

TOM BAMBERGER



TOM BAMBERGER

HYPERPHOTOGRAPHIC

Curated by Laurie Winters

with essays by Debra Brehmer and J Tyler Friedman

Published by the Museum of Wisconsin Art





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FOREWORD

Laurie Winters, MOWA Executive Director | CEO

I first met Tom Bamberger two decades ago in January 1997. It was my second week at the Milwaukee Art Museum as the museum's first curator of European art. It was an exciting time to be in the museum industry and to be part of an institution with big aspirations. The museum broke ground for the new Calatrava addition that same year.

Bamberger entered my world—or rather, I entered his. Graciously and somewhat apologetically, then director Russell Bowman informed me on my first day that I would be sharing an office with the curator of photography. Bowman was the consummate diplomat. New colleagues popped by that first day and every conversation started with something like, “so you’re sharing an office with Bamberger.” I failed to read the social cues. Days lapsed and still no office mate. Then suddenly one morning, Bamberger blew in, mustered a brief hello, and headed straight for his computer and a week’s worth of emails. Every now and then he would glance over his shoulder with the sort of expression one might have upon seeing a mouse run across the kitchen floor—a bit startled, too busy to take immediate action, and certain that it could be dealt with at a later time. And so our twenty-year friendship began.

It soon became clear that Bamberger and I were from different worlds. He loved everything about photography and was socially at the epicenter of Milwaukee’s artistic and cultural life. I studied dead European masters and flew over Milwaukee on my way to somewhere else. The bohemian Bamberger was a flip-flop-wearing, cigarette-smoking kind of guy. Let’s just say I was different.

Four or five times a year, Bowman would gather all of the curators together to discuss exhibition proposals and ideas. Every idea was on the table for discussion and conversation flowed freely and openly. When a proposal did not quite meet the sniff test, Bamberger would loudly blurt out “that’s a bad idea” or, on occasion for emphasis, “that’s a *really* bad idea.” He was not afraid to admonish the group for not having higher standards if he thought an inferior exhibition might make its way onto the schedule. I never took offense, nor did Bowman, who had his own wise way of separating the chaff from the wheat. I remember those meetings fondly, and so does Bamberger; they were

entertainment—and respect—of the highest order. As I reflect on our two-decade relationship, I think it was precisely at that table and in those animated conversations that our bond grew. We did have something in common after all. We have both always worked from two simple guiding principles: open discussion is always a good thing and high standards are never optional.

Bamberger’s donation of almost four hundred photographs to MOWA comes in some ways out of those early shared values. It is therefore with great humbleness that MOWA accepts this gift of a lifetime, and it is with great pride that we present this spring’s retrospective exhibition of Bamberger’s work.

A deep debt of gratitude is also owed to Debra Brehmer and J Tyler Friedman who contributed essays to the exhibition catalogue that so compellingly articulates the life and vision of the artist. Special thanks must also go to our talented book designer Amy Hafemann and to the book editor Terry Ann R. Neff. Miranda Levy and Andrea Waala deserve recognition for their organizational support, as do the many staff members whose hard work helped bring this project to fruition.

This catalogue is the seventh in an ongoing series of museum publications that are offered as free downloads on the museum’s website (wisconsinart.org), a reflection of the institution’s commitment to making Wisconsin art accessible around the world. Printed hardcover editions are available for purchase from Blurb.com.

For their generous support of this exhibition, we sincerely thank the following individuals for helping us share the extraordinary vision of Tom Bamberger: Karen and James Hyde, Marianne and Sheldon B. Lubar, Madeleine and David Lubar, Suzanne and Richard Pieper Family, Arthur Laskin, Angela and George Jacobi, and Anne and Fred Vogel III. MOWA’s 2017 exhibition schedule is also supported by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Pick Heaters, and the Wisconsin Arts Board. MOWA is proud to present this groundbreaking exhibition and the accompanying catalogue. We hope they give you new insights and great pleasure.

A HYPERPHOTOGRAPHIC LIFE

Laurie Winters

Teacher, philosopher, curator of photography, urban design critic—Tom Bamberger has embraced a number of roles in his life, but he is first and foremost a photographer of national significance. *Hyperphotographic* is the artist's first major retrospective and a celebration of his recent gift to the Museum of Wisconsin Art of almost four hundred photographs. For the first time in MOWA's history, all three changing exhibition spaces have been dedicated to the work of a single artist.

Most artists are described by their work. No one ever characterizes Bamberger in that way. He is far too complicated and multilayered for a single summary statement. More often than not, his friends will describe him with a roll of their eyes and half-muted phrase like “ah, Bamberger.” His personality can be all consuming: he speaks with blunt authority, his visual memory is impressive, his gossip scurrilous, and his anecdotes illuminating. People are attracted to him like flies to sticky paper—they know better but cannot help themselves.

Bamberger is Jewish and he attributes his professional success to “chutzpah.” The son of Sally and Richard Bamberger, he grew up in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, a wealthy Milwaukee suburb, where people are connected by money and country club. From that early start, he created friendships and connections that would help him in countless ways throughout his career. He attended Boston University and developed an early and abiding interest in philosophy and the history of ideas. His Boston sojourn was cut short by what he describes as a brief “Breaking Bad” encounter with drugs that ended in an arrest for trafficking, a negotiated plea deal (it was the 1970s), and a mandated return to the family home in Wisconsin. Perhaps in an effort to become more mature, he married the first of two wives. His three brothers gave him a 35mm camera as a wedding present. That was the beginning.

