, a new stream of experimentation emerged in Salzmänn's practice. For some years Salzmänn had occasionally made studies of nude models, mostly women, and mostly in private settings.<sup>105</sup> Unusually for Salzmänn, whose work typically assumes "project" form rather quickly, these photographs read as somewhat marooned in the archive, never collected together and never acquiring artistic momentum between one another. Sometimes these photographs have a distinctly mischievous quality, as for example a 1981 photograph of a nude in a bedroom under renovation (**Figure 167**). A workman bends before an open window, beside sawhorses and floor scraps, while a woman stands fully lit in an otherwise shadowed corner next to the same window, beside a board about her own height. The window is pure white, as if lit by a curtain of filaments, and the model seems drawn to it in a kind of tropism.<sup>106</sup> At a certain point of looking-into, the terms of the picture shift, and the worker seems not to be bent over, but rather he exists from the waist down only, his torso and head having vanished into the brilliance of the window—which is to say that the picture stages a progression from inanimate (board) to fully animate (nude) to dematerialized animate (worker). From another perspective, the picture stages an obvious sexual theater: a nude woman incongruously in a place of (manly) work, situated between a long hard plank and a bent-over workman, her line of sight gazing downward at his hips and toolbelt.

Salzmänn's theater of the nude emerged fully blown in a series of experimental images made over steam vents in west Philadelphia between 1983 and 1985 (**Figures 168–176**). Salzmänn himself says that some part of the idea for the vents series came from seeing homeless people sitting in winter on top of the city's steam-releasing iron sidewalk grates, and one might say that there was some kind of loose artistic algorithm in Salzmänn's mind that interpolated the

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<sup>105</sup> Nude self-portraits sometimes appear in Salzmänn's archive. For example, during the years he spent in Turkey in the 1980s, Salzmänn would often photograph his own shadow cast onto the tombs of desolate Jewish cemeteries, a gesture of witness. Occasionally we see him lying down on the tombs and photographing himself from arm's length, and in one instance, we see him lying full-figure on a tomb, nude and in a fetal position.

<sup>106</sup> Photographers will immediately recognize the tone of the window as the result of the discrepancy in light values between exterior and interior, with Salzmänn favoring the darkened space, resulting in overexposure of the window—but an overexposure that turns out to be as aesthetically necessary to the meanings of the image as it is technically necessary for the image to exist at all.



FIGURE 167

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
BARBARA TOWNSEND,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983.

steam of the Rădăuți bathhouse with the steam keeping fellow Philadelphians from freezing to death with the discoveries of posing nude models—maybe. But the question is how to account for what is new in the vents series, namely the element of performance and performativity. I suspect that some part came from Salzman being around his friends Flash Rosenberg and Robert Woodward (aka Peanut Butter), artists and event performers who would become actors and models in the vents project.<sup>107</sup> But the truth is that I cannot really account for the emergence of the vents work, other than to point to a certain nimbleness of imagination and lateral-mindedness in Salzman's disposition as an artist. (My own teacher, the photographer Joel Leivick, used to say that the difference between a good artist and a great artist is this: a good artist has one idea—one core idea to bring to realization—and a great artist has two.)

Beginning in the winter and spring of 1983, Salzman would gather his troupe of models for late-night photographic sessions, often in cold weather. His models would often apply white face paint for dramatic effect, and then disrobe above the chosen vent, which was sometimes in the middle of the sidewalk or street, and sometimes beside walls, fences and other props. On a nearby vent, Salzman would set up a tent for models to gather in to keep warm between their turns before the camera. Gradually a loose set of rules seems to have developed, in which models would dance, prance and pose within whatever billows and clouds the vent gave out, sometimes individually and sometimes in pairs, occasionally in larger groups. The process seems not to have been choreographed, but rather to have arisen organically and improvisationally as the models' responses to the shifting columns of wet heat in the cold night, and to one another. Salzman may have asked models to hold a pose or change positions slightly, but in general it seems that he responded to what was happening rather than directing it.<sup>108</sup>

The world that the photographs present us with is, like others that deal in magical consciousness, displaced from time and place. An enveloping darkness surrounds everything in the frame, through which the drawling mist passes, in the midst of which figures dwell and linger, and drop. They appear sometimes in a declarative gesture, centered in the frame, but just as often they trail to its edges, and sometimes recede into misted space in a kind of outward hiddenness. There is no indication of where they come from, where they might proceed to go, how long they remain, or why they should have made their way from darkness into light-flashed steam. Every frame, each in its own way, announces the departure of inhibition with the arrival of inexplicability. A libertine spirit seems to possess the space and the figures in it: they are young,

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<sup>107</sup> Flash Rosenberg is an artist, animator, photographer, writer, performer, comedienne and educator, and a Guggenheim Fellow in the Creative Arts. She is still active at the time of this writing.

<sup>108</sup> Salzman shot this work handheld with a Hasselblad medium format camera, with an off-camera flash.



lithe, glistening and beautiful, full of a kind of vital impulse that governs their motions with an ease that intuitively knows itself. And from within a heightened sensual aliveness they are also sexual—not sexualized, but freely and openly allowing arousal as it comes. We see virtually every kind of sexual coupling and all manner of pleasures, subtle and demonstrative alike. It does not seem that any type of sexuality belongs to anyone. Rather, it seems that a more omnipresent state of attraction and desire shapes and reshapes itself within the figures, and between them. The steam itself could be called the strangely thick and vaporous spirit of that all-over openness, through which Salzmänn's figures move as feels right.

I should mention that I do not see a reading of this kind—or further and more detailed in this direction—as fanciful. Rather, it seems the plain reading to me, based on the structuring logic of the pictures themselves, which overtly stand for a kind of transference between a performative event in the world and its status as rhapsody, or exuberance, or luminousness. This transference shares something with the suspension of disbelief on which theater depends—seeing actors as the characters they play and not merely actors playing characters. It also shares something with performance art, in which the category of art generally blocks that suspension of disbelief in some part, so that we remain conscious of watching artists being artists, whatever else we become absorbed in through their actions. Were Salzmänn a different kind of artist, he might have understood what he was doing as a type of performance art, especially in the ways that magical consciousness, for him, does not become fully blown fictional consciousness.<sup>109</sup> If fiction is a means of rippling or at times passing through the surfaces of the believable in order to reveal

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<sup>109</sup> Performance as a movement in contemporary art was on the scene from the beginning of Salzmänn's life in photography. In the 1960s and 1970s, many now-famous works defined a distinct territory of performance making, blending elements of live theater with conceptual experiment and often political or cultural commentary, according to no particular formula—sometimes with and sometimes without script, choreography, orchestration, media, controlled venue, fixed duration and direct audience. Allan Kaprow, Yoko Ono, Nam Jun Paik, Carolee Schneemann, Joseph Beuys, Yayoi Kusama, Hermann Nitsch, Andy Warhol, Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Maria Abramović, and many other artists—some working independently and some affiliated with movements such as Fluxus, Actionism and Happenings—created an overtly provocative, transgressive mode of artistic practice. The body was integral to many of these artists' works, particularly the naked body as a site of contest and of liberation. It would be convenient to say that Salzmänn had somehow come across the work of Carolee Schneemann, for example her 1964 piece "Meat Joy," a performance/filmwork in which several partially naked figures covered in paint, paper and brushes crawl, writhe and dance with raw fish, meat and chickens, in what Schneemann later described as an "erotic rite" and a "celebration of flesh as material." But to my knowledge, Salzmänn had no particular knowledge of performance art. I suspect that artworld debate about the place of photography and film in performance were also not of much concern to him. For some performance artists, photography was merely a tool for recording what existed in a more primary and more authentic form as the direct and immediate experience of work. For others, it was an integral element in the work of the performance itself, a necessary part of the work's intervention into normative, often binary conceptions of identity, sexuality and social belonging, as well as perceptions of time and the boundaries of life and art. Ultimately, I cannot explain why Salzmänn's vents photographs manage to incorporate both sides of this debate, but they do.

what is true behind them, Salzmann's vents images treat the photograph as a means of extending the depth of those surfaces in order to reveal what within them is loosened from the familiar binary distinctions of credible/incredible, fact/fantasy, unimagined/dreamed. To my eyes, Salzmann embraces performativity with hesitations about its codification as one type of performance practice or another. In some regard, this hesitation is exactly the hinge for his vision. He consistently seeks out a type of image which is neither a visual report about performative events that a passerby could see happening above steam vents on cold nights, nor the kind of dull visual fabulation which is the baseline for, say, pornography and advertising. Rather, Salzmann's vents photographs are tricky, even trickstery, in the ways they allow events to pass back and forth between non-fictional and fictional presence.

If, in the magical consciousness of Salzmann's vents pictures, the photograph functions both to reproduce the world and to transform it into something also itself—a world in which gravity-bound figures are made just a bit weightless by what the city belches from below ground, and flesh attracts the presence of angels without compelling their descent from the immaterial realms—this is just to say that the magic of magical consciousness trades on the image pointing to something outside itself, while failing entirely to encompass that externality. In a similar way, the crystalline character of time in these pictures points to the rotating or helical character of time around them—and, too, the circumvolution of time markers as they swirl through the images. The pictures offer no clear way to separate the now from the meanwhile, the remaining-after from the on-the-move-toward, the already-done from the eventually-to-repeat. We cannot easily say in these pictures that the whole of time is not allowed in—the past as the sphere of fragmentary memory and the future as the realm of absolute memory. In the world of the vents, we seem on the verge of glimpsing time in a paradoxically replete emptiness, dissociated from the hard properties we otherwise assign it. Salzmann's vents work is, to me, one of the triumphs of his career, as lucid as any of his socially witnessive projects—witnessive to non-literal things. Above the vents, he found stillness without temporal arrest, stillness graced with the flows of life and aliveness, which turned out to be the condition for visual miracle.



FIGURE 168

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 169

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 170

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 171

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 172

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 173

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



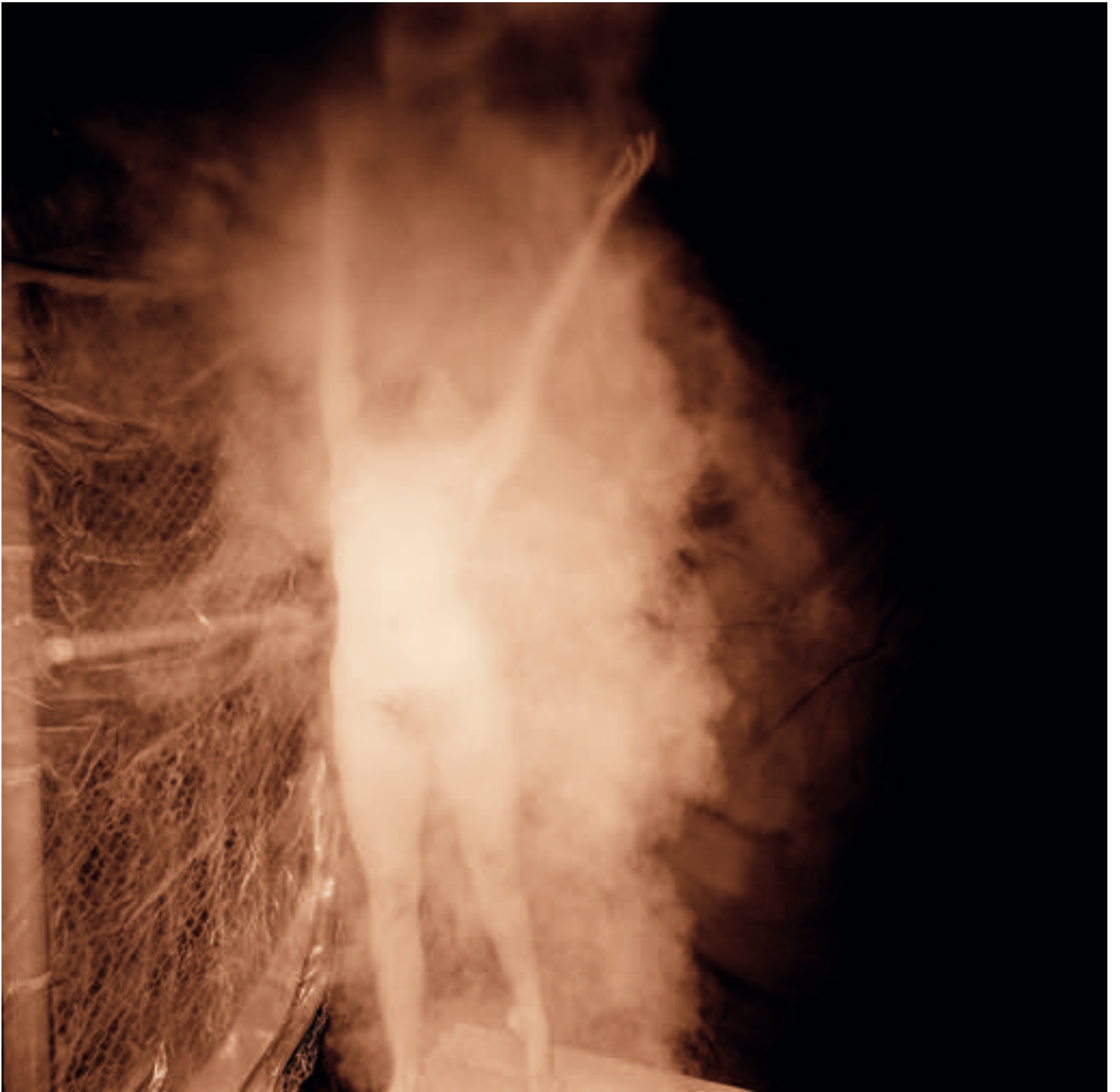


FIGURE 174

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 175

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.



FIGURE 176

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM VENTS,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1983-1985.

## LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE

In November 1999, while walking in the city of Santiago de Cuba, Salzman happened across a humble neighborhood gym named for the Cuban Olympian Aurelio Janet.<sup>110</sup> Peering through the doorway, he glimpsed young athletes, and discovered that it offered after-school training in weight lifting and Greco-Roman wrestling for boys aged 8–18. He walked in, introduced himself, and began to ask questions about what was going on. He was invited to make pictures, and over the next four years, returned half a dozen times to photograph the young wrestlers, as well as Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, a traditional Afro-Cuban dance group.<sup>111</sup> The gym photographs, plus an accompanying film, became *La Lucha / The Struggle*, published and exhibited together with original oil paintings by a Santiago-based painter, Luis Rodríguez, aka Luis el Estudiante (**Figures 177–186**).

It is immediately evident what *La Lucha* is not: it is not an exploration of the role of sports within Cuban socialism, not a study in the propagandistic value of sports for Cuban socialist ideology, not a look at the contrast between propaganda and reality in the Cuban sporting world, not an investigation into the durability or vulnerability of Cuban national pride through sports, and not a document of Cuba's emphasis on mass participation in sports as against other socialist countries' emphasis on elite sport.<sup>112</sup> It is not, in other words, a political project. It is also not precisely an examination of a subculture, though it locates itself entirely within one—not a work that pivots on a confession of personality. The personal stories of these athletes, their coaches, their families, friends and neighbors—all are beside the point.<sup>113</sup> What interests Salzman is something more universal: the struggle to train mind and body, to pull mind and body into a single forcefulness, to attain a certain oneness not in theory but in practice. And he is interested

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<sup>110</sup> Aurelio Janet (1945–1968), from Santiago de Cuba, represented Cuba in the men's javelin throw at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. He died in an auto accident a month after the games ended.

<sup>111</sup> Salzman had originally traveled to Santiago with the intention of creating a sister city relationship between Philadelphia and Santiago, which did not work out; instead Salzman created, directed and was the principal fundraiser for a large arts and culture festival in Philadelphia, *El Festival Cubano*, which ran between 2000 and 2004.

<sup>112</sup> For a critical overview of the role of sports in Cuban socialism, see Julie Marie Bunck, "The Politics of Sports in Revolutionary Cuba," *Cuban Studies*, Vol. 20 (1990), pp. 111-131.

<sup>113</sup> To be more precise, these things are certainly beside the point in the photographs, but somewhat more present

in a specific path to that oneness, in which self-unity is won through contest against another struggling for the same thing. On one hand, the struggle that compels Salzman is internal—psychological and even spiritual as expressed through the physical.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, the struggle is communal, even tribal—a set of rule-bound exercises that discipline the inner struggle, negotiate it, and render it as a process experienced with and through others.

What is immediately notable in Salzman's handling of his wrestlers and weightlifters is the grace with which the struggle unfolds, the ways his figures support and hold one another physically and psychologically through the paces that their efforts put them through. The process of the struggle is a process of joining into positions of mind-body that only two together can make, and then exiting, into a communion that encompasses the stages of togetherness and apartness both. The struggle is the constantly mutating out-pressure of muscular gentleness, which is at once an expansive solemnity and a gravitized exuberance, sheltering its triumphs within itself and marking points in a journey of undisclosed transpositions, each spiriting forward a small holding-on, a tactile resolution to an ordeal made habitable, even glad. All the levels of the human soul are present—physical consciousness touching emotional consciousness touching mindful consciousness touching mind-emptying consciousness as they all meet in self-displacement toward a larger unity without assignation as body, psyche or individuated will. Salzman's struggle is to make pictures that are equal to all of these movements, photographs that set forth a sensitized field of reception and then proceed to tension and adjust it, so that the viewer does not just view the struggle but feels tuned to it. As in so many of his works, he accomplishes this task by approaching the photograph neither as a window nor as a mirror but as a kind of membrane through which human energy is passed between the seen and the seeing worlds.

Or to put things in comparative perspective, *La Lucha* could be called the opposite of *La Baie*: one is a work of action and the other a work of inaction, one a work of exertion and the other a work of ease, one a work of striving and the other a work of repose. But there is as much that links these works and suggests them to be complementary investigations. Both offer us visions of men

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in the accompanying film. The filmwork in *La Lucha* fills in contextual and informational material that the photographs do not provide, and does so with the same physical proximity and directness as Salzman's later ethnographic filmwork in Mexico and Peru, albeit without the attention to individuals and their stories of those projects. To my eye, the difference between the photographs and the filmwork for *La Lucha* is the difference between compressive and decompressive approaches to the same material. The photographs create a pressurized space for drama, mystery and inner tension, and the film essentially lets that pressure out.

<sup>114</sup> In the film, we learn that Cuban Spanish contains a number of idioms that refer to different dimensions of the term "la lucha." To be "in the struggle," "en la lucha" or even "en la luchita"—a familiarized, diminutive form—is to be fighting for survival, to be caught up in the search for a sustainable way of life. A familiar injunction, "no cojas lucha," "don't choose struggle," suggests that to be struggling is already to concede something to the desperation or loss one is trying to overcome.



FIGURE 177

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

in battered concrete boxes—cells that might be in the pit of the world, any world, all the worlds.<sup>115</sup> Both blend qualities of stamina and absorption, endurance and quietude, and in both, time is without definition. And this is to say that the struggle in *La Lucha*, like the cleansing of *La Baie*, occurs without regard for history, also without regard for promises or ideals. The two works share a quality of alienation redeemed from harshness, a dolefulness somehow drained of dolor. Both works sustain a vague wistfulness for deliverance—a feeling for the beauty of not-perfectible strivings, and desire for apartness from the dominion of the extraordinary. Ultimately, the meditations at play in both works turn toward mortality, with death appearing as a shadow companion occasionally gesturing to the living, inviting the imagination of ceasings, breakings-off, caesurae.

What proves decisive in Salzmänn's Santiago photographs is his ability to see in others a chance to grapple with something very internal, specific to Salzmänn's own way in the world. The Torah tells us that Jacob wrestles all night "with God and men" and prevails—and that he-who-struggles-and-prevails shall be his new name, "Israel."<sup>116</sup> While Salzmänn's work is not a gloss on the ancient story, it is fair to spot him frame by frame dwelling between the opposing truths that define the space of his artistry here and in most of his works. The truth of what he can reveal faces off against the truth of what the revelation itself refuses to confess, and the truth of his pronouncements pulse against the truth of silence lingering in slow time. Salzmänn hands this predicament to us mostly by placing us in the midst of it, with no intimation about whether he himself finds resolution, whether we should, or whether art can manage to couple itself to our inner strivings to bring us to a place we would otherwise have been unable to reach.

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<sup>115</sup> There is an interesting question about the genderedness of both sets of pictures. Are Salzmänn's figures only incidentally men—men standing in for all human beings, not because men do stand for all human beings but because Salzmänn had access to these human beings, who happened to be men? Or are Salzmänn's figures in *La Lucha* and *La Baie* necessarily men? Does his vision partake in a masculinist mythology that renders spiritual struggle in the image of managed physical aggression and relaxation from it? I can see arguments pro and con for both interpretations.

<sup>116</sup> Rabbi Arthur Waskow usefully and provocatively translates "Israel" as "Godwrestler," and understands Jewish spiritual practice as a *techne* not of belief acquisition or credal maintenance but of the spiritual struggle for wisdom, compassion, justice and memory as skilled practices. See Arthur I. Waskow, *God-Wrestling*, New York, Schocken, 1978.

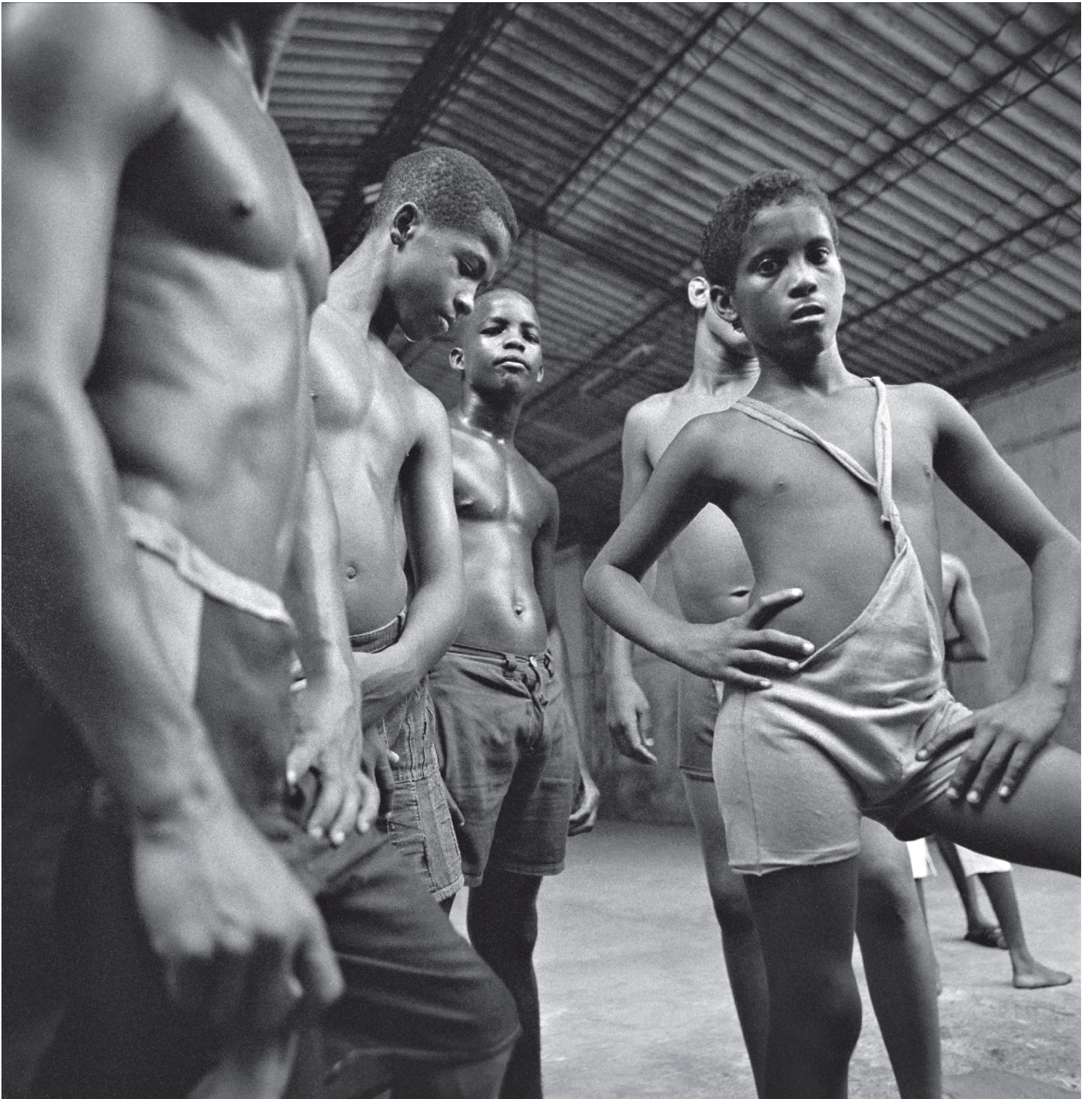


FIGURE 178

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA LUCHA/THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.





