

## PRESENT/FUTURE

Jane Jackson Fine Art

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All the photographers in "Present/Future" are concerned with social documentation. Tina Barney, Philip-Lorca Dicorcia, and Nick Waplington develop social dialogue between viewer and characters in the photograph, while Bill Jacobson records and presents a simultaneous synthetic whole.



Nick Waplington, untitled photograph  
(photo courtesy of the artist).

The photographers place themselves in different relationships to the work. Barney and Dicorcia take photographs as attentive observers, whereas Waplington and Jacobson become an integral part of the photographic record. Waplington places himself in the work through the tips of his shoes, which appear in many of his photographs. The personalities in the photographs then dance a narrative around this presence. Jacobson integrates the dematerializing mental and physical being of AIDS victims with the photographic medium so that there is no separation between the viewer, subject, and photographer.

Barney, as observer, documents the people and environment of upper-class America. Barney introduces us to modes of communication that occur within this particular culture. The works provide two different kinds of space for the involvement of the viewer. In one case, the viewer observes the dialogue which occurs between the characters in the work, maintaining an objective distance, whereas in the other situation the viewer becomes a participant in the dialogue itself. *Mother and Son* marks a close and intimate moment between the characters. A family resemblance is observed: the shape of the nose, the position of the head as well as the intimacy of the postures. The two share and express warmth, humor, and connectedness. The viewer basks in their pleasure with each other while accepting it as a moment identified but not shared. In another photograph, *Jill and the TV*, there is a place for a viewer's dialogue with Jill. She looks out from in front of a looming, oversized TV, and her presence introduces a strong, isolated human being. She invites us to participate in her world, to help construct her life story and ease her loneliness. Jill searches with us for the intimate shared moment which is absent rather than present, as it is in *Mother and Son*.

Waplington's photographs are of a working class family living in Nottingham, England. In his work there is a qualitatively different form of connectedness; Barney puts herself in the place of the viewer who may become an intimate part of

the work, whereas Waplington always places himself in the work as participant and keeps the viewer on the sidelines as an observer. Through tiny details an economically poor life grows emotionally rich through the accumulation of personal and intimate actions.

All Waplington's works are untitled. In one, a mother on her wedding day lacquers her daughter's hair in preparation for the celebration. The bathroom, where the scene takes place, is in need of a coat of paint. The quality of the moment is not in the surroundings but in the mother's gesture, which gives importance to the tangled poorly cut hair of her daughter.

Dicorcia's photographs of male hustlers present man as an object of desire. Both Dicorcia and the viewer analyze the details of these sensual male bodies. The question these photographs ask is: where is the next dollar coming from? The work communicates at a level of advertising. Like commodities in the supermarket, bodies are examined in terms of value and price. They advertise in order to attract attention and procure a quick sale.

Jacobson's works evolve in an entirely different manner. Self is always present in the image as object. This quality is absent in the other photographers' work, in which our self is less integrated and has the freedom to reflectively engage in dialogue. There is an aesthetic quality to Jacobson's work which both denies and incorporates the documentary aspect of the work. The work comments on the lives of young men with AIDS, but could just as well be commenting on any person's loss of physical and mental self. The fading image is fixed in the medium, which maintains the sense of a self which survives. There is no attempt by the work to impress, just the ability to enable the experiencing of a life which will ultimately give way to death.

In these works, there are two alternative approaches to the narrative image. In Barney's, Waplington's, and Dicorcia's work, a symbolic image emerges through constructive dialogue and action. In Jacobson's work, a spontaneous symbolic image is presented through a synchronous synthesis of emotional and intellectual material already in the process of deconstruction.

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