With hallmark intensity, Bamberger soon jettisoned the usual subjects of amateur photographers—family portraits and vacation spots—in favor of tarred, painted, and crumbled pavement. For nearly two years, he photographed all varieties of pavement, giving new meaning to the definition of street photography. In what

would become his first coherent body of work, “Pavement,” Bamberger did nothing but look down and compulsively photograph the pavement beneath his feet, along streets and sidewalks, in parking lots, and next to but not including abandoned buildings. In order to fully educate himself in the medium, he instinctively reduced the scope of the visual world to its fundamental matter, to the building blocks of subject and composition. His method was as empirical and scientific as it was artistic. Photography was a problem to be solved.

Just at the moment when many photographers were turning to full-spectrum color photography, Bamberger doubled down on a highly idiosyncratic film that would contribute to the signature style of his photography for the next twenty years. In 1980, Kodak discontinued the high contrast black-and-white film he had used in the “Pavement” series, a change that prompted countless telephone calls to Kodak in an effort to find a replacement. The engineers soon knew him by name. Trial and error followed until they put him onto SO424, a rare laser-recording 35mm film normally reserved for the science and military industries. It was not something amateur photographers could buy at the local camera shop. It was extremely finicky, requiring long exposure times with high power strobes and a chemist's sensibility for mixing custom developers and intensifiers. Bamberger was undeterred. It suited his temperament and he delighted in the extraordinary details and remarkable range of blacks and grays that could be achieved when the wizardry aligned. Today, whenever he shows his early photographs to friends or colleagues, he often stops mid-conversation to point out the rich tonal gradations in the same way a loving parent might admire a child in a family photograph.

Pavement soon gave way to flesh in a large and cohesive group of photographs of women's faces and bodies. Shot with SO424 film at close range in his studio, these heads and torsos have little to do with sex or sensuality. To be sure, there is plenty of nudity, but there is nothing pretty or alluring about these bodies. Oiled skins, gaping pores, and fields of body hair are just more corroded pavement. Bamberger was not monastic when it came to women, but these works are surprisingly neutral and asexual. Bamberger's camera so exaggerates the

details and textures that the images are all about skin rather than flesh—a kind of topography rather than seduction. When asked about the Botticelli-like beauty of one photograph in particular, Bamberger dismisses it as an accident. “I never tried to take beautiful photographs—that was never my goal.”

He next turned his attention to the movers and shakers of Milwaukee's business community. Inspired by John Berger's 1980 essay on clothing as a class marker in the photographs of August Sander, Bamberger invited local businessmen to pose for him in his studio. Shooting full-length figures for the first time, Bamberger likes to say that he photographed the suits, not the men. His subjects—captains of industry and investment gurus, Sheldon B. Lubar, Fred L. Brengel, and B. J. Sampson, to name a few—all wear crisp suits that like military uniforms define their rank and place in society. The series proved transformational for Bamberger. From the overly artful pose of architect David Kahler to the taut, steepled fingers of investment strategist Sheldon B. Lubar, his subjects one by one revealed themselves and the tension that exists between public image and private self (pp. 32, 33). Bamberger realized that photographs could be more than surfaces of chipped black top and oiled skin.

Bamberger published the series in *Milwaukee Magazine*, an eponymous city magazine, as “Power Portraits.” The photos drew a lot of attention and a year later in the same magazine he published a series called “Seven Women,” which juxtaposed portraits of women in office and domestic interiors with short biographical narratives. The women included Milwaukee celebrities such as Bo Black and Arlene Wilson, but also featured a fresh-faced bank teller he had randomly met at his local bank, a high school student, and his grandmother Bee Brill, the matriarch of his family. The series is noteworthy for its marked shift from studio to environmental settings and for inaugurating what would become a lifelong involvement with editorial magazine work as both a photographer and writer.

In Milwaukee, Bamberger may be as well known for his journalism as for his photography. For more than two decades, he served as a contributing editor for

Milwaukee Magazine, writing hundreds of articles about the visual world that garnered numerous honors from the Wisconsin Press Club for criticism, as well as the White Award, a national press award for city and regional magazines. His publications have broadly covered photography, architecture, urban design, and public art, and have often incorporated his own photography as part of the story. Bamberger likes to say that he develops a point of view by photographing his subject before starting to write. He has to “see” whatever subject it is to understand it.

His writing is direct and memorable for its turn of phrase. It has a staccato cadence and every now and then a shock element that people find themselves reading out loud at the morning water cooler. Milwaukee journalists learned early on to enliven their own stories with quotations from him because he was not afraid to say publicly what most people were thinking. Over the years, Bamberger's writing has “skewered” more than a few, occasionally even longtime friends, but he views his barbs more as admonishment for not having higher standards than outright criticism. He once described himself and his journalistic relationship with his subjects as “being a little bit like a kid who just wants the adults in the room to tell the truth.”

Bamberger soon developed a reputation for black-and-white psychological portraits shot in controlled interior environments. Throughout the late 1980s, in seemingly two-year increments, he moved through series after series of increasingly complex groupings of figures and relationships, starting with family and friends, the country club set, and diners in cafés and ice cream shops. One of the earliest works from this period, *Jane and Sophie* (1984), would become a pivotal photograph in his career (p. 47). The photo shows a mother and daughter seated together at a kitchen table but separated by the tensions of age and mother-daughter relationships. John Szarkowski, then curator of photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art, purchased the photograph, and his successor, Peter Galassi, featured it in the exhibition *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort*, which traveled to multiple museum venues and attracted significant national attention.

