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Critic's Notebook

Hue Turn

by Vince Aletti
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At a time when museums, galleries, and collectors' homes are full of massive color prints by Andreas Gursky, Cindy Sherman, and Thomas Ruff, the idea that color photographs were once not just unfashionable but unsalable seems impossibly quaint. "**When Color Was New**," a smart, compact show at the Julie Saul gallery, puts things in perspective. Its focus is work from the nineteen-seventies, when Jan Groover, Joel Sternfeld, Mitch Epstein, Joel Meyerowitz, and others were challenging the notion that color was vulgar and *commercial*. Pictures by Paul Outerbridge and Harry Callahan set historic precedents, while others, from the eighties, by Nan Goldin and Boyd Webb, suggest color's subsequent and unstoppable surge to dominance. But the seventies were the turning point. If one photograph sums up the breakthrough, it's William Eggleston's worm's-eye view of a rusty tricycle on a Memphis street—the icon of his 1976 MOMA show, which cracked the black-and-white photography establishment. But Eggleston's trike has a context, and between Stephen Shore's frozen dinner, Martin Parr's fast-food counter, and Helen Levitt's vivid gaggle of runway-ready street urchins, this show provides it.