FIGURE 179

LUIS EL ESTUDIANTE,  
"EL FOTOGRAFO,"  
FROM LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

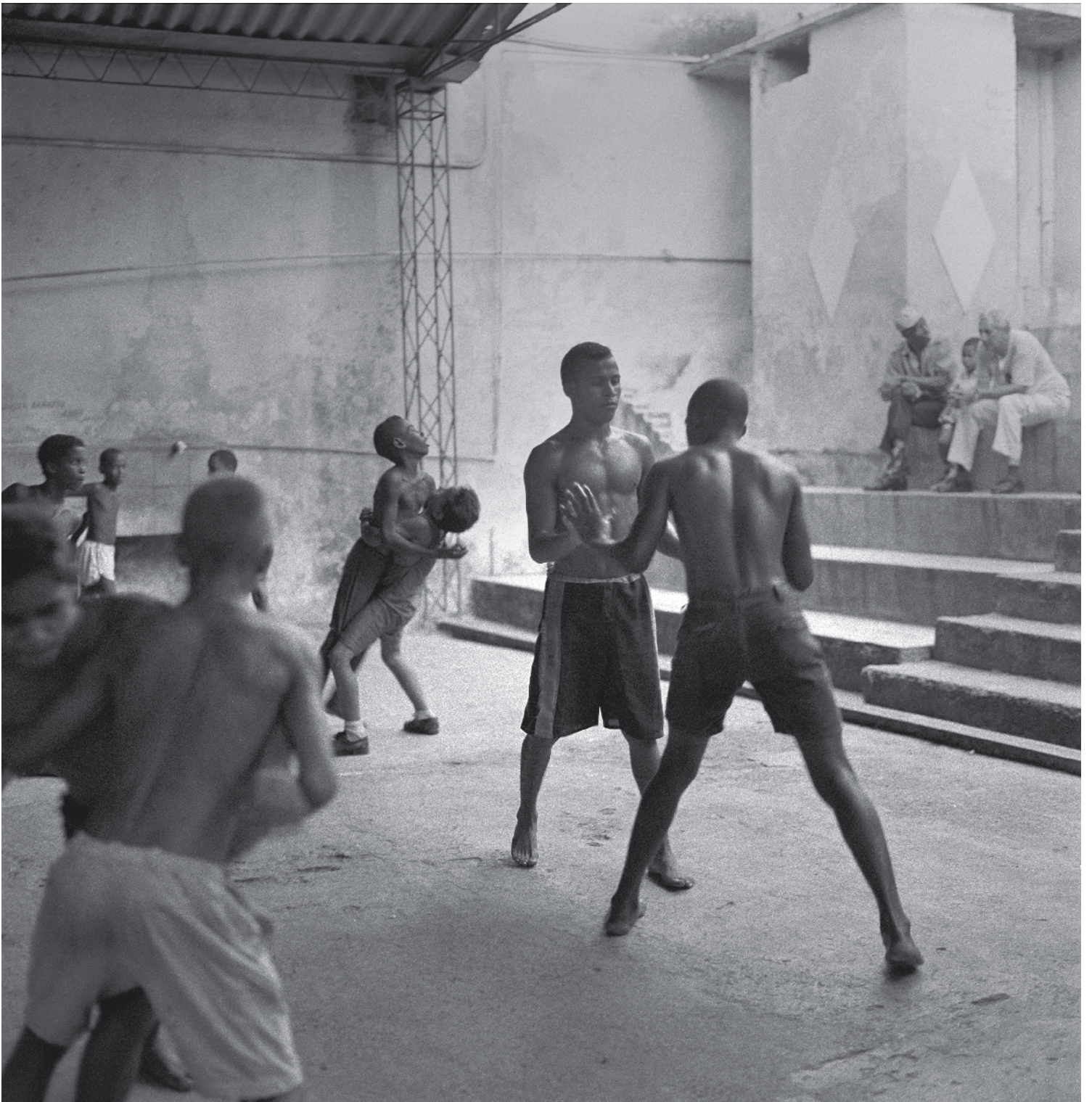


FIGURE 180

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA LUCHA/THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

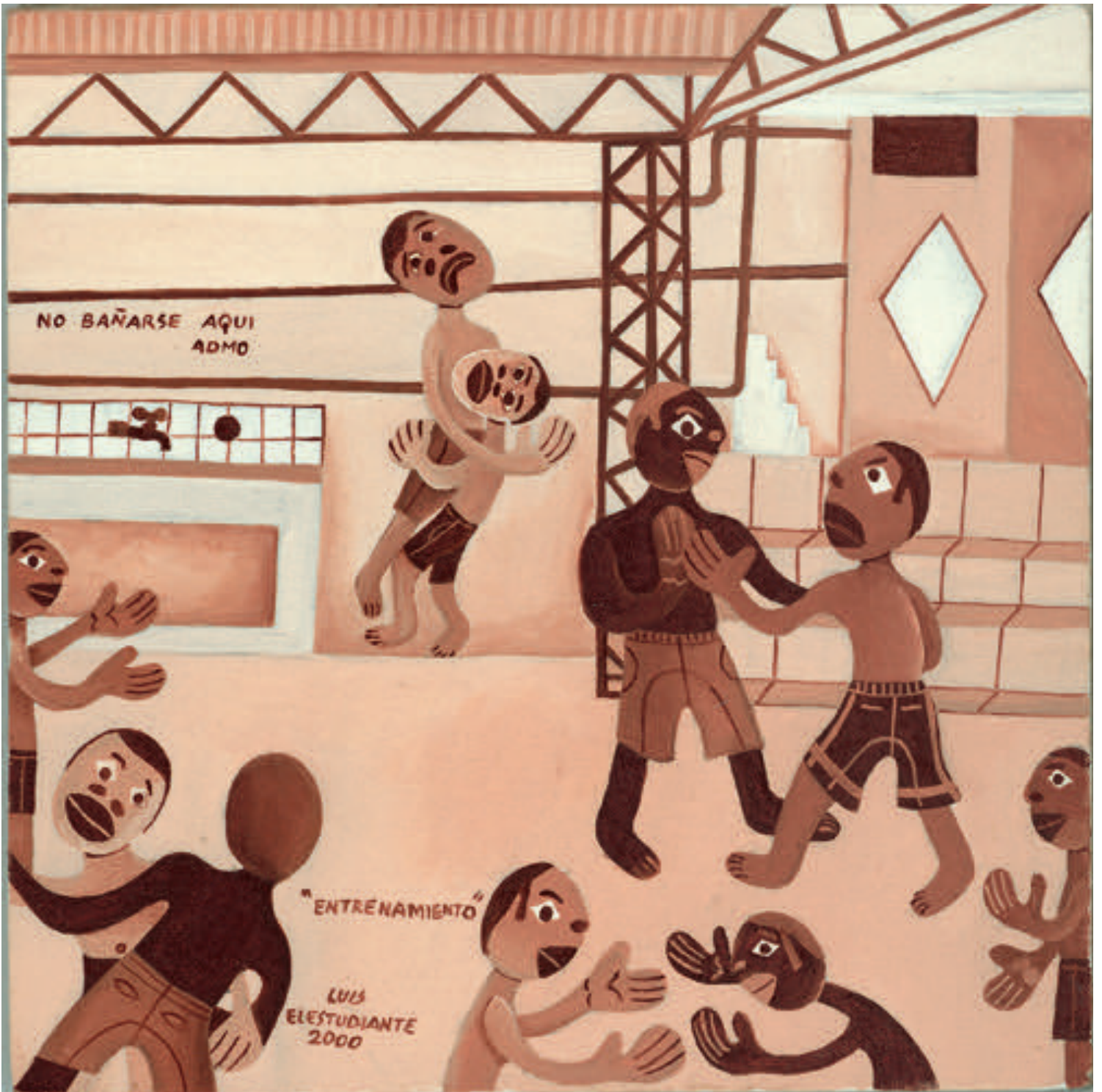


FIGURE 181

LUIS EL ESTUDIANTE,  
"ENTRENAMIENTO,"  
FROM LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

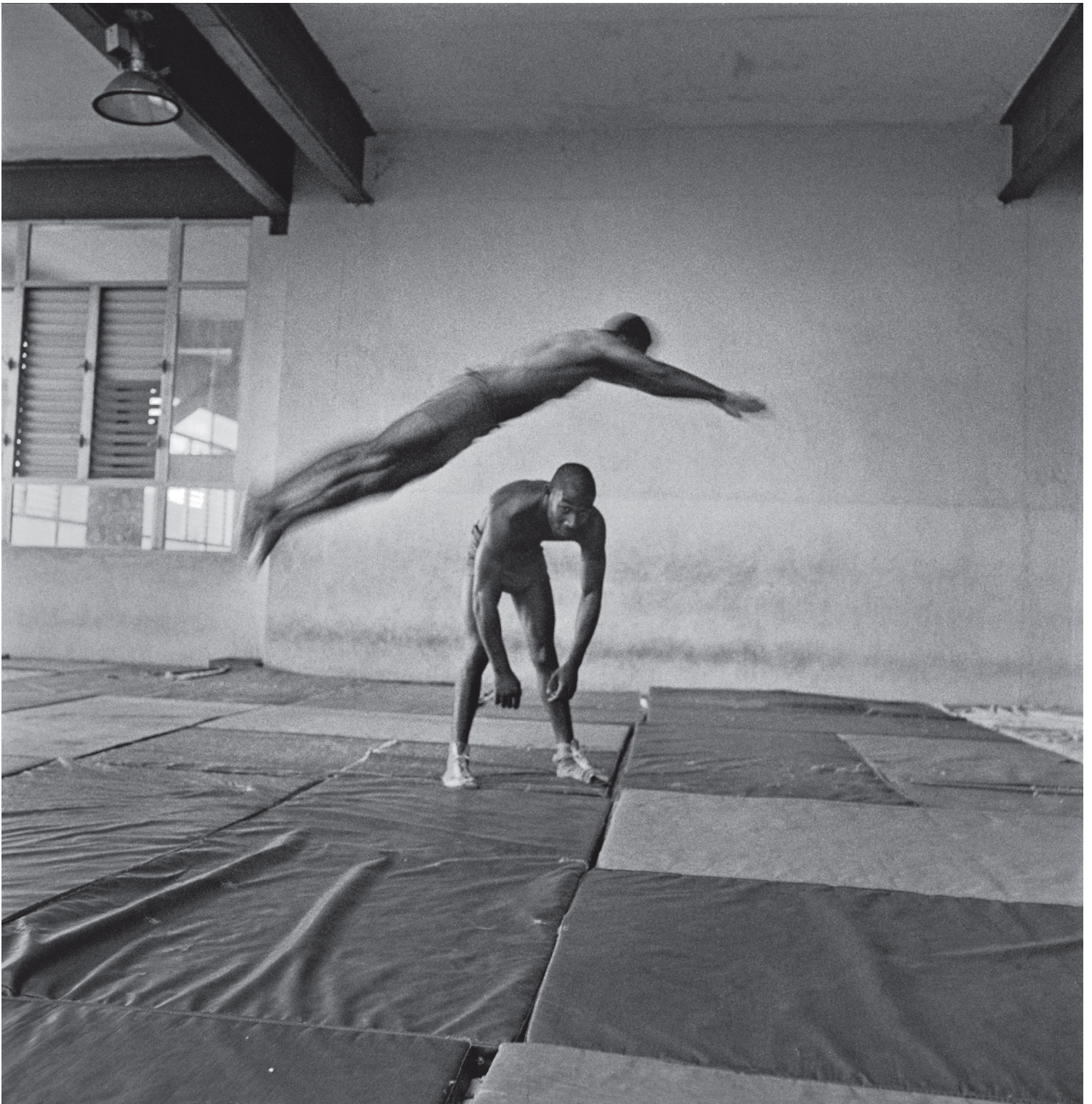


FIGURE 182

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

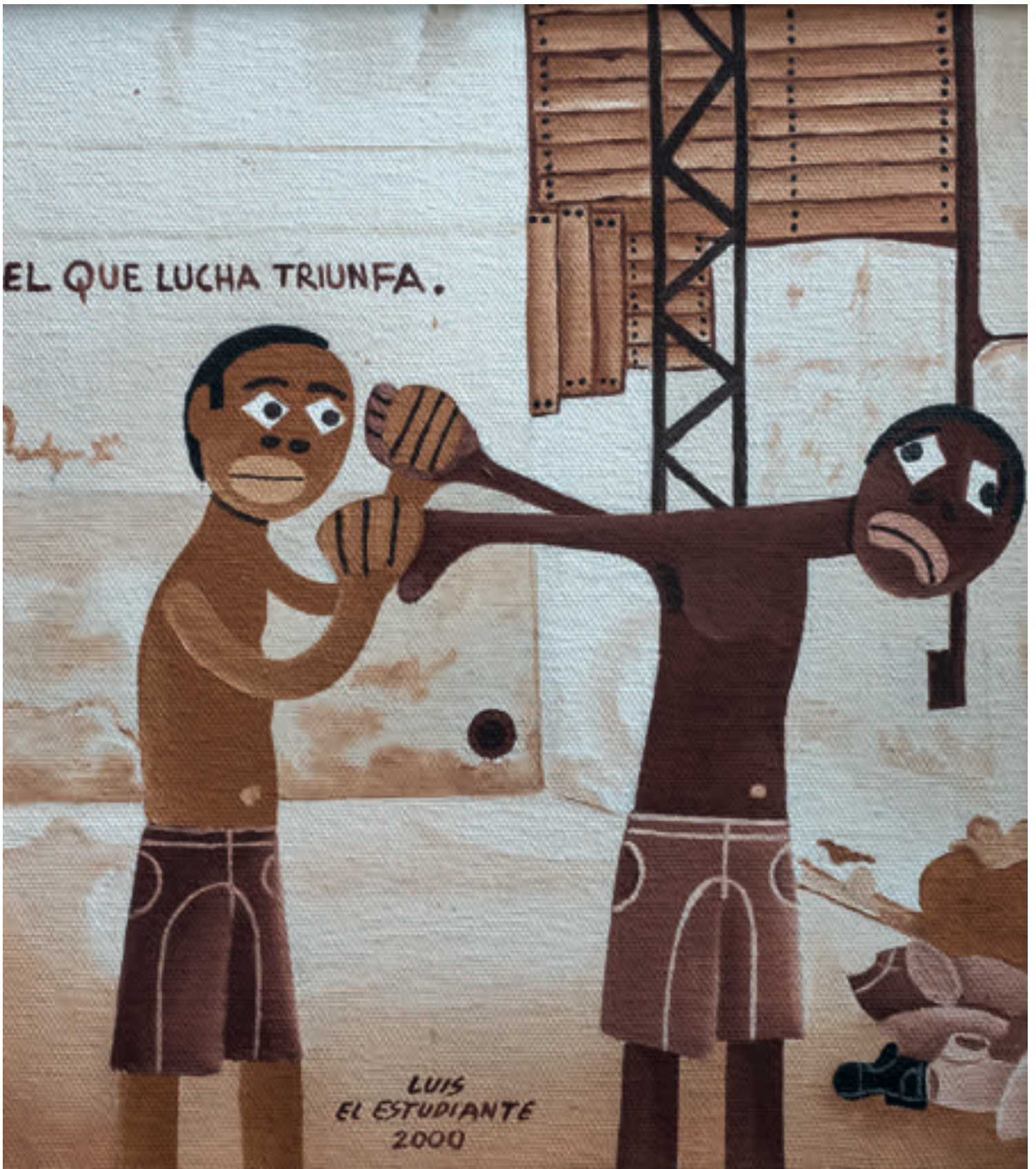


FIGURE 183

LUIS EL ESTUDIANTE,  
"EL QUE LUCHA TRIUNFA,"  
FROM LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

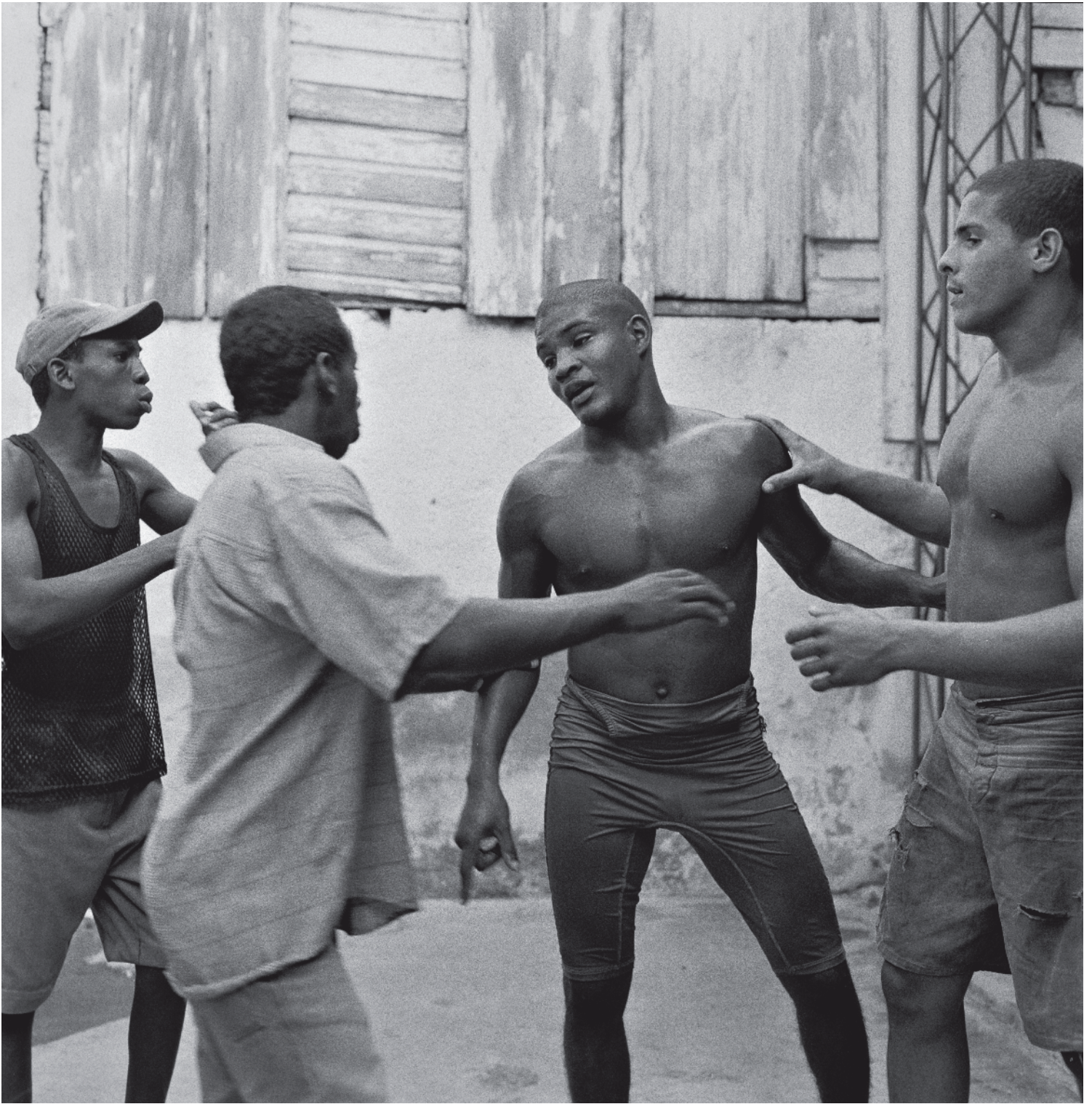


FIGURE 184

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA LUCHA / THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.



FIGURE 185

LUIS EL ESTUDIANTE,  
"LUCHA CON UN COCODRILLO,"  
FROM LA LUCHA/ THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.

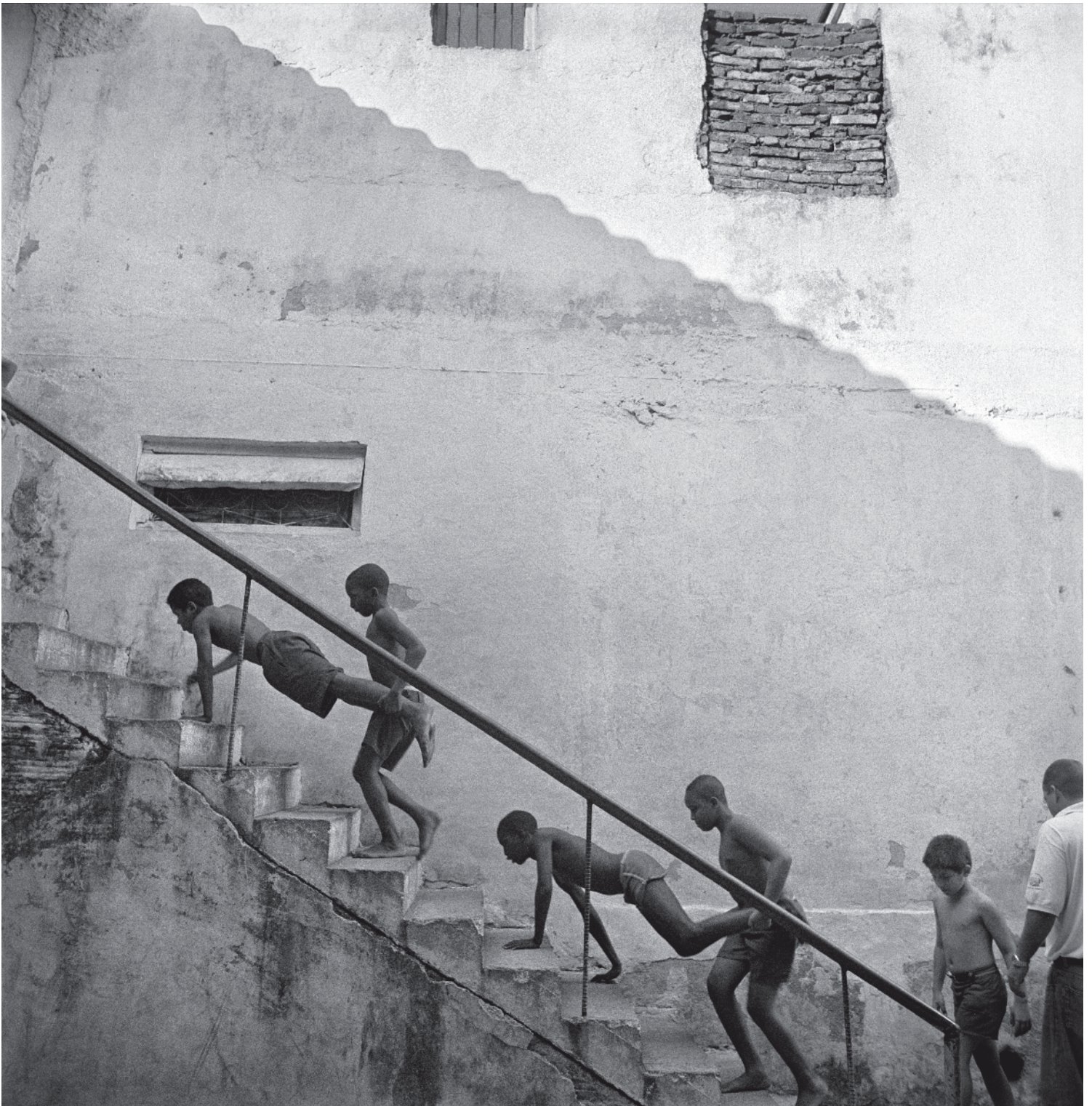


FIGURE 186

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LA LUCHA/THE STRUGGLE,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1999-2004.