Buoyed by the recognition, Bamberger next launched a series he called “Diners,” which shows people eating at tables in fast food restaurants and ice cream shops. Here, distilled narratives of human interaction unfold: a police detective having a hot lunch on a cold day, a kid on break devouring a hamburger, and a sixty-something couple dominating a quick-serve counter. As Bamberger’s confidence grew, he gradually expanded to outdoor suburban settings on the outskirts of the city, to the treeless tracts of new housing developments. He would drive around the edge of the city in a car packed with studio assistants and equipment looking for “interesting” people, and would politely ask if he could photograph them. His subjects now turned to sunny afternoon barbecues, porch sitters arguing, and strange characters slumping in Lincoln Continentals at the local Kohl’s Supermarket. Bamberger called this snapshot of Middle America “Suburbia.” By the end of the decade, he was exhibiting in museums around the country and his works were on every savvy curator’s wish list.

This was an optimal moment. He had attracted national attention for his work and was at the epicenter of artistic and cultural activity in Milwaukee. Starting in the late 1970s, he served as the director of the Perihelion Gallery, a local art space known for cutting-edge exhibitions. In the early 1980s, he spearheaded an informal collaborative called Art Futures that worked with city administrators to establish individual artist fellowships that are still in existence today. Bamberger had become Milwaukee’s golden boy and his activities soon caught the attention of Russell Bowman, then director of the Milwaukee Art Museum. Bowman, who had a unique ability for recognizing and molding talent, asked him in 1986 to do an exhibition for the museum: a year later, he hired him as the museum’s curator of photography. Bamberger would hold this curatorial position for well over a decade.

Bamberger thrived in the intellectual atmosphere of the museum. The exhibitions he curated and his photography informed each other in interesting ways. In *Blood Relatives* (1986), his first museum exhibition, he articulated ideas about the complexity of human relationships in the work of Tina Barney, Sally Mann, and Larry Sultan. In an exhibition on the nineteenth-century

Wisconsin photographer H. H. Bennett (1992), Bamberger wrote a surprisingly prescient essay on the demystification of nature in landscape photography. Throughout the 1990s, Bamberger produced more than thirty exhibitions and publications. Among the shows that received national recognition were the first US museum exhibitions of Anna and Bernhard Blume (1996), Andreas Gursky (1998), and Rodney Graham (2001), which traveled to multiple venues and were accompanied by publications. Bamberger’s ability to recognize talent in emerging photographers was second to none.

In this milieu, his own photography evolved ever more quickly. Although he was not directly influenced by any single artist or movement, the museum environment provided him with a visual grammar that would allow him to pivot and move in a radically new direction. The topographical impulse that characterized his earliest work reasserted itself with focused intensity.

Seemingly with each new photograph, Bamberger moved the camera lens steadily back from his subject until the tortured narrative of suburban life disappeared altogether, leaving only empty fields and horizon lines. He reduced landscapes to their genetic code, to the building blocks of barren fields, empty skies, and horizon lines. By the mid-1990s, he had tapped into the zeitgeist of Donald Judd and Agnes Martin. Pure landscapes had evolved into minimalist experiments with accentuated horizon lines contained within broad expanses of white that objectify and distance the subject. He called this series “Horizon Lines.” No longer photographs of places per se, Bamberger’s works now straddled the line between traditional photography and contemporary art, and therein lay their compelling visual power.

Around 2001, he noticed that three photographs he had taken three years earlier in eastern Colorado had furrows and horizon lines that aligned perfectly (pp. 82, 83, 84 – 85). Curiosity compelled him to seam the images together, which after much experimentation he accomplished through the use of a drum scanner and hundreds of hours of Photoshop replication, mirror imaging, and assembly. This simple experiment inaugurated a new scale and a new method that he would explore for the next decade.

Brown Grass and *Windmills* are examples of what followed (pp. 94 – 95, 100 – 101). His elaborate process involved digitally manipulating and multiplying photographic images into singular seamless vistas ten feet or more in length. He also shifted to color film for the first time and eventually to larger cameras capable of capturing greater detail and taller images, which enabled him to achieve his desired scale. Bamberger calls his method “cloning” or “culturing” after the way DNA reproduces or the process a scientist uses to multiply bacteria in a petri dish. Each photograph is the result of repeated images and countless small changes that diminish the appearance of replication. By blurring the line between an existing landscape and the process of “cloning,” Bamberger further challenges the very idea of landscape as place, asserting that his scenes are “no place in particular.”

In 2012, Bamberger purchased a robotic GigaPan camera that would allow him to take high-definition, panoramic photographs. The GigaPan operates mechanically by dividing a landscape into a grid and creating a composite of hundreds of photographs recorded successively over time. The panoramic capability was a logical extension of his previous work. *Civil Twilight* (2013), a behemoth at thirty-five feet, and *Pete’s World*, taken a year later and twenty-two feet in length, are remarkable for their size and for the recorded effects of changing time and atmosphere (pp. 106 – 107, 108 – 109). They are physical and temporal composites that defy definitions of photography as a captured moment.

Civil Twilight and *Pete’s World* in many ways achieve the status of archetypal Wisconsin landscapes—on steroids. Their unframed, horizontal formats resting against white museum walls evoke the earlier “Horizon Lines” and “Cultured Landscapes”: long rectangular boxes surrounded by expanses of white that challenge the idea of the photograph as a window to the world. Even though these landscapes are topographically precise, they hover alluringly between specificity and universality with subjects that register immediately as both somewhere and nowhere. Here, “no place in particular” has evolved into specific visions of Wisconsin-ness. Or, perhaps more aptly, they are Bamberger’s visions of utopia.

Bamberger continued his trajectory of digital manipulation in two related digital installations that overlap in date with previous bodies of work. In *white.blue* from 2009, he transformed a single photographic image of a fallen white leaf to blue in just over a minute by using the same method of manipulation he had used in the “Cultured Landscapes” (p. 111). He added countless small changes sequentially over time to create a cumulatively transformative change. The video’s absence of an explicit narrative allows the changes to go unnoticed. Only when the first and last stills are compared does the extent of the change become apparent.

Ok is a multi-image digital installation that has been in development for nearly a decade (pp. 112 – 15). Whenever an image caught his eye, Bamberger would add it to a folder titled “Ok,” which served initially as his screen saver. Today, three screens play host to a revolving set of images, drawn randomly from a portfolio of approximately eight thousand. Each image is timed to change after eight seconds, creating different combinations in an unending, visually hypnotic display. Bamberger collected the images from countless sources and they constitute a visual compendium of his myriad interests. The individual pictures themselves are visually arresting, but it is their relationship to each other that captivates the viewer’s attention even when there is no apparent connection between them. Bamberger says, “There is no single story to tell. The images are fragmented, but they are continual and sequential, one after another. Meaning can only be constructed by the viewer.”

These simple, decisive words apply equally well to Bamberger’s forty-year career as a photographer. He sees his life and work as a series of scientific and empirical investigations into the pursuit of rich tonalities, resolution of details, the highest possible number of pixels, and the density of information. “It has always been about seeing more, or seeing more clearly,” says Bamberger. He has devoted himself to pushing the limits of photography at every stage and exploring every new direction, whether mastering improbable blacks and grays or pushing digital images beyond definitions of traditional photography. His work—indeed his life—can only be described as *hyperphotographic*.



THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The Photographs covers nine distinct periods of Tom Bamberger's oeuvre. Short essays introduce the images that follow. All of the black-and-white photographs are gelatin-silver prints. Color images are inkjet pigment prints face-mounted to plexiglass except for *The Building*, which is mounted on aluminum. *Ok* and *white.blue* are multi-image digital installations.

The plates are organized chronologically except where it seemed more logical to create groupings of similar subjects. All of the works are gifts of the artist and are part of MOWA's permanent collection.

PAVEMENT

Debra Brehmer | Laurie Winters

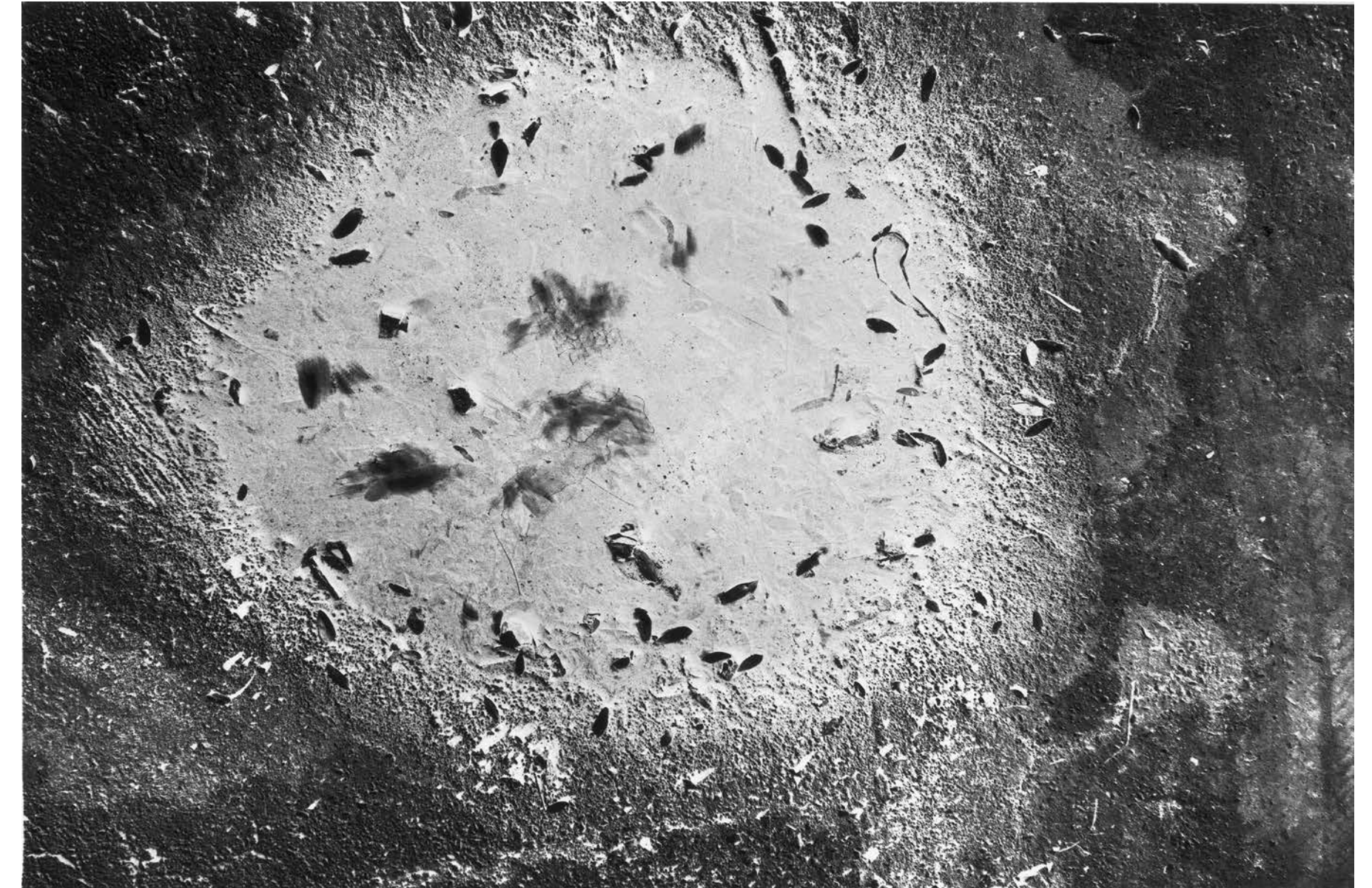
When Tom Bamberger married for the first time in 1976, the wedding gift of a 35mm camera launched him into a lifelong relationship with photography. He briefly tested the conventional subjects of novice photographers but soon narrowed his field to a purely visual world of surfaces that rarely register notice. With the signature intensity that would mark his work and life, he focused his camera on pavements in all stages of wear and tear. In this first coherent body of work, which he called “Pavement,” he learned to find infinite variety in humble, unexpected material. “It was my playground,” muses Bamberger. He describes these works as micro-landscapes.