# IMAGINING CUTUMBA

Between 1999 and 2002, in multiple visits to Santiago de Cuba, Salzmänn found himself photographing not only the wrestlers and weight lifters of the Aurelio Janet gym, but also the Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, one of the country's oldest and best-regarded folkloric dance companies (**Figures 187–193**). Its repertoire focuses on Afro-Cuban traditions specific to the eastern part of the country, mostly derived from the religious and social dances of Haitian immigrants—cultural forms that are exotic even to many Cubans.<sup>117</sup> Salzmänn, in other words, zeroed in on the very heart of the debate over what Cubans call “Cubanidad” (“Cubanness”). For a century, Cuban intellectuals, artists and eventually revolutionaries have framed Cuban identity in terms of cultural fusion and syncretism, expressed as the hybrid culture of an “Afro-Latin nation,” in the words of Fidel Castro. It is not hard to see a certain utopic urge motivating the work Salzmänn made with the Cutumba dance company: not a political work endorsing the Cuban socialism but a celebration of what might be called cultural impurism, especially involving the admixing of high and low class and social positions. And likewise it seems clear enough that the joy he found in Cutumba's egalitarianism finds its source in many of his life's commitments quite apart from his interests in Cuba specifically.

As with *La Lucha*, the photographs and filmwork that became *Imagining Cutumba* are not, however, documentary in their conception, not about locating the dance company or its work in historical consciousness.<sup>118</sup> And even more than with *La Lucha*, the departure from historical consciousness is registered as a departure from the idiom of photographic realism, in favor of a full-throttle embrace of visual experiment to a degree Salzmänn had not previously attempted.<sup>119</sup> Salzmänn's experiments begin from an acceptance of the dimness and low available light of the company's rehearsal studio, which begat long exposures, camera movement during long exposures

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<sup>117</sup> Kristina Wirtz explains in a useful essay published with Salzmänn's work on Cutumba that Haitians came to Cuba in two waves: after the 1791 Haitian Revolution, when Haitian coffee farmers recreated their slave plantations in the mountains around Santiago; and in the 1920s–1930s, when Haitians, Jamaicans and other West Indian laborers came looking for work. “Among all ethnic groups in Cuba,” Wirtz writes, “the Haitians were arguably the most denigrated, bearing the triple burden of prejudice against their immigrant status, their language, and their race. Their rural traditions, as often happens with marginalized groups, have now come to represent the most colorful and exotic of Cuban folklore.” See Kristina Wirtz, “Light Rumba: Laurence Salzmänn's Photographs of Cutumba,” in Laurence Salzmänn, *Imagining Cutumba*, Easton, PA, Williams Center for the Arts, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup> As with *La Lucha*, the filmwork for *Imagining Cutumba* hews toward ethnographic filmmaking, albeit from within the subjectivist idiom that characterizes most of Salzmänn's ethnographic film.

<sup>119</sup> To a considerable extent, Salzmänn's visual approach parallels that of Alexey Brodovitch in his classic and still remarkably

to complement the movements of the dancers, optical blur to complement the motion blur, under- and over-exposure in unpredictable juxtapositions, sometimes double and multiple-exposure of the same piece of film, and sometimes even digital layering techniques with the scanned negatives. Most of the work is in black and white or digitally toned monochrome, though the archive does reveal some work in color. Except for a handful of examples of the sharp, realist work Salzmänn could have pursued but did not, the series freely embraces all manner of visual irrecognition. In effect, the series can be understood as a deconstruction of the “stillness” in so-called “still” photography. Rejecting the conventional association of visual stillness with the held pose, Salzmänn’s Cutumba photographs variously offer stillness without immobilization, stillness without seizure, stillness without arrest, stillness without stasis.

For example, in what can only be called a tour de force of expressive dance photography, Salzmänn approaches the bodies in motion not as objects to be caught on film but as sources of reflected light whose marks trace out a parallel realness over a long exposure (**Figure 190**). He renders the dance in a counterpoint of heavy blacks and wispy midtones, a rhythm of long diagonal intervals and a hazard of sharp highlights, all toward an understanding of the dance as a state of energy, modulated in time. Space is rendered as the differential transparency of these marks, the ability to see “through” the tonal atmosphere “into” into the umbral geometry of the room. Presiding above it all is a single window gleaming with guidance, with sheer presence—a light of infinity and nothingness. And we realize: in the condition of this photograph, the room and the window, the dancers and the dance are all different states of the same luminous substance. Other photographs move this insight in different directions. In another image, the windows do not hover but flash above a floor which could be made equally of concrete, liquid or smoke, made more solid by the bodysuit of a dancer, whose torso rhymes with the rectangles above it, calling them into partial incarnation (**Figure 188**).

Salzmänn courts two types of critique with this work. Both trade on photographic realism treated as moral orthodoxy. If photography is a mimetic technology before it is anything else—if its image-productive capacity is fundamentally reproductive in nature—then a photograph that

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fresh 1945 photobook *Ballet*. Between 1935–1937, Brodovitch photographed several Russian ballet companies performing in New York on world tours, embracing precisely what was technically “wrong” as a means of expressing the dynamics of movement in the idiom of “still” images. Salzmänn’s experiments are directly the legacy of Brodovitch; however, I do not know whether Salzmänn knew of Brodovitch, who even now remains something of a photographer’s photographer. Even if he did not know Brodovitch’s name, there is every reason to believe that Salzmänn knew his work as a pathbreaking graphic designer and art director at *Harper’s Bazaar* between 1934–1958. Brodovitch also left his mark as a private teacher and mentor for many of the generation of celebrated experimental New York photographers whose work I have mentioned above. See Alexey Brodovitch, *Ballet*, New York, J.J. Augustin, 1945, republished in 2011 by Errata Editions as part of its Books on Books series.

interpretively clarifies its subject is immediately endowed with moral prerogative, in contrast to a photograph that “distorts” what it pictures. The readiest index of interpretive clarity is the optical clarity associated with aesthetic realism. Thus one kind of critic might complain about aestheticization in Salzmänn’s Cutumba pictures: gratuitous beauty, ugliness or strong visual effect that seem to exist for their own sake. For this critic, Salzmänn has fallen prey to letting the thrill of appearances corrode the integrity of the image as it is otherwise imagined. The other kind of critic might take issue with Salzmänn’s aesthetic choices with regard to Afro-Cuban culture specifically, arguing that the chaotic quality of Salzmänn’s pictures plays into stereotypes of exoticism, primitivism and violence, especially as these have attached to Haitian culture.<sup>120</sup>

I would defend Salzmänn against both criticisms. To the first critic: I see no moral authority attached to any kind of aesthetic appearance, realistic or non-realistic, and I see no basis for any claim of moral hierarchy privileging photography as a reproductive technology over photography as an image-productive technology, much as I see no moral hierarchy that privileges texts over images, or social science over art. Salzmänn’s Cutumba photographs are not distortions of some other photographs he did not make, any more than they are “distortions” of paintings he did not paint, or derivatives of poems he did not write or music he did not compose. There is no *other* method or medium whose endorsement he needs, or indeed that can serve to justify his choices on his own terms. To the second critic: the visual culture of non-white primitivism extends far beyond Haiti, and has been as pervasive an element of post-colonial media as of visual representation in colonial and pre-colonial periods. In contrast to those images that link black bodies to various states of seizure—black bodies clenched in ecstasy or in misery, possessed and transported in pleasure or in pain—Salzmänn’s Cutumba photographs make little claim on the body at all. Instead, these pictures push the body to the point of dematerialization, which is not to vanish the black body but to treat the black body in dance as the source of intense visions of human freedom.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Haitian culture, religion and politics has long been a source of fascination for North American photographers, with the 1980s–1990s being a period of particular activity. Alex Webb, Bruce Gilden, Eli Reed, Gilles Peress, Maggie Steber, Chantal Regnault, Lynne Warberg, Gary Monroe, James Nachtwey and Christopher Morris are a few among many journalists and documentarians to work in Haiti in this period, many tacking back and forth between photographing the violence and political turbulence of the struggle for social justice in the country, and vodou religious culture. For a pointed look at the differences between foreign views of Haiti and Haitian self-perception, see the series of essays by Amy Wilentz, Mark Danner and others, in “Haiti: Feeding the Spirit,” *Aperture* no. 126, Winter 1992.

<sup>121</sup> Even more extreme critiques would argue that Salzmänn can only perpetuate racialized stereotypes because he is a white American, not a person of color, or descended from a colonized people. Notwithstanding that as a Jew he belongs to a historically

This particular visual idiom found one further outlet in Salzmänn's oeuvre, a 2005 series of photographs titled *De Noche / By Night* (**Figures 194–196**). On Easter 2005, Salzmänn accompanied thousands of people on an annual pilgrimage to a high Andean plateau in Argentina's Jujuy province (**Figure 194**). The sequence knits together the spiritual journey of the pilgrims with the more secular activities of the night, both types of photographs using long exposure and strong use of saturated color. There is an argument to be made that in the single inspired night on which he made *De Noche*, Salzmänn corralled the impulses that over years developed into the separate projects of *La Lucha* and *Imagining Cutumba*. *De Noche*'s dialectic of sacred and mundane forms a unity whose spiritual reach is more dimensional than ecstasy alone. In the words of the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar—words that Salzmänn aptly uses for the epigraph of the project and that also speak to the particular magical consciousness of Salzmänn's long exposure dance and motion studies: “[A]nd all of this is drawing a picture, a pattern, something nonexistent like you and me, like two points lost. . . that go from here to there, from there to here, drawing their picture, putting on a dance for nobody, not even for themselves. . .”<sup>122</sup>

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oppressed people, and that Jewish minority consciousness does not align neatly with binary racial categories, I find such an identitarian critique flawed for two other reasons. First, being a member of an ethnic, racial or national group guarantees nothing, after all, about the intellectual, artistic or ethical worth of that member's work. Artists who confine themselves to working on the cultures or peoples with whom they identify or are identified are just as capable of work that is shallow, stupid or offensive in any number of ways as artists working on cultures other to their identities. Second, the identitarian critic must do more than argue for the moral authority of the cultural insider—which is certainly defensible, and not censorious on its face. Rather, it is incumbent on the identitarian to show how the other-centered ethics of a practice like Salzmänn's are doomed in advance by a kind of insipid self-misunderstanding, so deep that they actually do more harm than the defensive and ultimately self-certain ethics that set out to discipline or disqualify the work of outsiders merely on ascriptive terms. For his part, Salzmänn's operating principle in Cuba and across the spectrum of his career seems consistently to have been that what justifies one's right to do the work lies not in the identity of the artist, but in the character and the quality of the work itself.

<sup>122</sup> See Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, New York, Pantheon, 1987, chapter 34.



FIGURE 187

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.

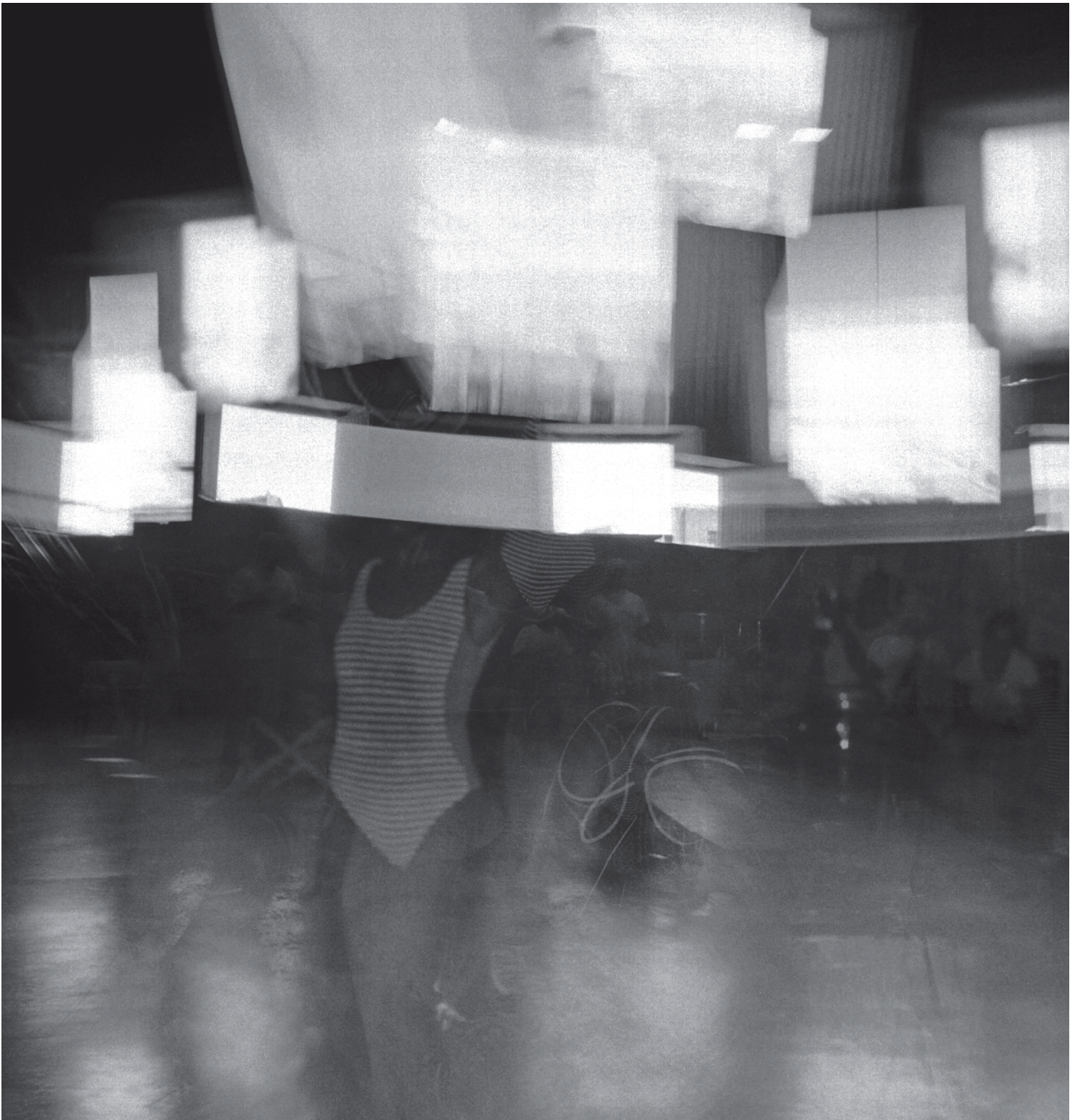


FIGURE 188

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.



FIGURE 189

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.





FIGURE 190

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.



FIGURE 191

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.



FIGURE 192

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.

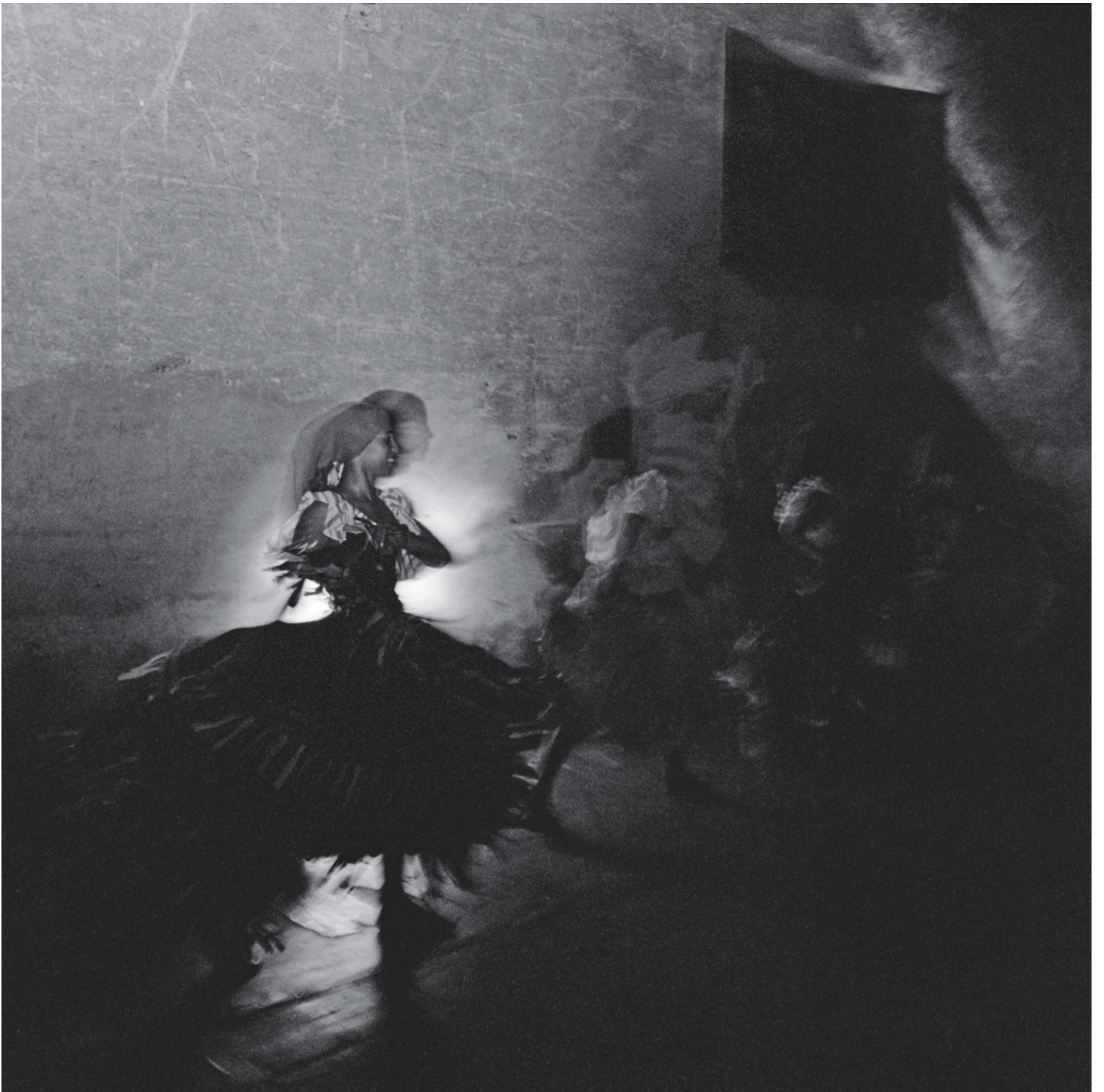


FIGURE 193

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
IMAGINING CUTUMBA,  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 2001-2002.



FIGURE 194

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM DE NOCHE / BY NIGHT,  
TILCARA, ARGENTINA, 2005



FIGURE 195

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM DE NOCHE / BY NIGHT,  
TILCARA, ARGENTINA, 2005



FIGURE 196

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM DE NOCHE / BY NIGHT,  
TILCARA, ARGENTINA, 2005

## LATE ABSTRACTIONS

By the mid-2010s, Salzmann had developed a daily practice of photographing that saw the withdrawal of the human figure altogether—or nearly so (partially returning in an overtly notional form). Made in streets, forests, building interiors, and just about anywhere, these pictures eventually made their way into loose collections under the titles “Transient Diamonds,” “Site Unseen,” “Fictive Archaeologies,” “Coral,” “Aegean Blue,” “Lamed Vavniks,” and “Reflections.” Many hundreds of such pictures exist in Salzmann’s archive, forming a vibrant and unruly chapter of the later years of his artistic life (**Figures 197–214**).

To take two examples from “Transient Diamonds,” Salzmann gives frame to subtle pictorial events anchored by no compositional rulebook.<sup>123</sup> Like most of this body of work, these pictures are square in format, but turned 45 degrees to create a “diamond.” And like many others, these images are monochromatic or close to it, not in grayscale but using black, white and some other color, for examples browns and ochres, or charcoal blues (**Figures 207 and 208** respectively). These pictures may or may not have conventional figure-ground relationships—Figure 55 does not, while Figure 56 does—but the placement of the figure against the ground is almost always irregular, not arbitrary but with a spontaneity that dances with accident. In the diamond-shaped works especially, the contents of the frames acquire a certain gravitylessness or hoveringness, as if issued by the turn of a scratched and broken kaleidoscope. I hesitate, though, to invent metaphors for what Salzmann shows, or even to call it “content,” as if to suggest a separation between form and content. The particular magical consciousness of this work is the collapse of that distinction and also the distinction between idea and sensation. In these works, form is content is idea is physical perception, in a non-binary whole.

Photographically speaking, the key move with these images is that they present details that are not fragments, visual particulars that are not clues to a visual entirety. In effect, Salzmann inverts common assumptions about photographic reference: what we see does not gain meaning by participating in a world beyond itself—a world it effectively converts to a contextual surround. It indicates little or nothing about some larger imagined plenum of space and time that we might observe, and offers little in the way of mediation of that larger world, eschewing even the role of

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<sup>123</sup> To my knowledge, Salzmann’s interest in the rotated square or “diamond” frame was inspired by the work of the photographer Arthur Tress, specifically his series “Pointers” (2000–2015) and “Morro Rock” (2009–2015), both of which were made using a Hasselblad turned to a 45-degree angle, so that its square format became a diamond.



recording it for reproduction. Rather, Salzman's images present us with imagistic actualities whose reference to actualities outside of or on the other side of themselves is incidental. The images are self-sufficient. They are not replacements for an observed world—tokens, symbols, residual indices—but displacements of one observable world into the terms of another. The events that we see in these images are not, in other words, pictorialized events of the world, but *pictorial events*—events that start and end only as pictures. As such, the usual questions that swirl around pictorialization of the non-pictorial (the world is not in itself, of course, a picture) relax their claims on interpretation. How images generate and liven the imagination, or dampen and numb it, are important only on the terms of the pictures themselves, which allow the world little or no claim.

It is tempting to say that what Salzman discovered was, in a word, painting. Virtually no painted image, even when derived from the outer world, is yoked to that derivation in the way photographs conventionally are. Painting's freedom from derivation is even more pronounced when the painted image is unhitched from representational tasks in the first place. To my eyes, release from representation is precisely what drives this impulse in Salzman's late work: they presume non-attachment to representation, though he arrives at this presumption by way of the reactive methods of photographic mark-making, rather than the proactive methods of painterly mark-making.

It is also tempting to say that what Salzman discovered was abstraction, a word whose etymology means "to draw away"—which, I suppose, could mean withdrawing *from* some condition of nearness, or drawing *toward* some condition of apartness. Or more simply put, if the core of abstraction is subtraction, the elimination of what could otherwise have been seen, what Salzman's photographs subtract is, first and foremost, reference to an outer world. So doing, they draw away from the dialectic of resemblance between the image and the world, and block the associative or narrativistic tendencies that photographs so often draw toward themselves.

Finally, it is tempting to say that what Salzman discovered was flatness, the collapse of his habitual phrasing of space, and the reduction of the image to mere surface—its very surface, its own surface only. Such reduction found its champion in the critic Clement Greenberg, who fashioned it as a dogma for Modernist painting.<sup>124</sup> It certainly has no such normative or prescriptive status for Salzman, for whom flatness emerged simply as a practice of artistic discipline, not a method for disciplining art. Indeed, if there is any art historical reference in

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<sup>124</sup>In his influential 1960 essay, "Modernist Painting," Greenberg argues that modernism's essence is what he terms, following Kant, "immanent criticism": the use of a discipline's own characteristics to criticize that discipline itself—"not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence." Modernism's historic task, for Greenberg, is a medium's self-purification, which for painting means the complete rejection of realism, three-dimensional illusionism, and representation in favor of what is "unique and exclusive" to painting—two-dimensional flatness, the properties of pigment, and the mark-making gesture itself. Greenberg's formulation on medium-specificity *Continues on page 306*



FIGURE 197

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM "AEGEAN BLUE,"  
TURKEY, 2014.

Salzmann's turn toward visual reductionism, it is not Greenberg's reduction of the medium to material, but Vassily Kandinsky's conversion of the medium to spirit, the release of the image from the obligation to offer meaning as a "message" pertinent to a world beyond itself. "Each color," declares Kandinsky, "lives by its mysterious life," and likewise a work of art is purely the expression of inner need, and traces the path of spiritual striving.<sup>125</sup> It is as if Salzmann asked himself a series of questions that had never occurred to him, or which were somehow impermissible. Does a photograph fail if it is not "about" something? Why *should* a photograph be *about* something anyway? And what if the key to a good photograph is precisely speechlessness in response to the question, "what is this picture about?" Implicitly, the answers to these questions are Salzmann's

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<sup>124</sup> continues to be a useful rubric for contemporary non-Modernist and after-Modernist art, much of which fetishizes medium specificity and its critique for precisely those purposes Greenberg rejects: medium-subversion as a programmatic end in itself. See Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Forum Lectures* (Washington, D. C.: Voice of America), 1960.

<sup>125</sup> See Vassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler, New York, Dover, 1977, originally published in 1910.

photographs themselves, which one might say, are not “about” anything, and in not being about anything, lack nothing.