Patches of sidewalks and parking lots offered discrete, contained areas in which to play and learn the rudiments of photography. Using natural light, a flash, and slow film, Bamberger instinctively reduced his limited visual world to its DNA, to the building blocks of subject and composition. A piece of wire, scuffed concrete, grass, and spilled gravel are visual anchors that remind us of the pictures’ essential lack of content. In viewing these obtuse and fragmented photographs, the brain has to abandon its navigational habits of naming and identification. It is far more satisfying to settle in visually and simply wander through the lights and darks and delicate edges and experience the compositions like tone poems.

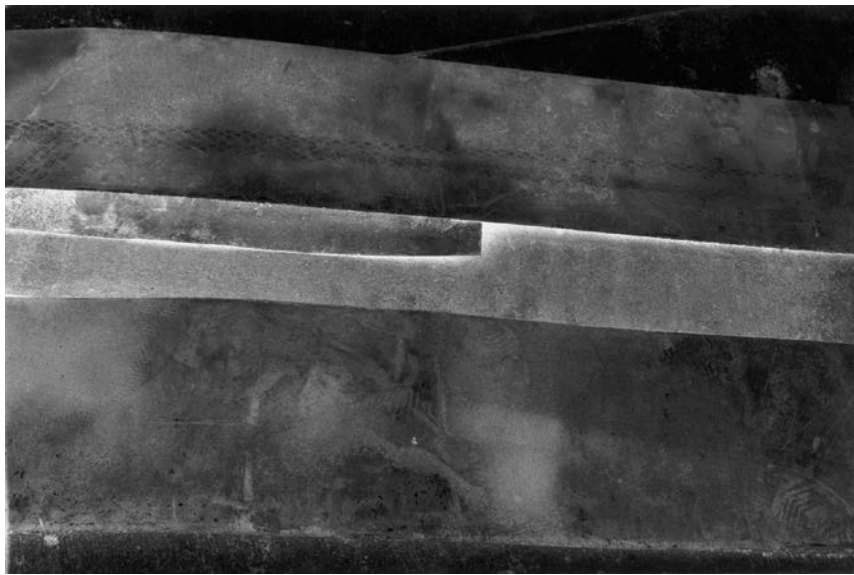
One can sense a fascination, even a conversation, with each step of the process as Bamberger learned to make pictures, dipping into the complexities of light,

lenses, and chemistry. The surface of the film interested him as much as the surface of pavement. He experimented with emulsions, mercury intensifiers, bleaches, and a variety of films. He liked a quirky film that produced a positive rather than a negative, which resulted in a number of eerily reversed negative prints (pp. 15, 18). He was experimenting, and things happened in the darkroom, like the furling of a negative, which he printed as a welcome formal gift rather than a mistake (*Icon*, p. 19). In *Collage*, he used a positive film to create a reversed abstract composition of old cut and torn photographs (p. 18). These are humble pictures that demonstrate a struggle to see the visual world with fresh eyes. It is ironic that many of the photographs look celestial. For Bamberger, “seeing is a source of wonder until you know what you are looking at.”

Bamberger often refers to the series as “Matter of an Unspecified Sort,” which is the *Oxford Dictionary* definition for “stuff.” The choice of wording is deliberate. There is nothing in these photographs that needs to be decoded, no symbols or elaborate iconography to be deciphered. In the memorable words of artist Frank Stella (b. 1936): what you see is what you see. They do not pretend to be anything other than themselves. Yet here, in this first coherent body of work, are the bricks and mortar of what would define his forty-year career: a deep and abiding respect for the process of photography and a straightforward admiration for the unexpected complexity and beauty of simple things.