In one stream of these abstractions, the figure does make a back-door appearance. Around 2016, Salzman began to associate certain of these images with a trope of Jewish folklore known as the Thirty-Six.<sup>126</sup> The Babylonian Talmud and subsequent centuries of Jewish mystical traditions speak of hidden saints, people of extraordinary ethical virtue who exist at all times, in every generation, but whose identities remain unrevealed. These are the so-called Lamed Vavniks, the Thirty-Six righteous people. (In Jewish cultures, numbers were traditionally written with Hebrew letters, the number thirty written with the letter *lamed*, and the number six written with the letter *vav*.) The number thirty-six is itself a mythic number: eighteen twice, eighteen being a spiritually significant number because it is written with letters *chet* and *yud*, which also spell the word “chai” or “life”—so that thirty-six signifies life redoubled, aliveness extended and intensified. By legend, it is the ethical merit of the Thirty-Six that sustains the world. Without them, humanity would lose its way fatally—destroy itself, explode itself, implode itself. Or to use the language of the religious, God preserves the world for the sake of the Thirty-Six, even if the rest of humanity has descended incorrigibly into barbarism. The hiddenness of the Thirty-Six is essential and also paradoxical. At the heart of ethical merit is humility, humility so profound that it precludes a Lamed Vavnik proclaiming, believing or even knowing that she or he is one of the Thirty-Six.<sup>127</sup>

Salzman set out, in an overtly quixotic spirit, to make portraits of Lamed Vavniks—portraits of and from their anonymity and their unrevealedness (**Figures 201 and 202**). On one hand the task is playful, inasmuch as a portrait of a Lamed Vavnik is a picture from which he or she has already escaped. On the other hand, it is serious: a way of asking the viewer to hold in consciousness a necessary striving (is our world not in need of the Thirty-Six, now as much as ever?) that is also necessarily elusive, a spiritual need we comprehend but which is not to be gained as comprehension. To my eyes, Salzman’s portraits function roughly as a visual equivalent of apophatic or negative to affirm anything about God or holiness removes us from its presence, and we are forced to proceed by navigating the spaces between our affirmation. Salzman’s portraits work like this: by deflection rather than by acquisition, presenting not images of the Thirty-Six but

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<sup>126</sup> I myself am the one who had introduced Salzman to the folklore around the Thirty-Six, at some point in the preceding years.

<sup>127</sup> In Jewish ethics, humility comes before every other righteous virtue, and is mixed in with them—so that we cannot speak of honesty, discernment, forgiveness, lovingkindness, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, fairness, peace-lovingness or any other ethical virtue apart from the absence of vanity, superiority and pridefulness. And the very marker of ethical virtue is the disappearance of the marks leading a humble soul to call itself humble: the humble soul does not claim or proclaim its own humility.

visions *in the image of the Thirty-Six*, perhaps in the sense that the Torah tells us that God made human beings *b'tselem Elohim*, “in our image.”<sup>128</sup>

By way of synthesizing this turn in Salzmann’s creative life: from a rejection of representation of a kind familiar in Western art for more than a century, Salzmann made his way in steps to an embrace of non-reference and non-semblance. His late abstractions treat images not as surrogates of the observable, but essentially as emanations—outflows of the invisible into the realm of the visible. Ultimately, in a borrowing from his documentary work, Salzmann attempts to infuse these emanations with (symbolic) ethical presence. The need to ethicize the abstract image, rope it into doing ethical work, is not a specifically Jewish impulse, but it is a deeply Jewish one. By this I mean that Salzmann’s images in their own way restage one of the paradoxes that mark out the Jewish way in the world. To put it the best way I can: if God is God, transcendent and apart from names or forms or any comparison, God also becomes God by way of the human heart, the soul and strength of people, for whom God is indwelling. Just as God’s being breaks—which could mean continues to break, always-already broke, perhaps must break—into becoming, so too, for Salzmann, the abstract image’s integrity eventually breaks from aloof into immanent aliveness.

At the time of this writing, Salzmann is in the midst of a new series of abstractions, which use an in-camera mirroring effect, by which the digital camera records half an image and then flips it to make a synthetic symmetry (**Figures 209–214**). The technique is, on its face, gimmicky. The era of digital imaging is, of course, replete with such gimmickry—filters that turn any image into a fake watercolor, a fake charcoal drawing, a fake photocopy, a fake stained glass window, a fake snapshot made on expired film cross processed and bleach bypassed and three times turned to infrared and back.<sup>129</sup> In some sense, the measure of an artist’s suppleness of mind is not puristic avoidance of gimmickry, but an ability to move gimmickry past gimmicks. The best of Salzmann’s “Reflections” photographs manage to do just this, by approaching the doubling effect as a means to bend the abstraction toward the return of the figure.

Some of the reflections carry distinctly entomological overtones—as if splayings-open or dissections of uncategorized species of insect—and it is not surprising that Salzmann has found in this series the emergence of his Lameds. “Melek—Winter Lamed” (**Figure 213**) offers an austere figure, pressed from stone toward a less material standing-forth, tall and caped in rushing water, with epaulettes of grass and a navel-tuft also of grass. If Salzmann’s sighting of the Winter Lamed

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<sup>128</sup> Genesis 1:26.

<sup>129</sup> For those old enough to remember, subverting the tyranny of the straight photograph did not arise in the digital age—I remember in my twenties buying a stack of UV filters to put on the lens of my 35mm camera, smearing one with petroleum



FIGURE 198

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017.

seems the result of coveted accident, it is not the sort of accident that results from chance. Rather, it is the sort that stems from a feeling for the mysterious as it reaches out—reaches back, reaches around—to touch the actual. Salzmann allows such reachings to take place, and to his credit, does not attempt to explain them or explain them away when they happen, but rather allows them to take shape as pictures, after which the pictures themselves bear the joy and responsibility for the enigma.

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jelly, creating soot deposits from a candle on another, incising lines into another, shattering the glass on another, all for the sake of inserting something disruptive and unpredictable into the process of making photographs.



FIGURE 199

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PATHS TO THE PAST,  
SACRED VALLEY, TIPON, PERU, 2016.

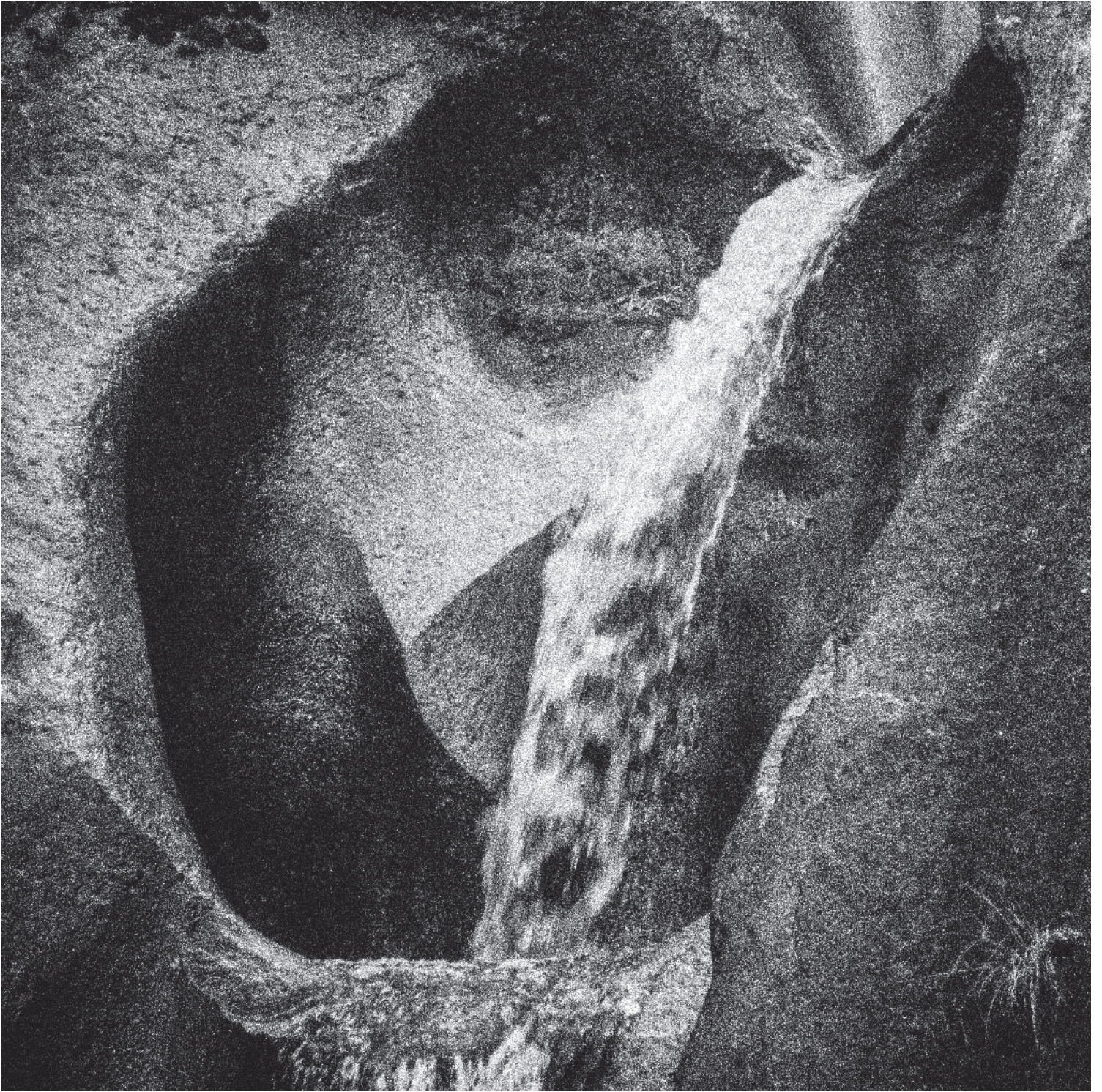


FIGURE 200

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
PROMETHEUS RISING,  
SIETE TINAJAS, QUILLABAMBA, PERU, 2017.



FIGURE 201

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LAMED FORMED BY LIGHT,  
PERU, 2020.





FIGURE 202

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MELEK, WINGED WATER LAMED,  
SIETE TINAJAS, QUILLABAMBA, PERU, 2017.



FIGURE 203

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
COVENT DE SAN BERNARDINO DE SIENEA,  
VALLDALOID, YUCATÁN, MEXICO, 2020.



FIGURE 204

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
WINDLEY KEY FOSSIL REEF GEOLOGICAL STATE PARK,  
ISLAM ORADA, FLORIDA, 2020.

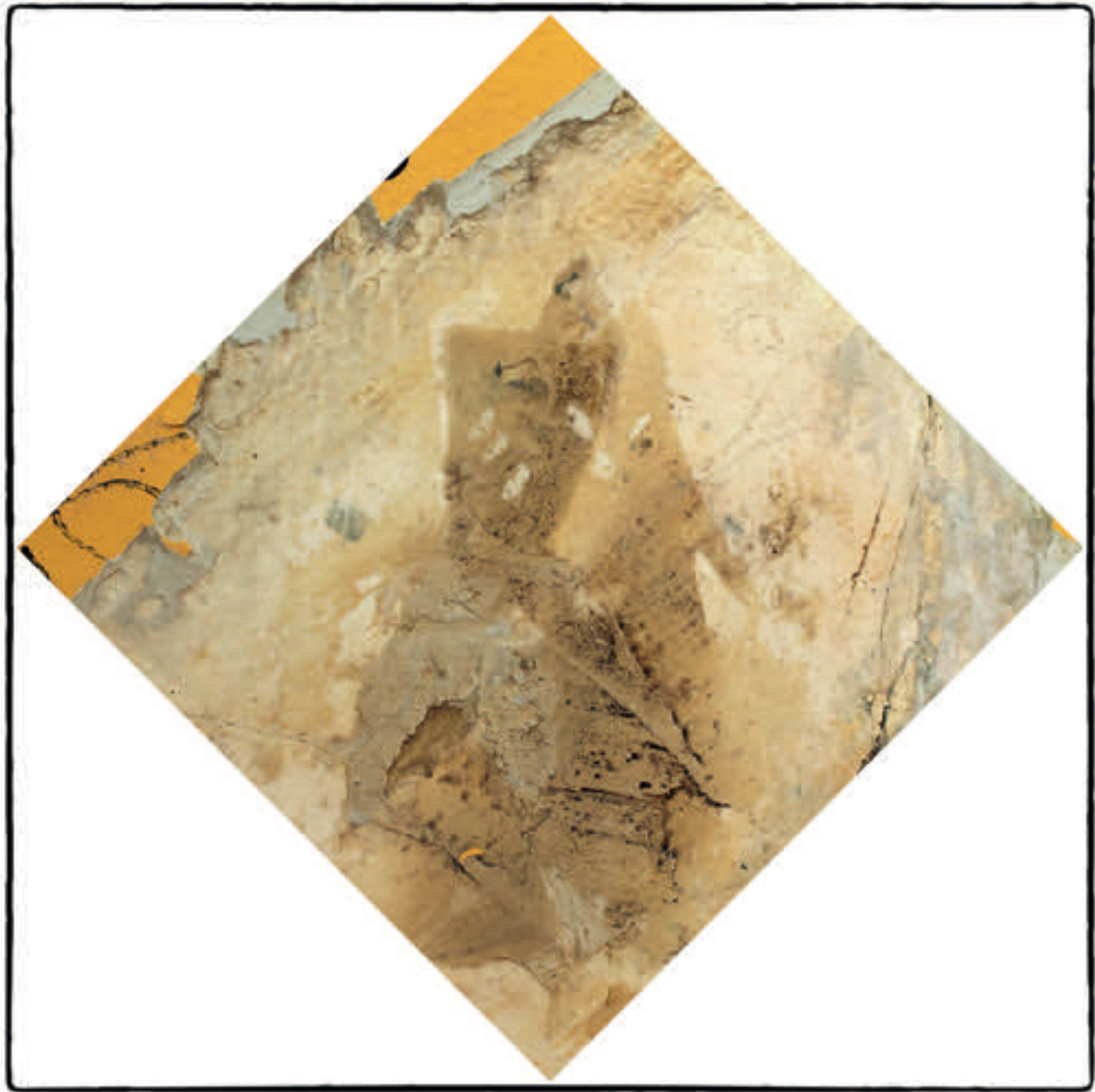


FIGURE 205

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM "SIGHT UNSEEN,"  
PHILADELPHIA, 2017.



FIGURE 206

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM "SIGHT UNSEEN,"  
PHILADELPHIA, 2017.

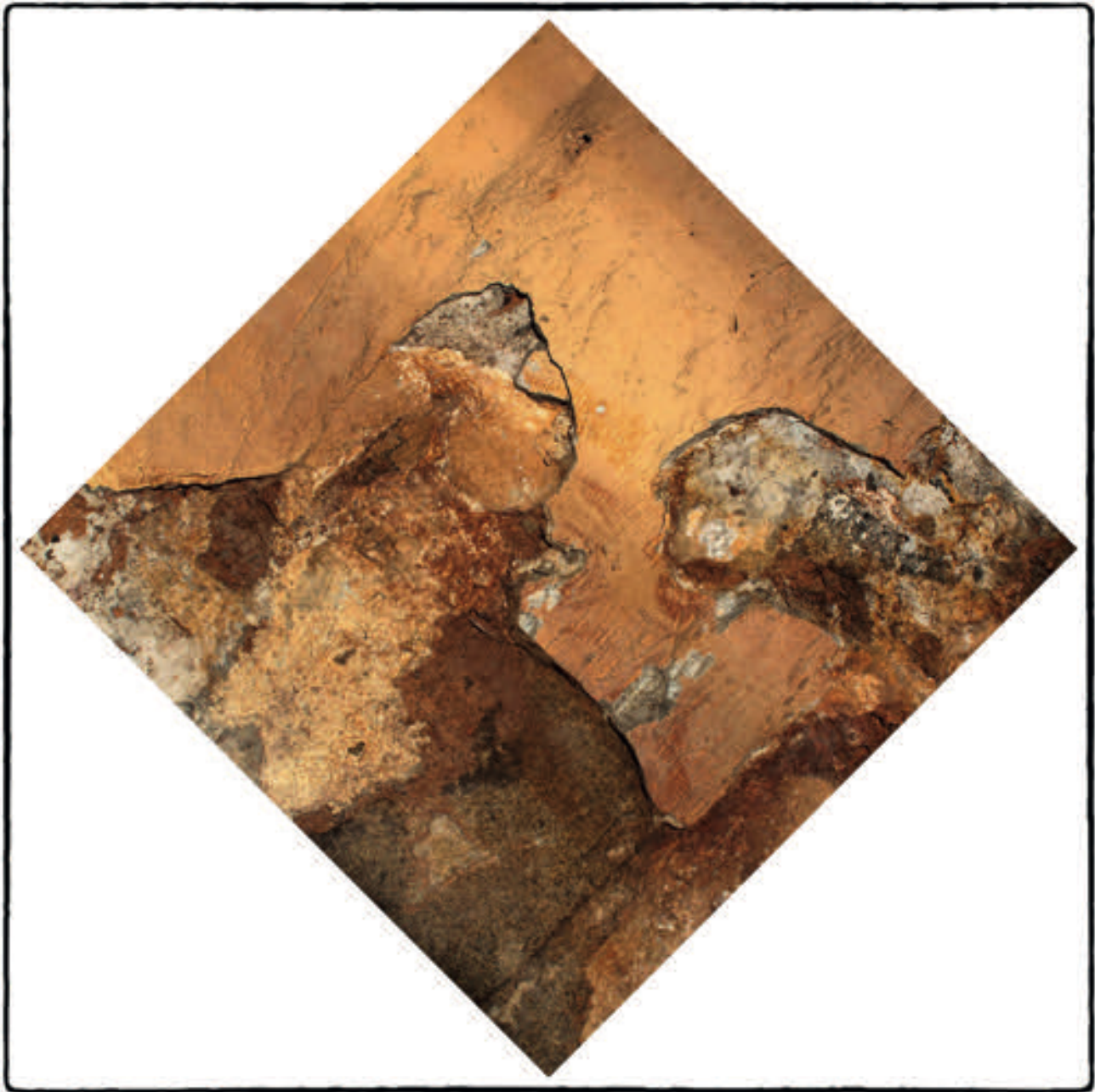


FIGURE 207

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM "SIGHT UNSEEN,"  
PHILADELPHIA, 2017.



FIGURE 208

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM "SIGHT UNSEEN,"  
PHILADELPHIA, 2017.



FIGURE 209

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
EVIL AND GOOD DWELL WITHIN US,  
MARAS, PERU, 2020.





FIGURE 210

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
CATARATA DE MANDOR,  
PROVENCIA A CONVENCION, CUSCO, 2018.



FIGURE 211

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MAGUEY TRANSFORMED,  
MARAS, PERU, 2020.



FIGURE 212

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
WITHIN US THE UNIVERSE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2018.



FIGURE 213

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
MELEK WATER LAMED,  
TIPON, PERU, 2018.



FIGURE 214

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
SADDENED ATAHUALLPA LOST HIS EMPIRE TO GREED,  
MORAY, PERU, 2019.

# MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT

Forty kilometers north of Cuzco in Peru's Sacred Valley, near the town of Maras, are a complex of salt ponds that have been producing salt since pre-Inca times. Salt and mineral-rich subterranean streams are channeled into hundreds of ponds on terraced hillsides, where the mountain air evaporates the water, leaving salt crystals to be harvested by hand. Salzmänn found himself captivated by the sight and history of the ponds, which became one of the key subjects of his Fulbright fellowship to Peru in 2016. His initial interest was the persistence of pre-Columbian lifeways in contemporary Andean culture, for which the salt ponds provided a rich source. He began to photograph the labor of salt cultivation, and came to learn the elaborate socio-economy of the ponds, as well as individuals in various positions within the hierarchy of owners and workers. In time, however, his attentions gave way to something else, a poetic response to the place as a meeting of the natural world and human history. And from this feeling, Salzmänn made photographs of great lyricism and lucidity (**Figures 215–220**).

It is evident enough that Salzmänn's photographs of the ponds begin from the point that his Lamed Vavnik series leaves off: in a square frame holding forth an abstract play in monochrome. The tonal dynamics of the salt photographs are extreme, with a quality of light that seems to overwhelm what the camera can handle.<sup>130</sup> Optically, the result is a particularly scintillant image, very much in the spirit of Salzmänn's earlier work with backlighting (**Figures 54–55**), except now the intensity of light has taken an aliveness of its own, and seems almost lifted away from the reflective surfaces of the world and given its own embodiment. Notably, however, these pictures depart from the idiom of flatness, and return again to a description of depth and of landscape. Sometimes there is the sense of an arial perspective—as if in reply to the 1970s landscapes of Mario Giacomelli (**Figure 215**). Sometimes the spatial depth leaves little clue to the nearness or distance of our vantage point, the illusion of space obtaining either as macro- or microcosmic (**Figure 218**). Sometimes the illusion of space becomes liquid and refractory, describing an unstable depth liable to shift abruptly from iridescent surfaces to impenetrable to impenetrable blackness and back.

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<sup>130</sup> These photographs were made with a small handheld digital camera, and were overexposed by several stops so that the highlights were blown out. Salzmänn made a virtue of what otherwise might have been a technical mistake. With no highlight detail to recover, he added artificial noise to give the whites a subtle texture, and then upsized the files to enhance their granularity even further. The enlarged final prints are made on Tyvek, an industrial product made of polyethylene fibers smooth and lightweight, allowing the prints to hang frameless and to move slightly with the air flow of the exhibition space.

Without pushing the metaphor too far, it seems that the crystalline character of the salt itself appeared as a crystallizing force in Salzmänn's imagination, and he beheld the natural and the human worlds profoundly inter-crystallized, inter-struck in lucent symbol patterns. He saw the result of human labor, human striving and human ingenuity having trained hidden mountain streams into briny pools where air does the work of separating water from the solids it holds within itself—a harvest by evaporation, a reaping by desiccation. And I think it is not going too far to suspect that he beheld in the salt ponds a crystallization of time's mysteries—a certain unified perception that the distinctions between past, present and future falsely particulate time, which is whole and unchanging, and on the other hand that time does pass and new things do arise, in a flow of meaningful imprecision. This language is, of course, my own, not Salzmänn's, and a simpler way to put it might be that Salzmänn experienced—allowed himself to experience—a state of wonder, which is to say undirected positive regard for something, affirmation asked to do no work. And if so: it is one thing for a child to experience wonder, which seems to happen through sheer innocence, and it is quite another for a man to experience it—a man who makes from experience a medium for wonder.

One could say that Salzmänn spent a lifetime preparing for the salt ponds Maras, and that his own name led him there. Salzmänn, the “man of salt” whose ancestors in eastern Europe were probably salt brokers or salt merchants, became Salzmänn the photographer, an expert in a process whose origins are the fusion of silver and salt. Salzmänn's artistic path was salty and sweet, taking him by turns through the aftermath of the Holocaust and the struggle for memory, to the sources of life in communities around the world. Perhaps it is not accident that he is called Salzmänn. Just as salt preserves, so too do photographs. And in the best examples—as these images from the Peruvian pools—what photographs preserve is not the shell of what lived, but the aliveness within those shells, glowing in memory and anticipation.



FIGURE 215

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017





FIGURE 216

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017



FIGURE 217

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017.

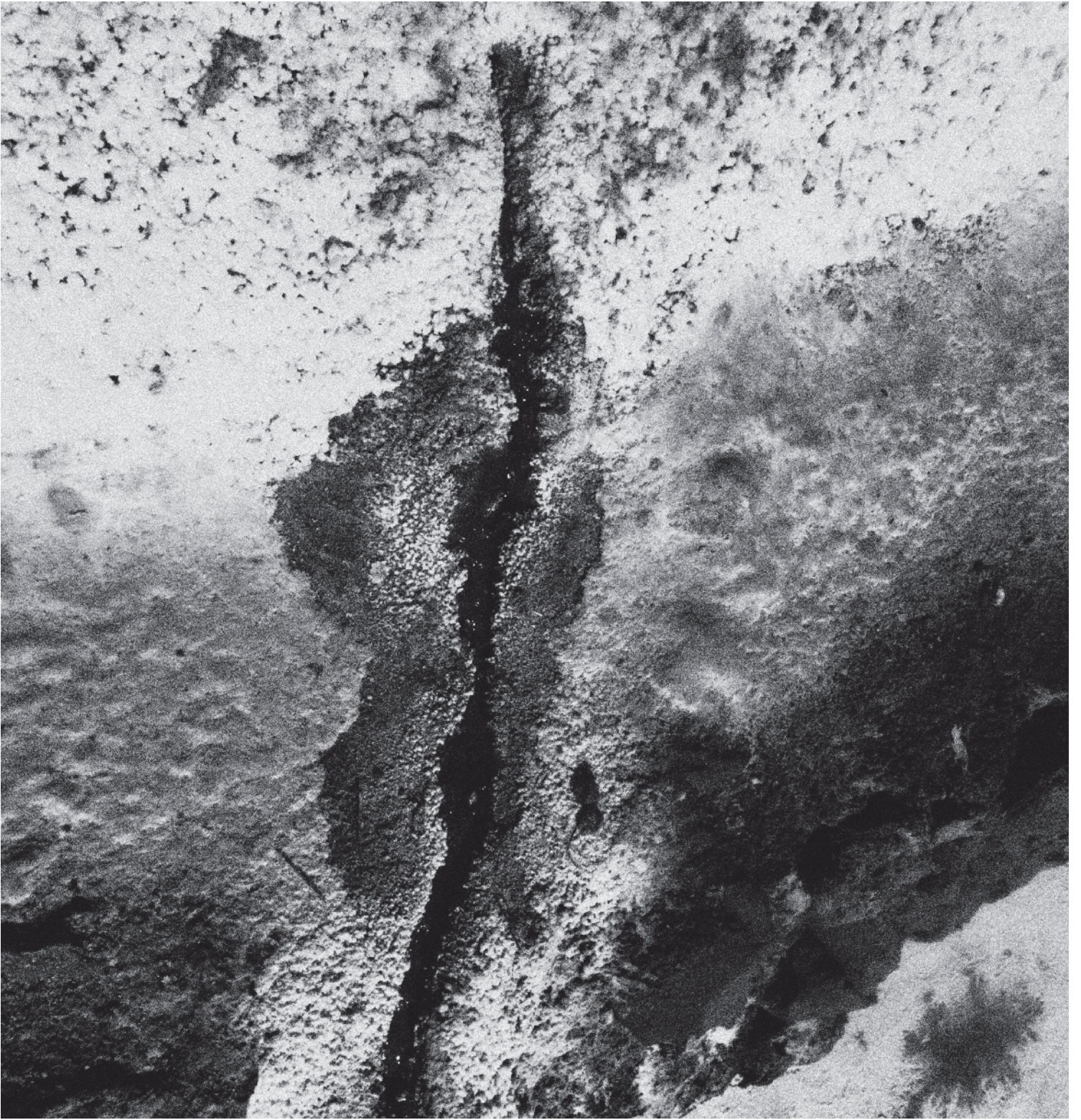


FIGURE 218

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017

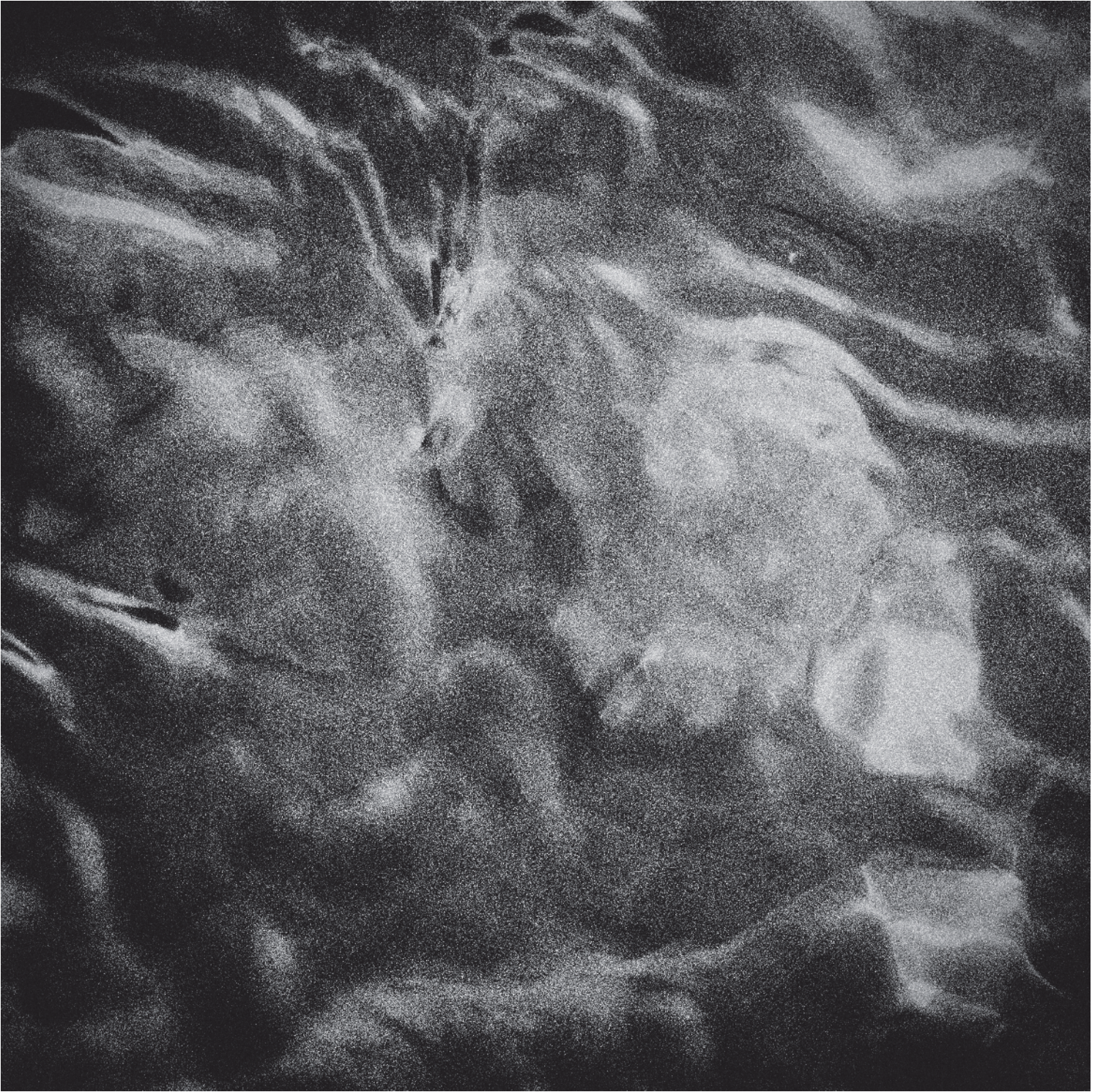


FIGURE 219

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017.

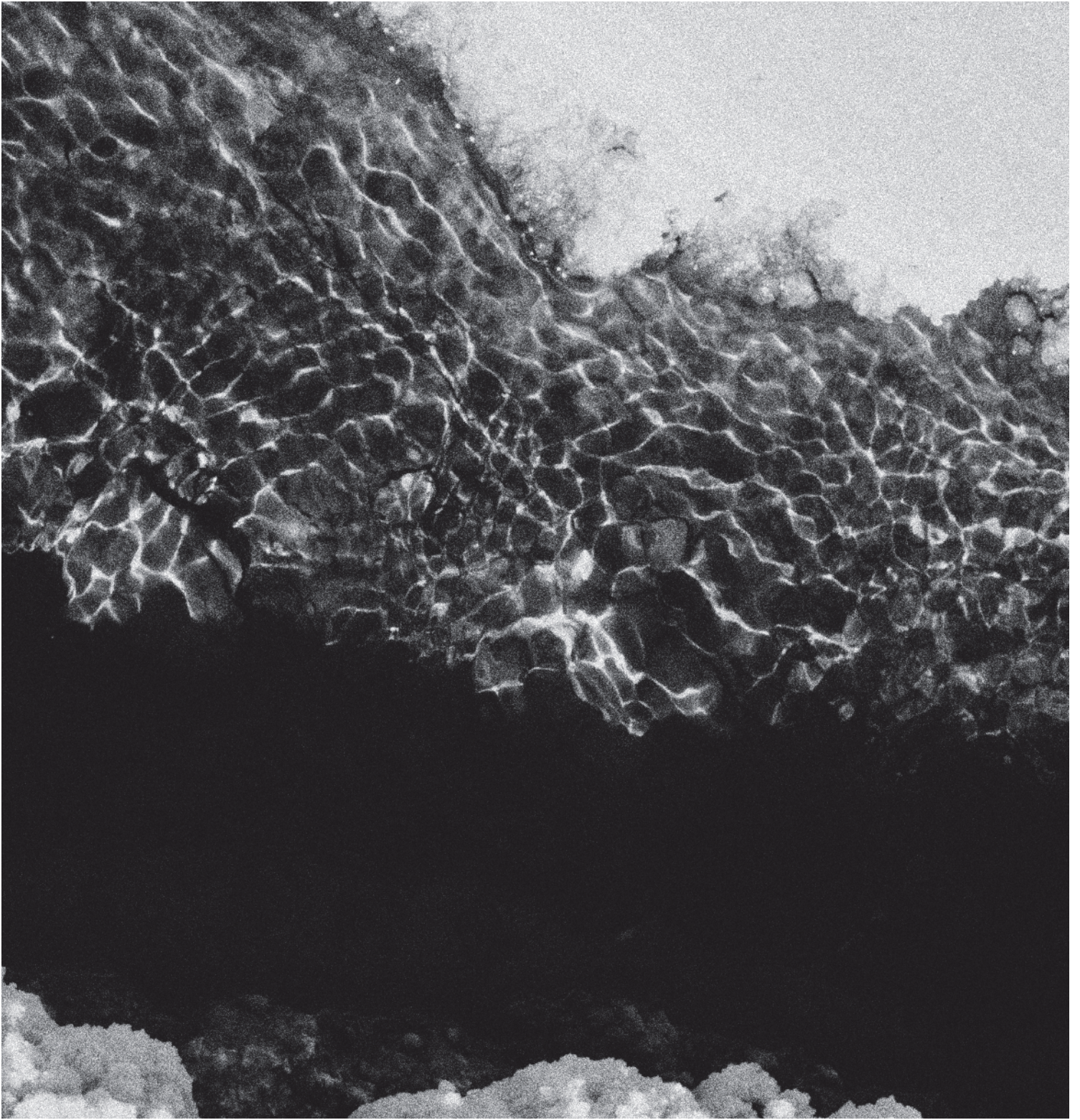


FIGURE 220

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
FROM MISK'I KACHI / SWEET SALT / SAL DULCE,  
MARAS, PERU, 2016-2017.

# EPILOGUE: FROM THE ARTIST TOWARD THE SELF

In *Poetics of Relation*, the French-Caribbean writer Édouard Glissant's magisterial book on poetry, history and prophecy, Glissant distinguishes two approaches to the pursuit of truth:

The poet's truth is also the desired truth of the other, whereas, precisely, the truth of a computer system is closed back upon its own sufficient logic. Moreover, every conclusion reached by such a system has been inscribed by the original data, whereas poetics open onto unpredictable and unheard of things.<sup>131</sup>

As a medium, photography is a hybrid of both. Photography as art is, after all, never far from photography as science: a poetical feeling for photographic images sits beside photography's informatics—the ways that we understand “photography” to mean the informationalizing of the visual, the instrumentalizing of that information, and the circulation of the instrumentalization as commerce, identity, memory, politics and eventually history. The totality of Salzmänn's career is, in retrospect, a sustained engagement with the contradictions of his medium, toward both the ordained and previously unheard of truths. And what about Salzmänn himself, his own self as the vehicle for such engagements? This book, as I have indicated, is a critical study of Salzmänn's art and not a biography, and I maintain a certain wariness about the value of a biography—not because I find Salzmänn's life stories irrelevant, but rather because I am loath to turn to any artist's biography to adjudicate the complexities of creative work, or to discipline that work's ambiguities. Salzmänn perhaps feels similarly. It is notable that self-picturing is not an aspect of any of his works, and his private life has never been the subject of a work per se. Nonetheless, images of him at work do appear in the catalogues of most projects. Likewise, he photographed his private life actively, especially in the early years of his marriage, and in the years of his daughter's childhood. It seems only right to present, as a coda, a selection of pictures of Salzmänn himself and Salzmänn's private life over time (**Figures 221–236**).

These photographs might form a visual chronology of Salzmänn's life in the mode of information, each a sign whose deciphering might reveal facts that eventually, in some aggregate, confess the whole of what it has meant for Salzmänn to be Salzmänn. But if so, this informational whole is far from the greater whole. In Glissant's terms, Salzmänn's personal pictures turn toward “the desired truth of the other” that characterizes so much of his approach, only here this other is the self and the immediate family. What emerges in many of Salzmänn's self-portraits is the self's

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<sup>131</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, p. 82.

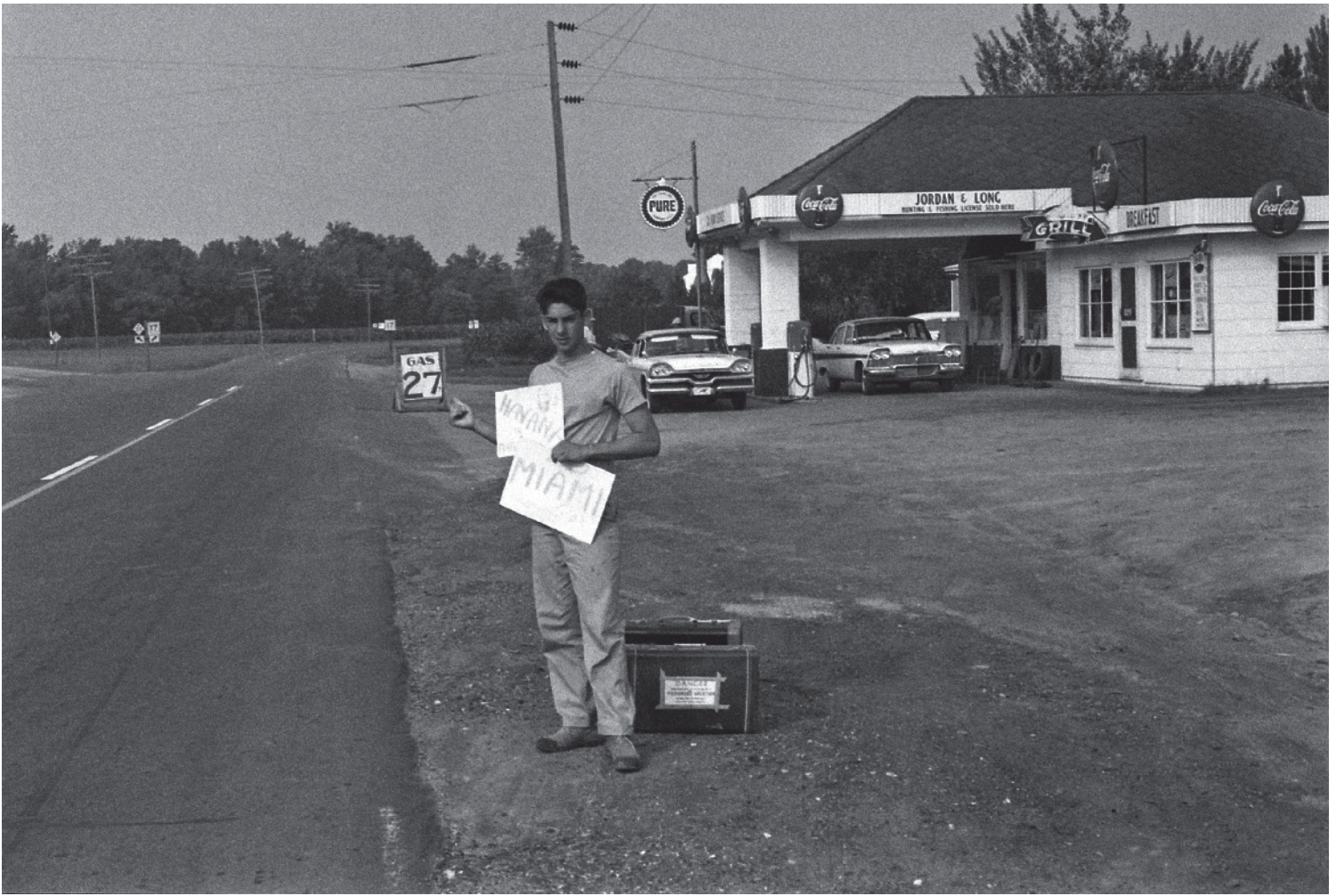


FIGURE 221

LAURENCE SALZMANN HITCHHIKING  
TO CUBA AT AGE 16, 1960.

account of its own self-incompleteness, the wonder of the self's flickering presence before itself.

I see this search for self-recognition especially in his self-portrait in the bathhouse in Rădăuți, in which he sights himself as one of the denizens of the brume—three others sitting on his shoulder—his own face emerging into clarity, his arms extended for the purpose of holding his camera but appearing as a wide embrace (**Figure 231**). The self in this self-portrait is, in other words, not just an “I.” It is also a “you” and a “we” and an “it.” The picture announces, simultaneously, “There I am,” “There you (Laurence) are,” “There it is (that me of me, being me),” and “There we are (the I, the me, the you, the it, all together).” Or to put it in Jewish terms, Salzmänn calls out to Salzmänn, “Where are you?”—a question that occurs repeatedly in the Jewish Bible, most famously in the Akedah, the story of the Binding of Isaac—and Salzmänn answers with a with a visual form of *הינני*, “Hineni,” “Here I am.” The photograph has similar qualities of the presence and presentness associated with these ancient words in the ancient stories: to say these

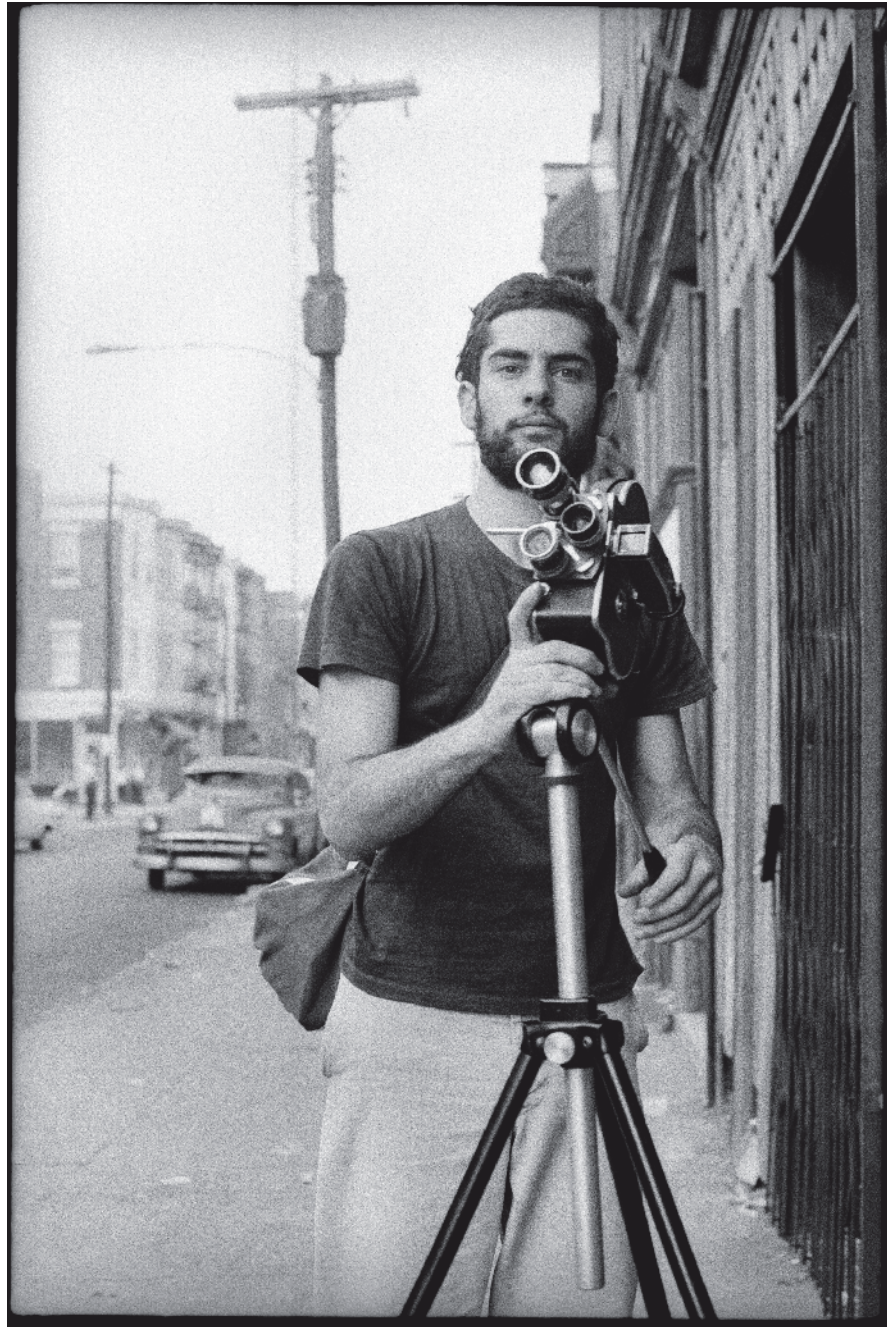


FIGURE 222

SIEGFRIED HALUS,  
LAURENCE SALZMANN WITH BOLEX CAMERA,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1966.

words is to pronounce oneself fully alert, attentive and available, open without judgment to one's whole self in the moment. In Salzmänn's visual *Hineni* is this kind of self-turning, as it occurs within the telluric questions of the outer world going on with its own business.

In the photographs of Salzmänn's wife Ayşe and his daughter Han, a similar dialectic appears. On the one hand, Salzmänn makes a record, an informational account of those he loves, in discrete times and discrete places. On the other hand, these pictures extend self-recognition





FIGURE 223

PRODUCTION STILL FROM THE FILM "ALFRED,"  
SHOWING LAURENCE SALZMANN, ALFRED CADE AND PETER BARTON,  
NEW YORK CITY, 1969.

to include those who dwell in the heart, those so deeply entwined in the self that their otherness feels to be (paradoxically) a free element operating within the self, and an extension of the self beyond the self's own terms. In his photographs with and of Ayşe, she appears variously as his lover (**Figure 228**), his soulmate (**Figure 229**), his muse (**Figure 232**), his companion (**Figure 230**). In his photographs of Han, she appears variously as his gift from the future (**Figure 233**), his tender heir (**Figure 234**), and in a particularly remarkable portrait, a child-teacher of a world better than the one we have (**Figure 235**). In this photograph, we see Han barefoot on a beach, a doll in each arm, leaning into head-to-head communion with a horse calf. There they are: the child and the animal nested together under the protection of a horizon defined by its dune plants, the sky unfurling itself in rhythm with the textures of sand, the whole of it as if an unexpected encounter with Isaiah's prophecy, ". . . and a child shall lead them."<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Isaiah 11:6.