Little Pond with Yellow Leaves, 1980

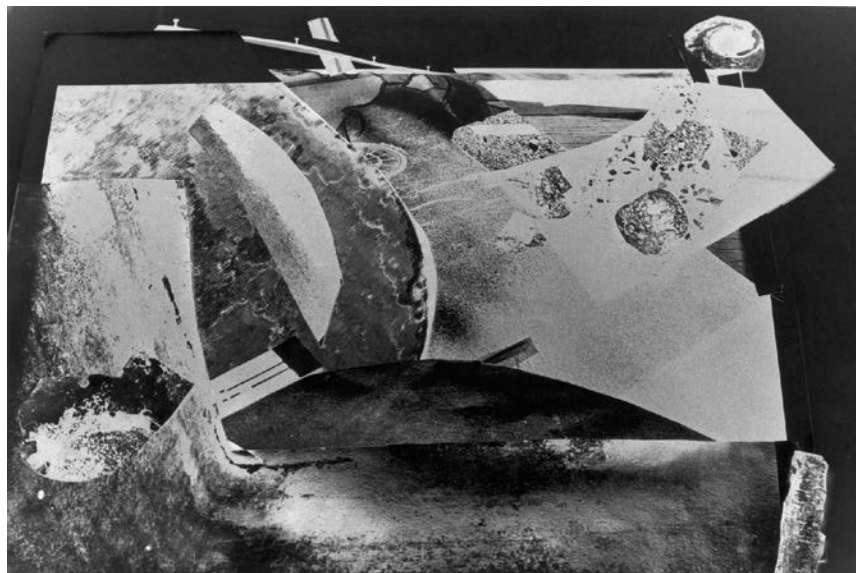
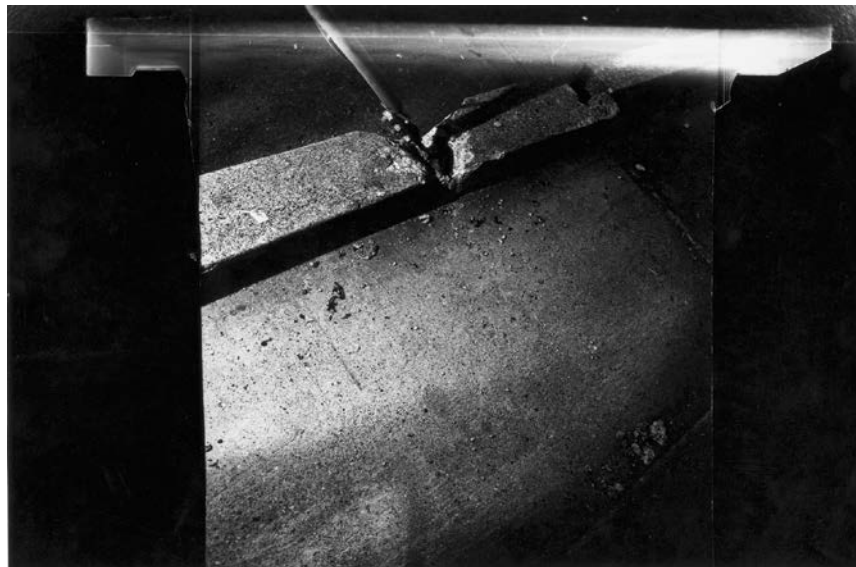


Untitled, 1978
Untitled, 1980

Untitled, 1978
Untitled, 1980



Untitled, 1978



Untitled, 1979/80
Collage, 1980



Icon, 1980

FACES | NUDES

Debra Brehmer

After two years of making pavement abstractions, Tom Bamberger was ready for new challenges. Around 1980, he adopted an extremely slow Kodak film, SO424, used by the science and the military industries to record lasers. The film was extremely finicky and required Bamberger to turn his darkroom into a full-scale laboratory. Adaptations to his enlarger, complicated chemistry, and substantial trial and error marked the process, but when everything worked, Bamberger was able to achieve amazing tonal ranges and the sharpness of large-format camera film with a 35mm camera.

The film was so slow that high-powered strobe light blasts were needed for proper exposure. Adapting this complicated lighting practice to the studio with an unclothed human being as subject presented some difficulty, but Bamberger's impulse was to treat bodies in exactly the same manner as he had photographed small patches of the ground. He started by abstracting the parts.

From 1980 to 1983, Bamberger focused exclusively on faces and bodies, treating the skin as just another surface that was interesting in its own right, and approaching the subject experimentally. He used an unconventional portrait lens of 50mm or less positioned at approximately two feet from the sitter. To create highlights, he adjusted studio lighting and manipulated the skin's texture by applying oil and water; he also altered the prints by bleaching them. Bamberger's determination to drive the process toward the most tonally rich, silky expansion of blacks and grays imaginable represented a near lust for the materiality of the print, a deep desire to synthesize tones symphonically, regardless of subject. He figured it out as he went along.

There is surprisingly little difference between the micro-landscapes of the "Pavement" series and some of the early nude torsos. Both subjects are predominantly abstract and texture and tone dominate content. The film's limited sensitivity to blue-green generates pictorial interest—or visual discomfort—by harshly amplifying the sitters' leg hair, eyelashes, pores, and even freckles. In this body of work, Bamberger particularly expressed his natural inclination toward experimentation in a small group of photos he made by slashing the negatives and then printing them as finished images. A bit reminiscent of the experimental photographs of the pioneering Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy (1895 – 1946), these nudes have a startling beauty (p. 27).

The earliest photographs in this series are the close-up views of faces, followed by abstracted headless torsos. Finally the parts come together in half-length figures with full frontal heads and expressions of engagement. The progression is fascinating. As Bamberger's technical confidence grew, he increasingly stepped back from the models to allow more of their physical being and personality to emerge in the photographs. Soon, his unglamorous photos blossomed into actual, though not quite conventional, portraits of negotiated beauty, as in *Skinny Woman (Half Length)* and *Untitled (Sue Smoking a Cigarette)* (pp. 26, 29).