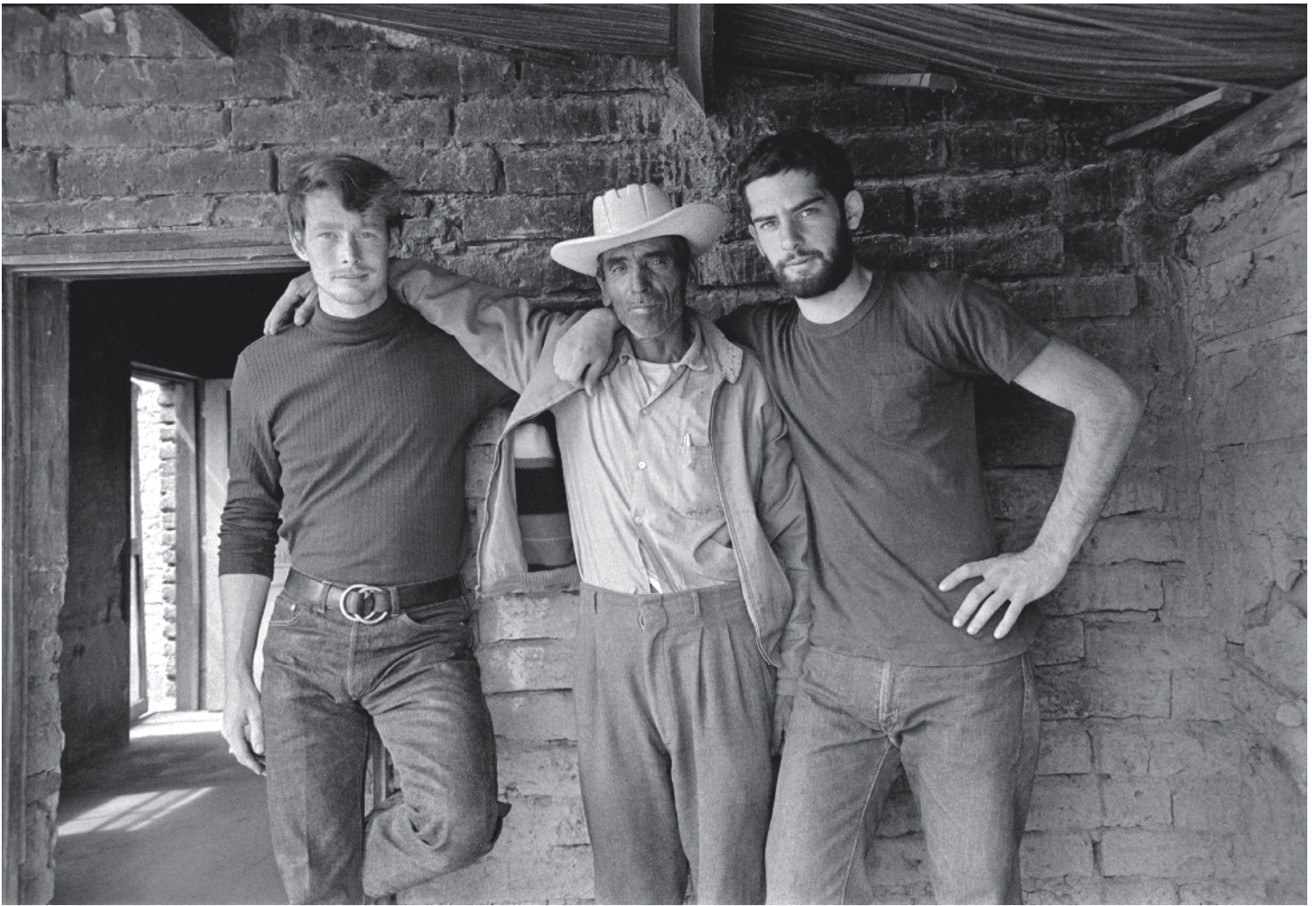


FIGURE 224

TOM PAYNE, LUIS ROBLES, AND LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
SAN LORENZO, JUÁREZ, MEXICO, 1967.

I myself have photographed Salzman over the years I have known him, including the last illustration in this book (**Figure 236**). I see something specific in this portrait of mine: the still-evolving artist touching the open palm of the other, lithe in body and spirit, with camera and dog (and pandemic mask), relaxed in the city at its early evening, laughing with the invisible things. And it seems right to include this picture also as a way of calling out to you, his audiences—by way of Salzman to call you forward toward the past, the future, memory, speculation, and the next sighting of the unfinished self in the unfinished world.



FIGURE 225

MARCIA OLSON AND LAURENCE SALZMANN.  
PRODUCTION STILL FROM THE FILM "HAPPINESS ET LE BONHEUR,"  
HOCKESSIN, DELAWARE, 1969.



FIGURE 226

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
HARRY SALZMANN ON HIS DEATH BED WITH HIS BROTHER JACOB SALZMANN,  
PHILADELPHIA, 1971.

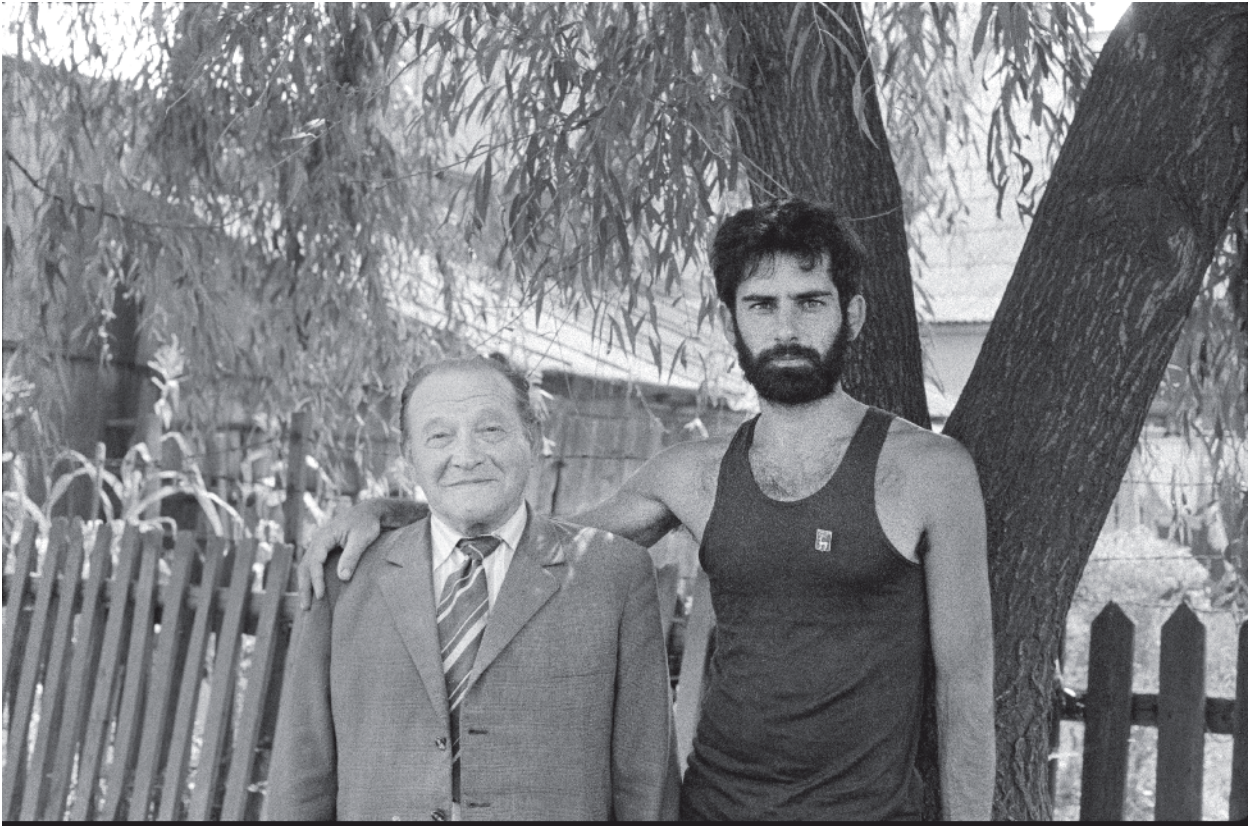


FIGURE 227

TOP: MR. MALIK AND LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1976.  
BOTTOM: AYŞE GÜRSAN-SALZMANN WITH ROZA BLUM,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, C. 1976.



FIGURE 228

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LAURENCE SALZMANN AND AYŞE GÜRSAN-SALZMANN  
IN THEIR ROOM AT HOTEL RĂDĂUȚI,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1975.



FIGURE 229

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AYŞE GÜRSAN-SALZMANN,  
GEMUSHLIK, TURKEY, N.D.



FIGURE 230

STEPHEN PERLOFF,  
LAURENCE AND AYŞE,  
POINANA SIBILUI, ROMANIA, 1983.





FIGURE 231

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
SELF-PORTRAIT,  
RĂDĂUȚI, ROMANIA, 1976.



FIGURE 232

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
AYŞE GÜRSAN-SALZMANN,  
ETILER, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984.

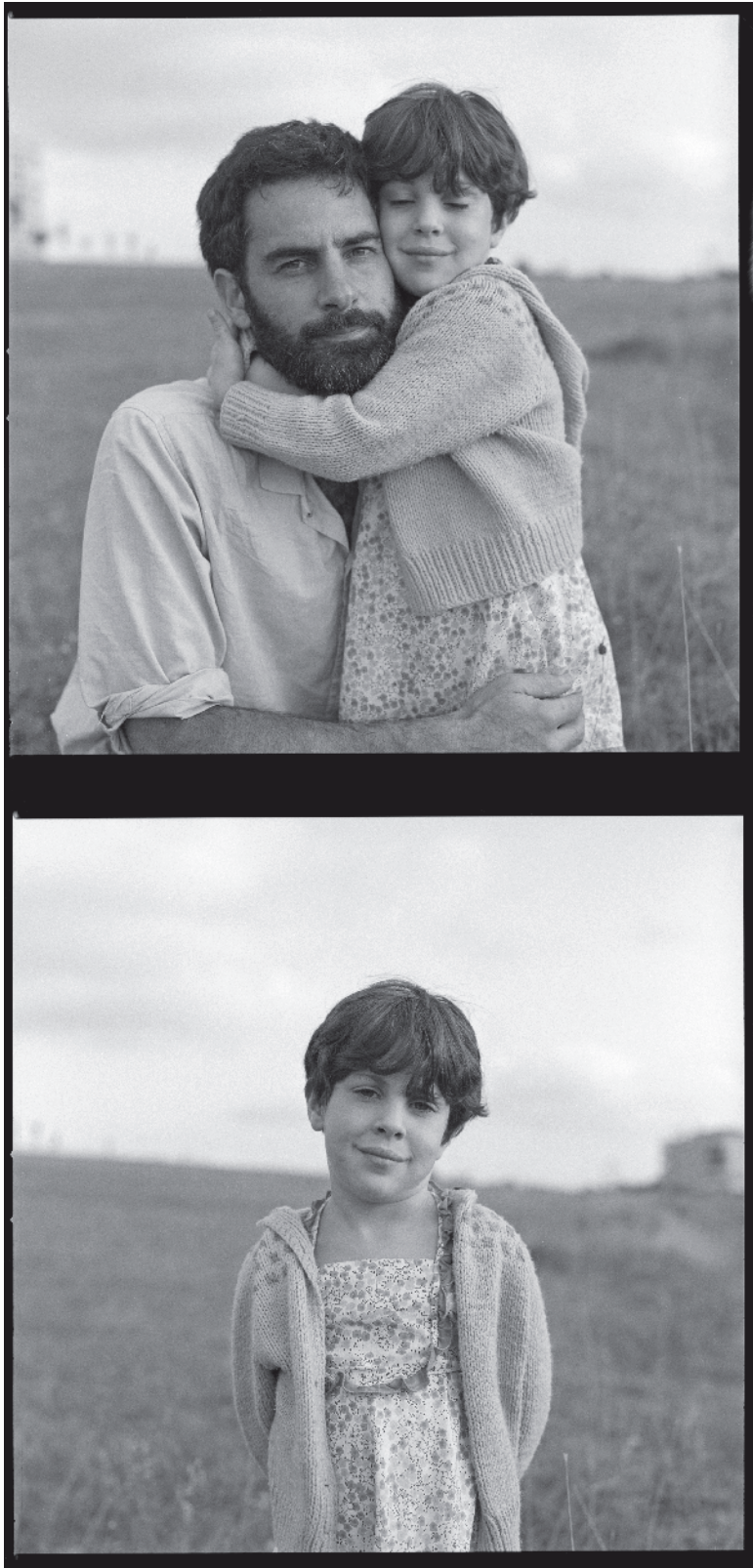


FIGURE 233

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
LAURENCE AND HAN,  
ETILER, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 1984.



FIGURE 234

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
HAN ARIEL SALZMANN,  
RITTENHOUSE SQUARE, PHILADELPHIA, 1994.



FIGURE 235

LAURENCE SALZMANN,  
HAN ARIEL SALZMANN,  
ASSATEAGUE STATE PARK, MARYLAND, 1983.



FIGURE 236

JASON FRANCISCO,  
LAURENCE SALZMANN (WITH THE GESTURING HAND OF W. KEITH MCMANUS),  
PHILADELPHIA, 2020.



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# APPENDICES

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# INTERVIEW WITH AYŞE GÜRSAN-SALZMANN

*In January 2020, I interviewed Dr. Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmann, an anthropologist and archaeologist at the University of Pennsylvania, the wife of Laurence Salzmann, and his collaborator on several works. I have known Ayşe for close to twenty years, and anecdotally picked up many things about Laurence's life and work, but I had never conducted a formal interview with her. Laurence was present for the interview, and in certain places makes contributions. What follows is an edited version of the conversation.*

**JASON FRANCISCO:** In a nutshell, the overall thesis of the book I'm writing about Laurence is that two streams of artistic activity run through his life's work, one preoccupied with what could be called historical consciousness, and the other one engaged with what could be called magical consciousness. These two streams of activity represent distinct artistic purposes and methods, and also different ways of being in the world as an artist, though they cross each other repeatedly over the decades, and both are generally present at any one time. And, so, to begin, I wonder whether this distinction makes sense to you as his partner and collaborator, and as a social scientist.

**AYŞE GÜRSAN-SALZMANN:** I would say that various combinations of documentary and magical themes are found in his work, but a great deal depends on the interpretation of the viewer. For me, for example, when I consider the concept of the magical. . . there's no magic in his work. I see his work as more of a romanticized aspect of the life that he sees in the people that he documents.

**JF:** And, how do you understand that romanticism?

**AGS:** Well, for example, in the early work that he has done in Mexico and that he is continuing to do in Peru and also in probably other countries in Central America. . . he chooses to deal with or photograph the lifestyles of peasants, farmers, those people who really are not part of the larger universe and well-to-do society people, and so forth. I think he feels he can learn from their lifestyle: not only how they make a living, but he really wants to capture the relationships of the members of the family and their closeness to one another. I think the close-knit family lifestyles that he finds in the lower level, I should say, the economically lower-level people seem to him to

**AGS:** (*continued*) be more real. And yes, there is a romanticism in that. There is a certain romanticism in his sense that love binds them all irrespective of what they give to each other materially or how well-off they are and so on. For Laurence, there is a certain love that binds them all, and not only love but also cooperation within the family, which I think he has a sensitivity for because of the way in which he was brought up. He was not really brought up that way. In the Western world today we don't really see people living cooperatively as they do in other parts of the world. Rural societies retain family obligations in aspects that I think are not part of the Western world, and Laurence finds them because he did not experience them during his childhood or young manhood.

**JF:** Are you suggesting a certain one-sidedness to Laurence's view of rural life, a positive picture that leaves out tension, struggle, conflict and so forth?

**AGS:** No, no, not at all. No, but he emphasizes the goodness of life and the basic tenets of people's feelings toward one another, irrespective of what return it might bring. It's a goodness that's just freely given and taken. And, it's the family that's the center of it, the most important factor in one's life. I think he missed that sense of family in his life. That's my understanding, and he tries to actually bring it out even when he's here with his own family. As he gets older it becomes more important to him to bring it out, but he wasn't brought up that way. And, he missed out.

**JF:** Okay, I'd like to come back to some personal questions a bit later, but I want ask you, in many of these projects that Laurence has done you were a direct collaborator: you conducted interviews, you were a kind of intermediary, sometimes a translator, working between Laurence and his subjects. And then of course writing texts for publications and films later. Could you describe your role in some of Laurence's projects—what you did, and what your particular contributions were to some of these projects?

**AGS:** Well, as you say, for one thing my role was to observe as an anthropologist. I have done this kind of work time and time again. I have had a sense of people. . . I get very interested in how people live and how they think. And one cannot really understand that only by observing. Obviously, you have to ask them questions, and those questions are always open-ended questions. And I listen well. So Laurence knew that. I was a collaborator in that sense, especially in Turkey, where my knowledge of the language was a great advantage, and culturally speaking, because I was brought up in Turkey, I would be able to understand some of the underlying aspects of what people were generally saying—I could interpret them. Maybe some of my interpretations weren't right; that of course happens. But we were in countries where I didn't speak the language,

too, for example in Mexico and in Romania, and even in some parts of Turkey. In these cases Laurence would be the translator. Laurence is a real linguist, I mean he speaks four languages and he could just jump from one to the other. In Romania, he would be speaking German sometimes, and sometimes he had some Hebrew which he also spoke in. And, he spoke Ladino in Turkey because his Turkish wasn't really so good at the beginning, but he could speak Ladino because he knew Spanish. So, where I couldn't really rely on my knowledge of language and my knowledge of cultural understanding to delve into what people were saying, I would then act as an anthropologist who could observe. Questions would come to my mind, but I couldn't really say them in the language we were speaking, and so I would turn to him and I'd say, "Can you ask this question?" And he would, and then he would translate to me what the person said. And, that way I would take my notes. It was a kind of a roundabout way of doing it, but a lot of the interviewing in Romania and also in Mexico were done that way. It's not as good as just speaking the language yourself as an interviewer, but at least we were able to do it.

**JF:** And, did it work the other way also, that Laurence would ask you questions to ask people?

**AGS:** Yes, that would happen too, but in most instances I would write the questions down, and then he would read them. It was a roundabout way of doing it, but it was the only way. He really depended on my, how should I say, on my understanding of the person and the situation, so that I would come up with relevant questions, or with responses to answers.

**JF:** Were there times when you worked separately—when you would go and do interviewing or research by yourselves and then come back and discuss?

**AGS:** Yes, but not as much. We generally did the interviews together, and then we would talk about them later on, and he would take notes. So, it was really a very long process.

**JF:** It sounds as if it was very mutual and very collaborative.

**AGS:** It was collaborative, yes, up to a point in time. Also remember we had a child, and she was growing up, and Laurence was going wherever he wanted to go. In some instances he was away for months, actually. I couldn't go, and also I was trying to finish my work, my degree, which took a long time to finish. Moving to Turkey prolonged it, though this was good for other reasons. When the Turkish project started, we decided we would be there as a family, and this would be a really wonderful occasion for our daughter to be part of Turkey and the Turkish language. And good for me as well, because I had left Turkey when I was 20 years old, and only went back for short periods of time, mostly living in the US.

**JF:** Would you say that working with Laurence changed the way that you practiced anthropology? Did working together with Laurence change your methods or your practices as an anthropologist?

**AGS:** No, it didn't change it. It's not that it changed it, rather I just learned a lot more about how to proceed with my questions and how to formulate better questions depending on the situation that we were in or the culture. Say for example when we were in Romania, in Rădăuți, specifically, it was a small town or a village—partly a village and partly a small town. Jewish families lived there who had come back from camps, and had settled and found their place, created home, businesses, recreated the lives that they had lived up until being put in the camp. It was a very different life they came back to—nothing, no work. . . they were non-people, non-persons, so to speak. We knew their names, but they had no acknowledgment by the society in which they planted themselves. They were survivors. How could they continue living in the same place, a few years after they had been taken, and then, fortunately survived, and come back? —But they did. They did, but they were nobodies. How they could bear that. . . I was always amazed at the way in which they went on with their lives.

**JF:** The way they could bear the stigma of being survivors. . .

**AGS:** No, it's not a stigma. It's a burden, I looked at it as a burden. I really wanted to talk to these people and to understand. Obviously, they had come back to a place that they were familiar with, but everything was taken away from them, everything. And they were. . . yes, they were really looked down upon. They were a minority, although maybe one was the owner of a beer factory, and another one was the daughter of a very well-to-do industrialist, etcetera, etcetera. And, these people had had names, these people had had businesses, and a certain lifestyle. It was totally erased from them.

**JF:** In Rădăuți, did you spend time talking with Romanians, non-Jews?

**AGS:** Yes, of course.

**JF:** And did you get a sense of how the Jewish community was perceived. . .

**AGS:** That part I cannot really tell you, I don't know that much about that, but they were always looked upon as Jews. They weren't part of the Romanian society. Or, at least that's how I felt. You know, they had their little bathhouse, they had their synagogue although, they lived among

the rest of them, but they wouldn't—for example, they wouldn't participate in the weekly market as vendors, let's say. The Jews were more urban people, and they had a different status.

**JF:** Can you say what you mean by that, a different status?

**AGS:** Status in the sense that they were not peasants. They never were peasants. Actually, also in Turkey, Jews were not peasants, because they were not allowed to own land, which meant then they had to be mediators—they owned businesses in which they bought the agricultural products and sold them with a good profit, but they weren't producers. So, they were more adept at living a kind of higher lifestyle, more educated or maybe knowing more about the business aspects of life, and urban life. So, I think yes, and in Romania, I think it was in a way below them to become vendors. In these markets they would buy things but they would not really sell things. The only things that were bought and sold there anyway were actually foodstuffs—vegetables, chickens, meat, maybe some pork—and clothing, traditional clothing and so on.

**LAURENCE SALZMANN:** I'm going to just interrupt. Ayşe, they were tradespeople, you know shoemakers, tailors, furriers, candlestick makers, but they weren't agriculturalists.

**AGS:** Yes!

**LS:** Agriculturalists bought their products. And actually, one guy did have some sheep, there was a Jewish man who had sheep.

**AGS:** Well, Laurence, very few people..

**LS:** But traditionally the Jews weren't agricultural producers. They were the millers, the whiskey makers, you know, all these things that served the peasants, provided them with services.

**AGS:** Yes, but they were beyond, socially as well as economically as well as craft-wise, they were craftspeople, yes there were a lot of Romanian craftspeople, too, obviously. But, the Jews were of a different social and economic level.

**JF:** I want to ask you, Ayşe, about Laurence's working method, how he managed to be both a participant and an observer, how he came close and kept a certain distance at the same time. It's a very delicate balance, right?

**AGS:** Yes, it is very delicate and it's very difficult to do. I think it comes very naturally to him. That's quite amazing. When he's working, his face changes, I've watched that.

**JF:** Can you describe that?

**AGS:** He becomes *them*, in a way, even though he's far away. I mean this person who died was not his brother, okay? But it's death, it's a sad event, obviously, and the wife and the sister and the brother, who were all attending this death scene were so emotionally wrecked and in addition to the crying, you could feel that scene and he got into that. He gets into such scenes, actually. He doesn't speak much, he just constantly continues, and he becomes. . . once he's in those situations, nobody questions him because he moves into them.

**JF:** Many photographers, in such a situation, would introduce awkwardness into the room. So, would you say that Laurence somehow made himself invisible?

**AGS:** Yes.

**JF:** Or did he *add* something, some quality of empathy? I mean, a few moments ago you said, "Laurence makes himself known."

**AGS:** Yes.

**JF:** So, would you say he made himself invisible, or that he somehow made his presence a contribution to the scene, the moment, the situation—that he added some empathy or he added something to that moment?

**AGS:** You may be able to say that yes he did add some empathy to the situation, but what I'm trying to say is that he was part of it, but that being a part of it did not really interfere with people's natural emotional response to the situation. And, in very difficult moments, he's able to create, actually.

**JF:** Not just receive but create?

**AGS:** Right.

**JF:** Last month I went through the Rădăuți negatives and I think I know exactly the scene you're

talking about. I went through the negatives frame by frame, something I don't think Laurence has done for a very long time. And I saw pictures that I don't think have ever been printed, some of them Keith has since scanned [W. Keith McManus, Laurence Salzman's technical assistant]. There is one sequence of photographs in which there's a corpse in a shroud, in a kittel, lying on the ground in what looks like a living room of somebody's house.

**AGS:** Well, that's probably what I'm talking about.

**JF:** And there's a woman standing above the corpse, grieving, seemingly in the depths of despair. Laurence is standing, it seems, on the other side of the corpse, but he is photographing the body and the woman in the space. He's taller than her, so it seems that we're looking down on the scene, and it seems that there's no one else in the room. Maybe there is, but it seems that there isn't. And, it's a remarkable series of photographs, precisely for this reason—because we, the viewers, seem to be alone with her in this room, in this intense moment of her grief. To be able to make photographs that allow this sense of presence is very unusual.

**AGS:** Yes, he becomes one of them, one with the scene, and people are no longer able to question why this person is there. He kind of puts himself in there and he's there.

**JF:** Well, on the other hand, hasn't the question of his presence already been answered? He's going to be there, because he's the photographer. . .

**AGS:** But he wasn't invited. He doesn't wait to be invited.

**JF:** He wasn't invited or uninvited?

**AGS:** Yes, right.

**LS:** But Ayşe, they knew me.

**JF:** That's what I mean—if they knew him, wasn't it natural that he would go?

**AGS:** That's it, yes. I see this all the time, actually, in other places, in other types of work, for example the work that he does in Mexico.

**JF:** Do you mean the Mexican pictures that you were a part of, or other, later photographs?

**AGS:** Other ones—I wasn't really a part of the long-term Mexican projects, so I couldn't really tell you that. *Luis' Family* and all those are really before me, but we worked together in Mexico with the market people. You didn't really get to know those people too well, except you knew how the economy worked and how women contributed to it. But now I'm not certain if we did any work together in Mexico. But we did work together in Cuba, and. . . this leads to another thing Laurence is not—he does not actually come up with a project before he gets to go somewhere. He has a very general outline of what he might like to do—it was like this in Cuba. He doesn't write anything down really in any detail, or maybe it's in the back of his mind, but he doesn't talk about it. Then, once he gets somewhere, he gets a sense of what it is that he really would like to deal with, what he wants to really do.

**JF:** So, you mean there's an improvisational quality?

**AGS:** It is, it is improvisation. . . But, one leads to the next, too. Yes, I had no idea when he went to Cuba, and he had no idea that there were a young group of people who are being trained to become. . .

**LS:** Wrestlers.

**AGS:** Wrestlers! Yes, wrestlers, they were wrestling. We're talking about an after-school activity, like from 8-year-olds to 17-year-olds. After school, there's nothing to do, so they set up this situation, the city or the community set up this situation where they could go and learn wrestling? Now, why did Laurence go there instead of going to the professional wrestlers?

**JF:** Good question.

**AGS:** I know what it is. Later on it came to my mind—doing it that way, he would be able to understand what makes a professional wrestler. Not only do they get the training, but they learn to understand the value of becoming a professional wrestler, who compete in international wrestling events, which makes them become important people—especially when they win the gold medal, which they did. So, Laurence was able to see how they train with great enthusiasm to become someone known in their community. I don't know if he had that in the back of his mind, but as we talk about it, it becomes more ingrained. And then that led to the dancers. And so also there is another aspect to this—it's really complicated—he began to observe bodies in motion. And that was a whole new vision, and a new way of working. Here are those kids, jumping up and down, running up the steps, and Laurence also is running, turning around, continuously moving,



taking these pictures. And then, as you saw on the wall, there are the paintings by the Cuban artist, Luis. Luis probably had never been there or maybe only a few times he had been there. It really captured his imagination and his creativity, and that was an idea Laurence had—to bring him there.

**JF:** So, there's a quality of thinking on his feet and responding to things and opportunities that arise without knowing that they're coming.

**AGS:** Yes.

**JF:** . . . And being able to recognize them for what they are when they do come.

**AGS:** Exactly. And, these kids—there's another aspect to this, these kids didn't even have uniforms. They came from poor families, because everybody's poor in Cuba.

**LS:** They didn't have shoes.

**AGS:** For uniforms they were wearing their underwear or something else that they were able to find, which they wrapped around their bodies. It was incredible, but they were so emotionally and energetically high. And as a photographer, to catch that you have to be on your feet and you have to feel that kind of emotive thing that's coming out. But then there are two other issues here. One reason why he chooses the rural people in some instances is because it's easier to work with them.

**JF:** Why is it easier?

**AGS:** It's easier to work—they don't question you as much as an urban person would question, "What are you doing?" and "Why do I have to tell you this?" With rural people, it's more natural, more accepted.

**JF:** And would you say that was true in Cuba?

**AGS:** Yes in Cuba, too. I mean, in Cuba everybody's the same, actually. There is no difference between rural and urban.

**LS:** Well, the poverty level. . .

**AGS:** I mean, everybody has the same food, everybody has the same clothing. All the doors and

**AGS:** (*continued*) the windows are open to the world; nobody is going to steal from you because everybody has nothing to begin with. But of course everybody has the music, and everybody knows how to play it, almost everybody. And, everybody has that amazing sense of fun and happiness when they're with the music, when the music starts. I saw a lot of 70-, 80-, or even over 80-year-old women dancing by themselves in this little dance place, which is open to everyone. Laurence also wanted to, or I think I asked him to go to a musician's house, a man who used to play in the courtyard of a building, which is completely open to people—anyone can pass through it and on the way to some other place. And this man would just play there, and so beautifully. It's really hard to describe. I said to Laurence, can we ask him to go to his house? And maybe you could record some of his music in his home—which we did, and that was really a wonderful thing. We still have the recording.

**JF:** To go a bit deeper into something you're raising, one of the things I've noticed about photography of poor people in developing countries, especially when it's done by people coming from developed countries, is that it's easy to fall into a way of looking in which the poor are either ennobled in their poverty, or the reverse, in which they're sort of reduced to some aspect of squalor and disadvantage.

**AGS:** Yes, I know.

**JF:** And, there's a tendency for photographers to pull their pictures this way or that way. I would say that there's even maybe a burden on photographers to understand the dynamics of how this kind of thing is liable to happen when they go into places where there is a lot of poverty and need. I wonder whether you have thoughts about this issue as Laurence negotiated it in, say, Cuba or in Mexico or even in Romania.

**AGS:** No, I think what he does or what he did in situations where I was there—I can only speak about that, and you can see it in his photographs too, in places where I wasn't there—he is not really trying to bring out the sadness of poverty.

**LS:** What about *Luis' Family* and the early Mexican projects? That work has a kind of sadness.

**AGS:** Yes, but that's not why you were doing it. Is that why you were doing it?

**LS:** No.

**AGS:** That's what I'm trying to say, he didn't do it to bring out the sadness. It's not the nobility of poverty. Or, no, actually there is a nobility of poverty to the Cuban dancers—okay, so they don't have the right clothing, they don't have the right shoes, they don't have this, that, and so forth, it's all homemade. And that's what makes it so noble, anyway. It's the dance that counts, it's their bodies, the way they moved that counts. And, that's what comes out in the work. One other thing I want to mention here: I think one of the reasons he deals with the lower economic levels of the societies is that they're easier to get into because they're more accepting people from different parts of the world. In fact, they get very curious about you. But Laurence always wants to leave something, to give something back. That's the other thing that he has done.

**JF:** I know also that his giving back has had a lot of repercussions and ripple effects over time.

**AGS:** Well, yes, for example with a lot of the Mexican workers here in Philadelphia who came from Puebla. Most of them are from Puebla, and most of them are related. Laurence hired them, paid them decent wages, has had drinks with them. We've been to their houses because we were invited to go to their houses. For some of them, we're talking about 20, 15 years that some of them have worked on and off for Laurence. We had a dinner party in a restaurant and you could see that they've gone up in life. It's not that this is all Laurence's contribution, but you have to give someone a chance, and that's what he did. I think that this in itself is a very important issue when he deals with Mexicans, Colombians, Guatemalans and so on who do housework, construction and so on. First of all, he speaks with them. He speaks Spanish with them, and he wants to understand who they are.

**JF:** This is interesting, because if you look at Laurence's books, *Écheleganas* for example or the Cuban work, you don't see Laurence in the picture very much. You don't really learn the context in which Laurence himself is functioning in Xonacatla or in Tonalapa or these other places in Puebla. You aren't presented with the conditions that made it possible for Laurence to appear in these places and do the kind of work that he's doing. You don't understand the Philadelphia side of the story—although, there's a new project that might explore that. Laurence's presence in his own work is not really described very forthrightly. He wants the work to be about other people. He wants it to be about the people who live in those places, not about himself.

**AGS:** You're saying that it doesn't come through.

**JF:** I'm saying that it's not a topic of the work. It's in the background. I myself know something about it, because I know Laurence. You know about it, because you're married to Laurence.

**JF:** *(continued)* But it's not something that a reader of his books is asked to think about or to understand, which is interesting. Laurence himself remains, in a sense, outside the frame, which I see as an artistic choice that Laurence makes. It's not that he's obligated to put himself or his story in the frame—it's not required, and he's made the decision for artistic reasons, or conceptual reasons. But then you're right, and it's very interesting that there are whole communities of people in Philadelphia that owe a lot to Laurence. I know there are many Romanian people here in Philadelphia who are here, and wouldn't be here if it wasn't for some connection to Laurence. This is the invisible backstory to a lot of his work. And he's the one who keeps the backstory out of sight, out of the work itself.

**AGS:** And when they came here, they had quite a bit of help from Laurence. Yes, there is this dimension of giving back.

**JF:** Right, giving back, or you could see it not just as giving but as investing, as community investment that's bigger than the work itself. It transcends the projects themselves. And as I say, the projects don't address this. I tend to see this as part of Laurence's ethical integrity, an expression of humility. He shows the world his vision of what it means to be committed to others—often others with a capital “O,” people made other by the dominant society—but he keeps his work for others anonymous.

**AGS:** He also keeps in touch with people, with all these characters. And, he communicates with them. When the project is finished and over, the connections remain and keep going. He communicates by email, by mail, telephone. Laurence, what was her name, the woman in Peru?

**LS:** Yolanda.

**AGS:** Yolanda, who worked with him writing some of the captions in Quechua and then also in English for these very abstract photographs, which would be very difficult to envision for an outsider. [Note: Yolanda Carbajal Zuniga, Laurence Salzmänn's collaborator in Peru.] He had that idea of making it more culturally understandable, at least through her captions, and she spent a lot of time doing these things. And, then wouldn't it be nice to have her come here and maybe make some connections? She's an archaeologist, actually, a good archaeologist. She's very experienced, too. So she came, and it was nice that she was able to come, and Laurence is going to invite her again—maybe, I don't know. But, he keeps in touch with their lives and how they get along and how they can work together. . .

**JF:** Sometimes I notice a tendency, when it comes to interpreting photographs, especially documentary photographs, to make the biography of the photographer the “real” story of the work, or an account of the photographer’s activities behind the scenes of the pictures themselves.

**AGS:** Yes, I understand.

**JF:** I mean as if to say that the photographs aren’t enough on their own, even that they aren’t to be trusted, rather demand to be positioned or contextualized within a greater account of a social transaction they were part of, how they overtly or silently reflect the power relationships that can be said to exist between the photographer and his or her subjects. Laurence has consciously chosen to resist a sense of obligation to including this kind of metanarrative about himself. He’s consciously decided not to make the work about Laurence Salzmann in Mexico, for example. Rather, it’s about these people in this place in Mexico. As I said before, the background story is not part of the story.

**AGS:** No, it’s not. He’s never done that. The story is told by the pictures. That’s it, and the pictures tell the story, but in the abstract pictures the stories are not easy to figure out. The abstracts are difficult, but he sees them. That’s his visualization of the physical environment, without people as such.

**JF:** You’re turning to a new thread that I want to ask you questions about, the abstract work, but before we go there, I’d like to finish with one thing that I’m thinking about—your role in the creation of certain projects after the fieldwork is over. For example, I’m interested in your role in choosing photographs, sequencing photographs, writing texts, conceptualizing what the work could become. Can you describe something of your role in the creation of the work as it came to exist, say in book form, or film or in exhibition form?

**AGS:** Well, it’s generally Laurence’s decision as to how to use the work. On the exhibit level I haven’t been of much help, except I guess in Peru. We kind of put that show together, and I did do some work of curating an exhibit together with him—very quickly, actually. And, that was very successful, because the whole thing was done in a week and the doors opened—it was in the Gallery of the Fine Arts Institute in Cusco. And, people just rushed in. Nobody was even invited, it was just announced, and people rushed in, which was a wonderful thing. It was also another example of giving back, because he was on a Fulbright when he went to Peru, and not too many people immediately show the fruits of their labor, but he did. And also, he gave away the photographs.

**AGS:** *(continued)* The writing takes a bit longer, obviously, for people who are not photographers, but anyway he did this exhibition immediately, and it created a really nice feeling. And then you know he also put in time learning Quechua, the indigenous language. I don't think he is continuing with that, I mean improving on that. Quechua is a hard one. But as far as the conceptualizing afterward, you know, he makes the decisions. He thinks "well, I'd like to make this into an exhibit, I'd like to make a book out of that one, and also give talks"—all of these things. As far as the writing goes, I've done a lot of writing for the Turkish work, and also in the case of Romania. There it was in the form of a book and articles, like I think I edited the film, in part, on Turkey, and I chose photographs for the Turkish book.

**JF:** I'm not sure I follow. Were you choosing the photographs to include in the books on Romania and Turkey, or did Laurence bring you a set of pictures to work with?

**AGS:** Generally, he did it, but I was also part of it.

**JF:** Were there cases in which you made Laurence understand his own pictures in a way that he didn't seem to understand them previously? Cases in which you said to him, "This is why this is an important picture. . ."? I ask because I know from being a photographer myself, that it's often very hard for photographers to see their own work. Or, they see it in a partial way, but, not with the kind of breadth that other people have.

**AGS:** Yes. To me I did help him, and he seemed to think so as well. Actually, Han also worked with him a little bit, and not only as a translator, because her Turkish is very good, better than mine I have to say—she keeps up with the changes in the language [Han Salzmann Masinovsky, daughter of Ayşe and Laurence]. Also I took her with me to Romania, she was about 3–4 years old the time, and she contributed to the families' acceptance of Laurence. We would take her everywhere. If we went to a school where he wanted to capture students in elementary school, Han would go with us, and then during the break Han would play with the children. And, this child who looked absolutely nothing like the Romanian children stood out in a way, you know.

**LS:** This was with the shepherds.

**AGS:** . . . I mean, with curly hair, blondish curly hair, and big green eyes, and very white skin, but very energetic, and she didn't understand a word of Romanian, but the way children do, they can do a lot of communication without speaking.

**LS:** She actually learned Romanian.

**AGS:** Well, she learned a little bit, but at the beginning, you know, we found her sitting on the ground playing with the kids. What a great experience for Han, and also it added to our presence there, and, our acceptance there. And it was a great thing—I mean, there was no place to take a shower or wash, so we would fill the big basin with heated water in the yard, and then I would wash her there. And now, when I'm thinking about these things, I'm asking myself: why was I doing all that?

**JF:** And, how do you answer yourself?

**AGS:** It was an excitement. And, I didn't really question it, because I could have said, "Look, I'm going to start finishing the dissertation and looking for jobs." I didn't do that.

**JF:** Having talked to you about this a little bit in the past, it seems like this period with the shepherds in Romania was a particularly. . .

**AGS:** He's also very persuasive.

**JF:** Yes, you've also mentioned this. To me, it seems that time of the shepherds project was one of the most memorable periods of family life, when the three of you were in Romania together.

**AGS:** I actually suggested that project, two years after the Romanian-Jewish project ended. Within a two-year period, I said to Laurence, "Well, now you know all about the Jews of Rădăuți; what do you know about Romanians?" We were familiar with the pastoralists and so on in Romania—we had been around and pictures had been taken and all that stuff. I said, "Laurence, it's also so beautiful, it's like a paradise on Earth. And they have a whole different lifestyle and the economy and their landscape. Maybe you should really try to get another grant, huh?" So I started writing the grant.

**LS:** She wrote the grant for IREX. You know about IREX?

**JF:** I know about them.

**AGS:** I also wrote his papers, two papers that he hadn't written to graduate.

**LS:** Oh yeah, Ayşe is actually able to—or was able to—she can just go and pick out a book from the shelf, pick out that book and write a paper, whereas somebody else, like me, could take forever.

**AGS:** Well, so that was part of it. That was at the very beginning, before the projects began.

**LS:** Well, that was when I finished my thesis.

**AGS:** No, your thesis was actually your film.

**LS:** Well, the thesis was a film and a written thesis.

**AGS:** But, in order to finish, he had to finish the unfinished papers for courses. And one of them was biological anthropology.

**LS:** Physical anthropology.

**AGS:** Physical? It's called biological anthropology, now. It's a much wider reel than just physical. So, the writing part came before and after.

**JF:** This is now the final phase of our interview, although, there are many threads to continue with. I want to ask you, at some point, about the big changes in Laurence's work. Laurence's projects have increasingly focused on abstraction, and I want to ask your opinions about that. But, most of all I want to ask you a question that's a bit hard to frame. . . What has it been like to share your life with a person who is artistically driven, whose life has been powered by these artistic ambitions? That's a very particular kind of marriage, a particular kind of life path together. As you know I'm an artist too, so I know something about the challenges of this. But I'm interested in some reflections you might have about this question.

**AGS:** Hard, especially because I am a very communicative person, and he's not verbal. He's visual. That's one thing. And so it has been hard, but also he has a certain. . . he seemed to think that he would continue his lifestyle that he had before we got together, which certainly he couldn't. He tried to, and it didn't work, and it created a great deal of heartache on both parts. But, I am the kind of person who. . . I'm a strong person in terms of my ability to be on my own, emotionally as well as physically, but it's getting to be harder and harder now, because I am not physically as active as I used to be. But there were many, many months and many years where it was a very hard life to continue together. But I was convinced that I could continue this without really



breaking it. It could have been broken years ago. So, it is very difficult, and was very difficult, but I was able to make it happen. First of all, I believe in a family, and a family has to be together—no matter what. And so, it's together, although in some ways it's not really all that together. We found ways of managing. I wanted to continue as a family. I didn't want to break it up. I could easily have. He could easily have. But, somehow we met each other again at that point.

**JF:** Well, I was asking not so much about the marriage as a marriage, but about the way that Laurence's work and career have functioned as an element in your partnership.

**AGS:** Well, it was all that, and nothing more. Except, as I told you, he was very clever, is very clever in many respects. I have to say that. He had an enormous sense of how to take care of a family financially, and also, financially how to make it work as a photographer, how to continue as a photographer. And yes, he did that from the very beginning. And so, when I said I want to have my own place, etcetera, he said, fine, let's do it. And it is a good solution for both of us. So he's on his own. He's going to Peru in two weeks or something, I don't know, or three weeks. But I am very concerned about that, because of his health. He doesn't take that very seriously, it seems, and Peru is, I don't know, 5,000 miles away or something. It's not like being right next to the University of Pennsylvania, Penn Medicine. All of that he has to take into account, and I have said it more than once. But be that as it may, you say it and you cannot say anymore. Once I went with him, and I myself got sick. . . And Cusco, where he was, Cusco is at 10,000 feet? This guy is a heart patient—Laurence is a heart patient. We're talking about reality. When I was there, I started getting so dizzy, and I was throwing up. I don't know how he can do this, and he may not be able to do it. Take that in mind when you make these decisions. Sometimes you just cannot do it or shouldn't do it. Sure, he may have friends there, and he may have hospitals there. But you are 5,000 miles away, and the medicine here is very different and much, much, much better. You have your own doctors here. You're about three minutes away from the hospital, which actually saved you from the heart attack you had. And another person who saved you was Keith, who called me when Laurence had that heart attack, which wasn't just a heart attack. No, his heart actually stopped.

**LS:** It's not a heart attack; it is cardiac arrest.

**AGS:** It is cardiac arrest, and when he called me, I rushed to the gallery. And, the gallery is how close? You know how close it is—and by that time, actually, the ambulance, the firefighters had already come. He was on the floor lying, and his heart had stopped. Had they not brought with them the defibrillator, and had they not known how to use it, it would have been over. It only takes a few minutes to lose a person. They did this procedure four times until his heart began, okay?

**AGS:** *(continued)* None of these things can be immediately done in the wilds of Peru, no matter how close you are to a hospital. I hope it never happens again, but it was. . . somebody said it, who was it? I can't remember. Somebody said, "You're the only Jew who came back from the dead." I don't remember who it was, maybe it was you.

**JF:** Could have been me, I don't know.

**AGS:** So, you could be the Messiah, Lorenzo. I feel very strongly about that. But, he will not listen, and that's it. So, are we over?

**JF:** Okay, yes.

**LS:** That was a good interview, I think. There's a lot of material there.



# LAURENCE SALZMANN

## CHRONOLOGY

### **JANUARY 4, 1944 |**

Laurence Salzmänn is born in Philadelphia at Albert Einstein Hospital to Dr. Harry Salzmänn, a surgeon, and Eunice Salzmänn (née Chaiken). Salzmänn grows up on Pine Street in central Philadelphia, along with his two siblings, Jacob and Andrea.

### **1948 |**

Salzmänn's parents drive to Mexico, returning with gifts and stories that seed his lifelong interest in the country, and his desire to learn Spanish.

### **1949–1955 |**

Though his family has means, Salzmänn attends Thaddeus Stevens public school at 13th and Spring Garden Streets, the same school his mother had attended in the 1920s. Salzmänn's social consciousness begins to take shape, initially around the complications of race. He experiences the school's rapid demographic shift—from mostly white school to one in which he is the only non-Black student. For the 6th grade he transfers to a small new public school, Albert Greenfield School, where his class has only eight students, all but one white. At home, Salzmänn is raised by his mother and equally by the family's African American nanny, Zenora Carter. Salzmänn's political consciousness takes shape around the Korean War, a topic of family conversation, and Adlai Stevenson's first presidential challenge to Dwight Eisenhower. Salzmänn makes a portrait of Stevenson with a Kodak Brownie Hawkeye he had received as a birthday present. His civic consciousness forms as he leads a group of children petitioning the city of Philadelphia to build a playground on the site of a coal yard at 25th and Pine, an idea that came to fruition thirty years later.

### **1956 |**

Salzmänn becomes an avid stamp collector, a formative experience of childhood, creating an interest in history and travel, and pen pals in multiple countries. With his father's assistance, he sets up a darkroom in the basement of the family house. His earliest photographic work is socially oriented: he makes and gives back portraits of friends.

### **1956–1958 |**

Salzmänn attends Henry C. Lea Junior High School in West Philadelphia. He is nearly expelled for running an illegal business selling firecrackers.

## **1957 |**

Salzmann celebrates his bar mitzvah at Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia. As a gift he receives his first 35mm camera, a Kodak Pony 135. Reuben Goldberg, chief photographer of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology from 1937 to 1960 and friend of Salzmann's father, teaches him how to use the camera and make prints. In the fall of 1957, Salzmann enters Central High School in Philadelphia. As an athlete, he encounters anti-Semitism from other students, especially of Ukrainian and Latvian origin. He works as a delivery boy in a flower shop and buys himself an Asahi Pentax 35mm camera, which becomes his main camera for many years. In the summer he works as a camper-waiter at Camp Sun Mountain in the Poconos, assisting the camp photographer in his darkroom.

## **1960 |**

Salzmann hitchhikes from Philadelphia to Miami and eventually makes his way to Cuba in order to learn Spanish. He joins a group of visiting Marxist students, studies Spanish, participates in events celebrating the first anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, and attends a meeting with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

## **1961-1964 |**

Salzmann takes a series of trips to Mexico, Central and South America, and Europe. He hitchhikes extensively and obtains US seaman's papers. In April 1961, he gets a job on a German refrigerator ship leaving Panama for Brooklyn; he works as the ship's helmsman as the boat passes Cuba during the Bay of Pigs invasion. He travels to Colombia—to be greeted by rifle-bearing barefoot revolutionaries—and makes his way to Maracaibo, Venezuela, and later to Jamaica and Haiti. In Europe, he hitchhikes between Sweden and Yugoslavia, doing odd jobs in vineyards and restaurants, eventually encamping in Paris, where he attends classes at the Sorbonne and works as a tour guide at the Louvre.

## **1961 |**

Salzmann graduates from Central High School in Philadelphia, and in the fall begins studies at Temple University.

## **1962 |**

Salzmann opens a coffee house in the basement of his family home, calling it "Tripot des Trois Femmes" ("Gambling Den of the Three Women"), later calling it "Blue Flower" after the German Romantic movement.

## **1964 |**

Salzmann is hired by Temple University archaeologist Dr. Jacob W. Gruber to photograph at Gruber's most extensive excavation of the 1960s, the Mohr Site, a former Susquehannock Indian village near Bainbridge, Pennsylvania. Salzmann makes hundreds of 4 × 5 negatives of burial sites, still in the collection of Temple University.

## **1965 |**

Salzmann makes a film-and-photographic study of horse wagons still plying the streets of Philadelphia, focusing on one African American driver. "The Ragman" is Salzmann's first visual work. The film's soundtrack is by the blues musician Jerry Ricks. In the spring, Salzmann graduates from Temple University with a B.A. in German and a double minor in history and anthropology. To protest the escalating war in Vietnam, Salzmann stages a walkout during the commencement ceremony, whose speaker is Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

## **1966 |**

To avoid the military draft that would force him into the US war in Vietnam, Salzmann applies to the Peace Corps. Salzmann is initially assigned to a group training for service in the Dominican Republic, but declines in protest against US military intervention in the 1965 Dominican Civil War. Salzmann is redirected to service in Uruguay, where he undergoes an intense two-month training in Spanish at Ithaca College. At the end of the training period, he is deselected. He protests, and is assigned to train for service in Chile at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. At the end of that training period, he is deselected for the second time, and told he is "unamenable to authority." The two Peace Corps deselections help him to obtain a 1-Y draft deferment. He leaves his effort to join the Peace Corps fluent in Spanish and with contacts that will provide artistic initiatives for the next several years, in Mexico and New York City.