In 1982, Bamberger showed fifty 11-by-14-inch prints from this series in his first solo exhibition at a Milwaukee art gallery. The photographs garnered attention in the local press and Bamberger was identified as someone on the rise. It was a good, solid beginning.



Untitled (Shannon), 1982



Untitled (Rose), 1980



Untitled (Shannon), 1982

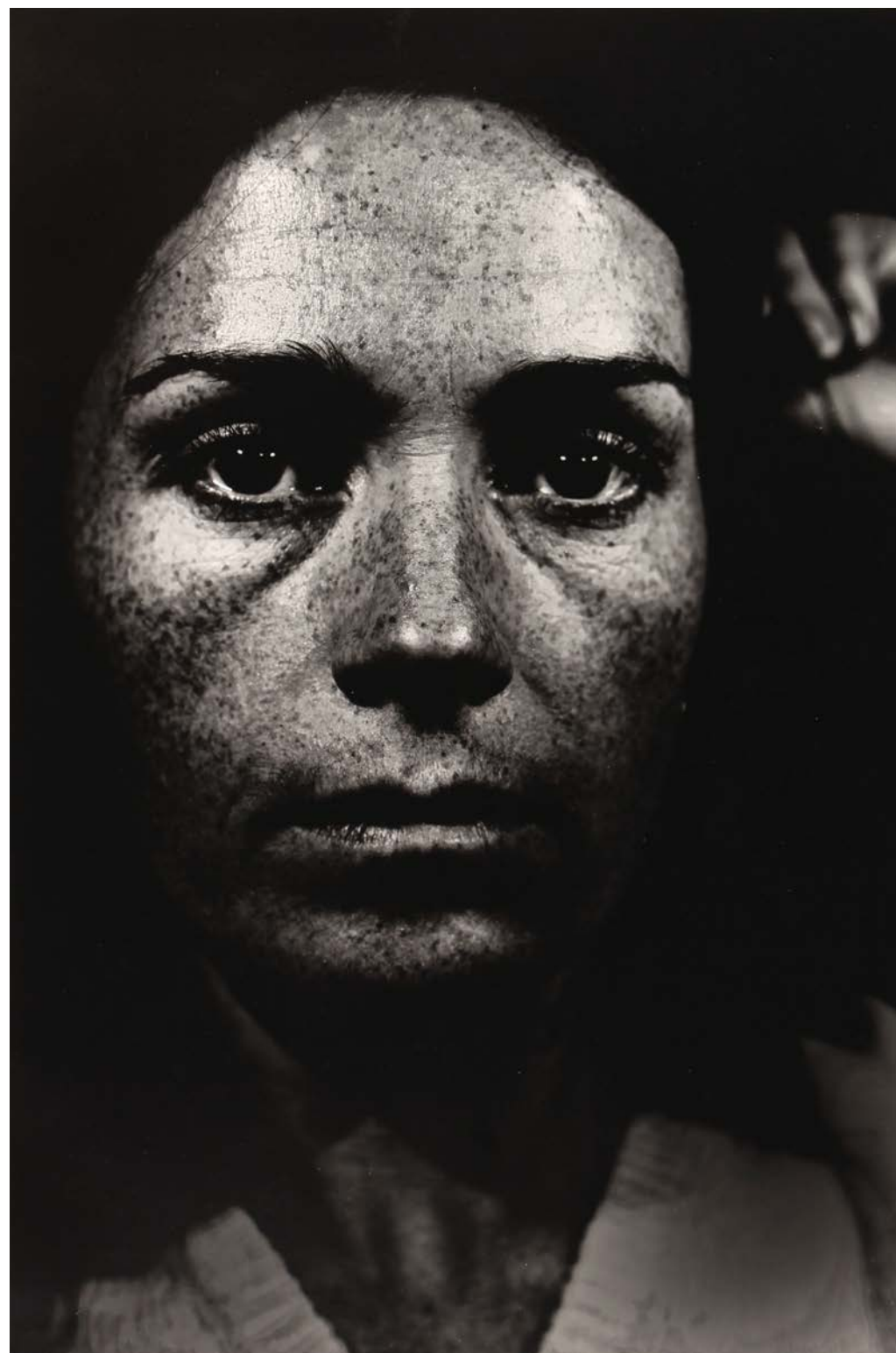


Untitled (Shannon), 1982



Untitled (Shannon), 1982

Untitled (Anne), 1981



Untitled (Anne), 1981



Untitled (Anne), 1981





Skinny Woman (Half Length), 1982



Untitled (Ann), 1982



Untitled, 1982



Ann (Half Length), 1983



Ann, 1983



Untitled (Sue Smoking a Cigarette), 1982

BUSINESSMEN | SEVEN WOMEN

Debra Brehmer

Tom Bamberger turned his attention to the movers and shakers of Milwaukee's business community in a series called "Businessmen" (1983 – 84). Bamberger's preferred orthochromatic film is no longer an experimental challenge but a fully realized tool: these first full-length figures are technically seamless. "Seamless, like marble" is how Bamberger describes their gray and black tones. His confidence and proficiency paralleled the capability and power of his subjects.

Instead of conventional descriptive portraits, the photographs are arrestingly moody compositions driven more by stance and the interaction of body and space than by an emphasis on likeness. The effect is enhanced by the peculiarities of his film, which creates skin tones that appear dark with an ominous, waxen quality.