## **1966-1968 |**

Salzmann returns to Philadelphia, and sets up a darkroom on the fourth floor at his family's home to print the photographs made in Juárez, Mexico. To support himself, he works as a substitute teacher in the Philadelphia public schools. He sells his first photographs to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A church magazine hires him to return to Mexico to further the documentary work he started on as a Peace Corps trainee, the project which becomes *The Family of Luis*.

## **1968-1970 |**

Salzmann moves to New York. By way of a contact from the Peace Corps, St. Luke's Hospital hires him as a research assistant in a participant-observation study in a single room occupancy (SRO) hotel on West 95th Street. Salzmann expands his job to include photography and film work. Salzmann takes evening classes in sociology at the New School for Social Research. With another Peace Corps friend, Peter Barton, Salzmann receives a grant from the American Film Institute to complete the film *Eddie*, on one of the SRO residents. Salzmann becomes friends with photographers Danny Lyon and Arthur Tress.

## **1970 |**

Salzmann moves back to Philadelphia and takes a job as a filmmaker with Concept Films, which has a contract to make films about drug addiction for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, as well as promotional films for the Democratic Party. Salzmann is asked to film Hubert Humphrey, whom he once dramatically protested. Salzmann's film *Sag*, about heroin addiction, wins a silver medal at the Venice Film Festival. Salzmann begins work on the photographic work that becomes *City / 2*.

## **1971 |**

Salzmann's father dies of pancreatic cancer. Salzmann receives a grant from the University of Pittsburgh to do field anthropology in Tlaxcala, Mexico, which later develops into the project *Tlaxcalan Sketches*.

## **1971-1972 |**

Salzmann enrolls in the MA program in Visual Anthropology at Temple University. He makes his first film about mumming in Philadelphia, *We're #1*, which is broadcast on New Jersey Public Television. His master's thesis consists of this film, plus an essay written under the guidance of the anthropologist Dr. Jay Ruby.

## **1972 |**

Salzmann meets Ayşe Gürsan, who invites him to travel to Mexico to help her with visual documentary related to her anthropological research. In Philadelphia, Salzmann manages to buy two adjacent houses in the Powelton Village section of the city. He fixes up the houses, and rent from them provides a primary source of income. In subsequent years, Salzmann would buy other rental properties in Philadelphia.

### **1972–1973 |**

Salzmann is hired as a film editor for ethnographic filmmaker Timothy Asch's work on the Yanamami people of the Amazon rainforest. Salzmann moves to Somerville, Massachusetts, and edits some twenty films for Asch.

### **1974 |**

Salzmann is hired to work as a film editor for Alan Lomax in New York City, where he edits films for Lomax's Choreometrics project.

### **1974–1976 |**

After four unsuccessful attempts, Salzmann receives a Fulbright grant to photograph in Romania. He settles in the southern Bukovina town of Rădăuți, where he produces the photography and film work that becomes *The Last Jews of Rădăuți*. In 1975, an exhibition of his Romanian photographs is held at USIS Library in Bucharest.

### **1976 |**

Salzmann marries Ayşe Gürsan in Istanbul.

### **1976–1977 |**

Salzmann is invited to exhibit *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* at Beth Hatefutsoth—The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv. Salzmann moves to Jerusalem to prepare the exhibition. He is assisted by Dr. Nissan Perez, later the senior curator of photography at the Israel Museum. While living in Jerusalem, Salzmann continues work related to his City/2 project and also work from public spaces in Bucharest, in a new series entitled "Jerusalem's People in Public."

### **1978 |**

Salzmann returns to Philadelphia. Cornell Capa invites him to exhibit *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* at the International Center of Photography in New York. Salzmann becomes friends with Margaret Mead and Roman Vishniac.

### **1979 |**

Salzmann's daughter Han is born. He photographs his young family intensively. Salzmann prepares *The Last Jews of Rădăuți* and *La Baie/Bath Scenes* for publication. The Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia hires him as a staff photographer. The Jewish Publication Society commissions him to do a book on a family seder. Salzmann begins work on his second documentary film on mumming in Philadelphia, *Who's Havin' Fun*, which is eventually broadcast on PBS.



## **1980 |**

Salzmann buys a decrepit building on Lancaster Avenue in West Philadelphia, restores it and turns it into his studio. *GEO* magazine hires Salzmann to return to Romania to continue work on a photo essay on the Jews of Rădăuți, which is published with text by Dan Rottenberg in 1981.

## **1982–1984 |**

Salzmann works on the *Vents* project, a collection of nude models photographed on public steam vents in Philadelphia at night. One night, the police arrest him on charges of endangering the welfare of a child—his own daughter, whom he was preparing to photograph on a steam vent. He spends the night in jail and is threatened by the police.

## **1983 |**

Salzmann is awarded a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) to photograph transhumant shepherds in Romania. He spends months walking the Romanian countryside. The work is later published in *Natural History Magazine*, and in 1999 as the book *Miorița*.

## **1984–1989 |**

Beth Hatefutsoth invites Salzmann to document Turkish Jewish monuments. Salzmann moves with his family to Istanbul, and a two-month project becomes a five-year work on the Jews of Turkey.

## **1990–1994 |**

Salzmann creates a traveling exhibition of the Turkish Jewish work, which is shown in over 30 venues in the US, Europe and Israel, with many lectures and public programs.

## **1991 |**

At the initiation of the Philadelphia *Photo Review*, Salzmann is one of five photographers who contribute to “A Day in the Life of Rittenhouse Square”—one of the city’s main public parks, near Salzmann’s childhood home.

## **1992 |**

Salzmann travels to Egypt and creates photographs for a sequence to which Egyptologist Dr. David O’Connor contributes an essay.

### **1994-1996 |**

The Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia asks Salzman to create an exhibit to complement a show entitled “Bridges and Boundaries,” presenting a historical overview of relations between African Americans and American Jews. Salzman undertakes the project with Philadelphia photographer Don Camp, which becomes the exhibition *Face to Face: Encounters between Jews & Blacks*. With the sponsorship of the United Negro College Fund, the exhibition travels to eight locations around the United States, including extensive public programming.

### **1995 |**

Salzman is invited to exhibit his Romanian work at a Jewish culture festival in Berlin, and to travel to Lithuania to do a related work on Lithuanian Jews. The resulting work is titled *Lithuanian Memories*.

### **1999 |**

The United States Information Service (USIS) invites Salzman to present a five-city lecture tour in Romania concerning his work on shepherds and to attend a major exhibit of the work at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest.

### **1999-2004 |**

At the request of a group calling itself Citizen Diplomats, Salzman makes an exploratory trip to Cuba, with the idea of creating a sister city relationship between Philadelphia and Santiago de Cuba. The sister city relationship fails to become a reality, but Salzman creates El Festival Cubano, a Cuban cultural festival that runs in Philadelphia between 2000-2004. The festival establishes exchanges between Philadelphia and Santiago de Cuba, with multiple art shows, films showings, and dance performances and more. Enduring relationships emerge between the Philadelphia-based Kulu Mele African Dance & Drum Ensemble and the Ballet Folklorico Cutumba of Santiago de Cuba, supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Dance Advance. Two works develop from repeated visits Salzman makes to Santiago de Cuba, *La Lucha / The Struggle* and *Imagining Cutumba*, on wrestlers and Afro-Cuban dancers respectively. These works become part of El Festival Cubano.

## **2004-2009 |**

Salzmann begins construction of a new photographic studio, and hires workers from the Mexican state of Puebla to help in its construction. Owing to his fluency in Spanish and his knowledge of the neighboring state of Tlaxcala from thirty years previously, Salzmann travels to Mexico as the guest of his workers, leading to multiple visits that become his *Écheleganas* works. This work is later shown at the Magic Garden in Philadelphia as part of a Mexican Cultural Festival that Salzmann helps to establish.

## **2005 |**

Salzmann visits Argentina for first time, and creates a body of work in a single night, *De Noche/By Night*, on an Easter pilgrimage to a high Andean plateau.

## **2009 |**

Salzmann survives a major heart attack.

## **2010 |**

Salzmann accompanies wife to the archaeological dig at Gordion, Turkey, where he creates an experimental series on his beloved Turkish sheepdog, Garip.

## **2013 |**

Salzmann visits Colombia and photographs Colombian Jewry. He begins work on *El Rayo*, a film about the Colombian artist Ana Uribe, made at her family's farmstead. Later in that year, Salzmann does the experimental color work, *Aegean Blue*. In Philadelphia, he helps to create a cultural festival celebrating the cultures of Mexican immigrants. Salzmann's daughter Han weds Yuli Masinovsky in Seattle.

## **2014 |**

Salzmann's first granddaughter Mavis is born. At the suggestion of Arthur Tress, Salzmann begins photographing using the model of diamonds. Salzmann travels for the first time to Peru and Bolivia.

## **2015 - 2016 |**

Salzmann is awarded a Fulbright fellowship to teach in Peru, beginning a series of works that lasts into the 2020s, with several subsequent trips to Peru's Sacred Valley.

**2016-2021 |**

Salzmann continues making abstract photographs, including a new small work on coral in the Florida Keys. He revisits Maras and prepares an exhibition in Cusco and another in Maras itself, to which all the villagers are invited. He prepares books for Misk'i Kachi Runakuna and Sweet Salt People. He presents the exhibition "Sweet Salt People" at Taller Puertorriqueño in Philadelphia, and a revised version of the Mexican show under the title "Echando Ganas," at the Slought Foundation in Philadelphia.

**2019-2020 |**

Salzmann continues making abstract photographs, including a new small work on coral in the Florida Keys.



Place designations:

Ar=Argentina	Bo=Bolivia	Co=Colombia
Cu=Cuba	Eg=Egypt	Il=Israel
Lt=Lithuania	Mx= Mexico	Pe=Peru
PR=Puerto Rico	Ro=Romania	Sp=Spain
Tk=Turkey	US=United States	

## LIST OF WORKS

Works are organized by the date that their original or primary content was made, with notations for later re-organizations or re-edits. A later date for the same work indicates substantial new content.

## PHOTOWORKS

- 1966–1967 *Luis' Family*, self-published (Blurb), 2015, Mx
- 1969 *Tlaxcalan Sketches*, self-published (Blurb), 2015, Mx
- 1969 *Neighbors on the Block*, New York State Council on the Arts, 1971, US  
*Single Room Occupancy*, self-published (Blurb), 2018, US
- 1971 *City / 2*, self-published (Blurb), 2013, US
- 1974–1976 *Last Jews of Rădăuți*, self-published (Consolidated-Drake), 1978, Ro  
*Last Jews of Rădăuți*, New York, Doubleday, 1983, Ro
- 1974–1976 *I Remember Them Now*, Ro
- 1974–1976 *La Baie / Bath Scenes*, self-published (Blue Flower), 1980, Ro
- 1974–1976 *Souvenirs of a Recent Time*, Ro
- 1976 *Jerusalem's People in Public*, self-published (Consolidated-Drake), 1978, Il  
*Jerusalem's People in Public*, self-published (Blurb), 2013, Il 1980  
*A Family Passover*, New York, Jewish Publication Society, US
- 1981–1982 *Miorița, Iași*, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1999, Ro  
*Transylvanian Shepherds*, self-published (Blurb), 2014, Ro
- 1983 *Stone Roses: Poems from Transylvania*, with Keith Wilson, Logan, UT, USU Press, Ro
- 1983–1985 *Vents*, US
- 1984–1989 *Anyos Munchos i Buenos (Good Years and Many More): Turkey's Sephardim, 1492-1992*, self-published (Han Books), 1991, Tk  
*In Search of Turkey's Jews*, Istanbul, Libra Kitap, 2011, Tk
- 1991 *Rittenhouse Square*, self-published (Blurb), 2013, US
- 1994 *Egypt*, Eg
- 1995–1996 *Face to Face: Encounters between Jews & Blacks*, self-published (Blue Flower), 1996, US
- 1995 *Lithuanian Memories*, Lt
- 2000–2004 *La Lucha / The Struggle*, self-published (Blue Flower), 2007, Cu
- 2001–2002 *Imagining Cutumba*, Easton, PA, Lafayette College, 2002, Cu

## PHOTOWORKS

- 2004 *Nature's Murals*, US
- 2005 *De Noche / By Night*, self-published (Blurb), Ar
- 2005–2009 *Écheleganas / A Life Left Behind*, self-published (Blue Flower), 2012, Mx
- 2007 *Almendros*, self-published (Blurb), 2018, Sp
- 2009 *The Gordion Project*, Tk
- 2011 *The Jews of Colombia*, Co
- 2011 *Garip, Portrait of a Turkish Sheep Dog*, Tk
- 2013 *The Jews of Colombia*, Co
- 2014 *Aegean Blue*, Tk
- 2014–2015 *Transient Diamonds*, US and various  
*Lamed Vavniks*, US and various
- 2016 *Misk'i Kachi*, self-published (Blue Flower), 2017, Pe
- 2019 *Site Unseen*, US
- 2016–2020 *Misk'i Kachi Runakuna / Sweet Salt People*, Pe

## SALZMANN PHOTOWORKS IN ANTHOLOGIES

- 1986 *Männer Sehen Männer: Akfotografie und ihre zeitgenössischen Vertreter*,  
Berlin, Verlag Photographie
- 1992 *Flesh & Blood: Photographers' Images of Their Own Families*, New York, Cornerhouse
- 1995 *Fully Exposed: The Male Nude in Photography*, New York, Routledge
- 1996 *Mexico Through Foreign Eyes: Visto por Ojos Extranjeros, 1850–1990*, New York,  
W.W. Norton

Blue Flower Press is Salzmänn's company for publishing his own works. Blurb, Inc., is a print-on-demand self-publishing platform.

## FILMWORKS

- 1966 "Ragman," 16mm, US
- 1966 "The Butterfly Girl," 16mm, US
- 1966–1967 "The Family of Luis (photo montage)," 2015 edit, 15 minutes, Mx
- 1969–1970 "Happiness et le Bonheur," 16mm, US
- 1969 "Tlaxcalan Sketches (photo montage)," 2009 edit, 2 minutes, Mx
- 1969 "SRO: Eddie," 16mm, 17 minutes, US
- 1970 "SRO: Alfred," 16mm, 29 minutes, US
- 1971 "SRO: Tenant Films," 16mm, US
- 1971 "Single Room Occupancy (photo montage)," 2009 edit, 5 minutes, US
- 1971 "SCAG," 16mm, US
- 1971 "City / 2 (photo montage)," 2010 edit, 9 minutes, US
- 1972 Editor of over 30 films for Timothy Ash on the Yanomamo people of Venezuela
- 1973 Editor for Alan Lomax of his choreometric films
- 1973 "Life on a Thread," 16mm, 21 minutes
- 1973 "We're #1," 16mm, 19 minutes, US
- 1974–1976 "La Baie / Bath Scenes (photo montage)," 2011 edit, 6 minutes, Ro
- 1974–1976 "Souvenirs of a Recent Time (photo montage)," 2011 edit, 9 minutes, Ro
- 1974–1976 "Last Jews of Rădăuți (photo montage)," 2010 edit, 5 minutes, Ro
- 1974–1976 "I Remember Them Now (photo montage)," 2014 edit, 17 minutes, Ro
- 1976 "Jerusalem's People in Public (photo montage)," 2009 edit, 6 minutes, Il
- 1978 "Song of Rădăuți," 16mm, 25 minutes, Ro
- 1978 "Song of Rădăuți" (short), 16mm, 9 minutes, Ro
- 1980 "Who's Havin' Fun" 16mm, 58 minutes, US
- 1982 "Miorița (photo montage)," 2011 edit, 12 minutes, Ro
- 1985 "Vents (photo montage)," 2011 edit, 6 minutes, US
- 1985–1986 Unfinished Hannah Szenes project, 16mm, Ro
- 1989 "Turkey's Sephardim: 500 Years," 16mm, Tk
- 1989 "Turkey's Sephardim: 500 Years," 2010 edit, 16mm, 49 minutes, Tk
- "Turkey's Sephardim: 500 Years—Chapter 1," 2010 edit, 16mm, 19 minutes, Tk
- "Turkey's Sephardim: 500 Years—Chapter 2," 2010 edit, 16mm, 16 minutes, Tk
- "Turkey's Sephardim: 500 Years—Chapter 3," 2010 edit, 16mm, 13 minutes, Tk
- 1989 "'Expulsion' as told by Rachel" (excerpt), 16mm, 3 minutes, Tk



## FILMWORKS CONTINUED

- 1989 "Purim" (excerpt), 16mm, 2 minutes, Tk
- 1991 "Rittenhouse Square (photo montage)," 2011 edit, 5 minutes, US
- 1996 "Face to Face: Encounters Between Jews & Blacks (photo montage)," 2011 edit, 28 minutes, US
- 2002 "Old St. Louis Cemetery," Mini DV, 12 minutes, US
- 2002 "Imagining Cutumba," Mini DV, Cu
- 2002 "Imagining Cutumba" (excerpt), Mini DV, 3 minutes, Cu
- 2002 "Imagining Cutumba (photo montage)," 2009 edit, 5 minutes, Cu
- 2002 "El Festival Cubano" digital, 33 minutes, US
- 2002 "Willy's Blessing," (excerpt), Mini DV, 10 minutes, Cu
- 2003 "Willy's Blessing" Mini DV, 30 minutes, Cu
- 2004 "La Lucha / The Struggle," Mini DV, 2007 edit, 27 minutes, Cu
- "La Lucha / The Struggle (photo montage)," 2009 edit, 5 minutes, Cu
- 2005 "Ana Uribe—Diamond St. Mural," digital, 7 minutes, US
- 2005 "Ana Uribe—Magic Wall Mural," digital, 15 minutes, US
- 2005 "De Noche / By Night," digital, 17 minutes, Ar
- 2005 "Romania Redrawn Concert," digital, 50 minutes, US
- 2009 "Gordion: Summer 2009," digital, 25 minutes, Tk
- 2009 "Écheleganas: Do Your Best," digital, Mx, comprising the following:
- "Adán & Luisa López," 7 minutes
  - "Adrian & His Animals," 4 minutes
  - "Adrian & the Hawk," 3 minutes
  - "Amanda's Presentation: 3rd Birthday," 5 minutes
  - "Aurelia of Xonacatla," 3 minutes
  - "Barbacoa," 3 minutes
  - "Boda (Wedding): Irene & Adán," 9 minutes
  - "Carmelo Buys a Fighting Cock"
  - "Carmen López: The Bean Lady of Tonalapa," 4 minutes
  - "Cecilia's Quinceañera," 4 minutes
  - "Crescenciana," 5 minutes
  - "Crescenciana Visits the Doctor," 7 minutes
  - "Crisanto Martinez," 6 minutes
  - "Écheleganas: Photo Montage," 9 minutes
  - "Enedino Talks About His Daughter," 2 minutes

“Enedino’s Sermon,” 3 minutes  
 “Faena (Community Work),” 3 minutes  
 “Festival San Isidro: Mirador,” 9 minutes  
 “Fidel Guevara Galicia,” 9 minutes  
 “Geraldo: A Young Man from Mirador,” 5 minutes  
 “Geraldo and His Wife,” 6 minutes  
 “The Guevara Family: Corn Harvest,” 4 minutes  
 “Jaripeo (Mexican Bull Riding),” 3 minutes  
 “José Enedino Martínez Cruz,” 6 minutes  
 “Lima Buses & Jesus Guevara’s Sewing Shop,” 5 minutes  
 “Lorenzo’s Loritos,” 5 minutes  
 “Lorenzo Vázquez Tilling Corn,” 5 minutes  
 “The Martínez Brothers,” 6 minutes  
 “Mother’s Day in Tonalapa, Mexico,” 5 minutes  
 “Pascasio’s House,” 10 minutes  
 “Pulque & Maquey,” 2 minutes  
 “Rogelio López & His Tortilla Shop,” 3 minutes  
 “Rubiceli’s First Birthday Party,” 3 minutes  
 “Santa Maria de Rosario,” 5 minutes  
 “Victoriana & the Turkey,” 5 minutes  
 “Xaicabo Driving to Libres,” 8 minutes  
 2010 “In Search of Turkey’s Jews,” 17 minutes, Tk  
 2010 “Jewish Life in İstanbul,” 2010 edit, 20 minutes, Tk  
 2010 “Girl Scout, Girl Scout!” digital, 2 minutes, US  
 2010 “A Story of Almendros,” digital, 12 minutes, Sp  
 2010 “Body & Soul,” 9 minutes, US  
 2010 “The Penn Center for Resuscitation Science,” digital, 6 minutes, US  
 2010 “Life Is Light: A Conversation with Lance Becker, MD,” 31 minutes, US  
 2010 “El Rayo,” digital, 56 minutes, Co  
 2010 “Miércoles de Ceniza,” 6 minutes, Co  
 2011 “Garip: The Turkish Sheep Dog (photo montage),” 3 minutes, Tk  
 2011 “Gordion: Summer 2009,” digital, 25 minutes, Tk  
 2011 “Gordion (photo montage),” 2 minutes, Tk  
 2011 “San Mateo Ozolco Carnavalero,” digital, 28 minutes, US  
 2011 “Revisiting Turkey’s Jews, Vol. 1,” digital, Tk, comprising the following:  
 “Antakya Revisited,” 21 minutes  
 “Habib Gerez,” 9 minutes

## FILMWORKS CONTINUED

- 2011 "A Visit to İstanbul," 16 minutes  
 "Remembering Izmir," 36 minutes  
 "Greeting from Hahambaşı İshak Haleva," 2 minutes
- 2012 "Revisiting Turkey's Jews, Vol. 2," digital, Tk, comprising the following:  
 "We Are Decreasing in Numbers: A Discussion with Şalom Gazette," 3 minutes  
 "Bar Mitzvah of Eyes B. Molinas," 5 minutes  
 "The Funeral of Loni Keribar," 4 minutes  
 "Sukkah," 5 minutes  
 "I Speak French, I Speak Spanish," 8 minutes  
 "Roza Gets Married," 10 minutes
- 2012 "Buscando la Finca de la Abuelita Reneé," digital, 24 minutes, PR
- 2013 "Constantino Bella," digital, 35 minutes, Mx
- 2013 "The Jews of Colombia," digital, 34 minutes, Co
- 2013 "Emil's WOW!" digital, 3 minutes, Co
- 2014 "Cesar Viveros—Fuego Nuevo Mural," 17 minutes, US
- 2014 "Ben Volta Mural (Inspired by Power of Ten)," 17 minutes, US
- 2014 "Huanchaco, Trujillo Province, Peru," digital, 5 minutes, Pe
- 2014 "A Conversation with Walter Chambi," digital, 21 minutes, Bo
- 2014 "Corocoro: La Tierra de Chuta," digital, 19 minutes, Bo
- 2014 "Dr. Rath, I Presume?," digital, 27 minutes, Pe
- 2017 "Tales of the Inca," digital, 1 hour 26 minutes, Pe
- 2018 "Ernie: A Man for All Seasons," digital, 28 minutes, US
- 2019 "Misk'i Kachi / Sal Dulce / Sweet Salt," digital, 16 minutes
- 2019 "Huillo Valley," digital, 52 minutes
- 2019 "3610: A Renovation," digital, 1 hour 36 minutes, US
- 2019 "Kings in Stone: Shadows and Rulers (photo montage)," 10 minutes, Eg
- 2019 "Stephanie's Quinceañera," digital, 11 minutes, US
- 2020 "Misk'i Kachi Runakuna / Sweet Salt People / Gente de Sal Dulce," digital, 41 minutes, Pe
- 2020 "The Snow of 2010: Snowmen," digital, 2 minutes
- 2020 "On Latin Music (2010)," digital, 2 minutes

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Francisco (born 1967, California) is an artist and essayist. Joining documentary and conceptual art, his photoworks and writings focus on the complications of historical memory, and new directions in the art of witness. Much of his work concerns the inheritance of trauma, specifically concerning Jewish experience in eastern Europe. Francisco's large-scale projects include *Alive and Destroyed: A Meditation on the Holocaust in Time* (Daylight Books, 2021), *Autobiography of an Unknown American* (2021), *The Camp in Its Afterlives* (2010–2018), *An Unfinished Memory* (2014–2018), *After the American Century* (2002–2018), *Big City* (1990–2020), *Far from Zion: Jews, Diaspora, Memory* (Stanford University Press, 2006), and *The Villages: Rural India at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1990–1997). He is also the author of numerous limited edition photobooks, web-based installations, experimental films, hybrid photo-text writings, reportages, essays, and poems in translation. He received his education at Columbia University, King's College London, and Stanford University.