In his essay "The Suit and the Photograph" from his 1980 book *About Looking*, critic John Berger discusses a 1914 August Sander photograph of three working-class youths wearing their Sunday best. Bamberger was intrigued by Berger's notion of the suit as a symbol of social hegemony, a costume idealizing "sedentary power" and designed for someone who no longer works in a field or factory but sits at a conference table. Bamberger explains: "I wanted to photograph a person in the most impersonal way. By focusing on the surfaces, on the light, I could look at someone in a totally different way, so I photographed the suits, not the men."

The project had a personal component as well. His maternal grandfather, Lorry Brill, was the founder and owner of Brill's, a successful men's clothing store in Wisconsin. Bamberger's father, Richard, owned a successful insurance agency and had business connections who provided Bamberger with an entrée to Milwaukee's corporate elite: B. J. Sampson was an insurance client, Sheldon B. Lubar a friend. Although Bamberger chose not to join their world, he invited these men and others into his studio with a mix of admiration and social familiarity.

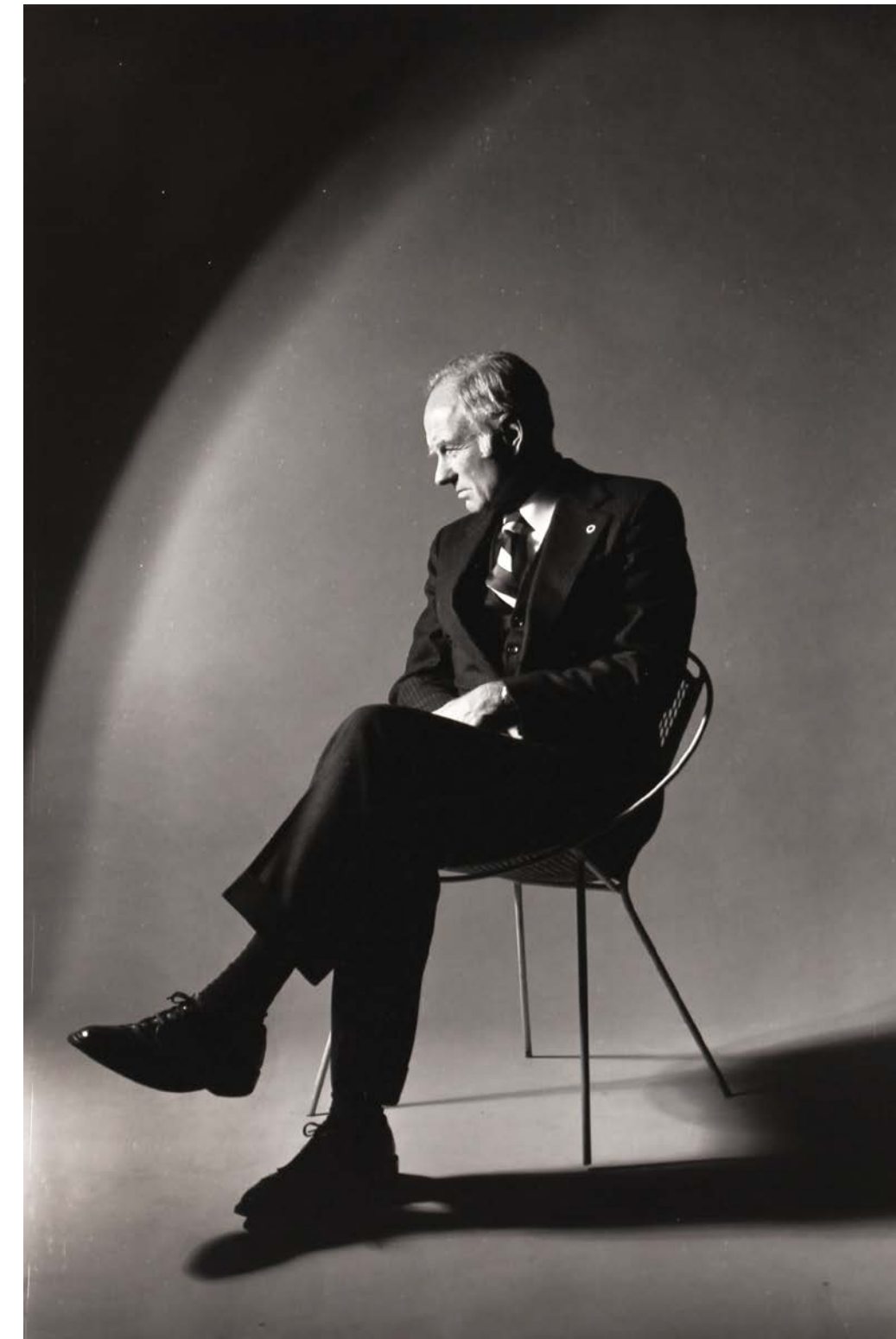
There, his sitters' personalities unfolded with an inventive potency of expression. B. J. Sampson, partner in Sampson Investments, stands strong yet relaxed (p. 35).

Fred L. Brengel, president and chief executive officer of Johnson Controls, sits in a chair, arms crossed in a resistant tackle block. He stares directly at the camera, light framing his "don't mess with me" expression (p. 32). The most striking portrait is perhaps that of Sheldon B. Lubar, a titan of industry and president and founder of Lubar & Company (p. 33). Light bounces from his glasses to leave one eye illuminated sufficiently to reveal an unwavering and determined gaze.

"Businessmen" proved transformational for Bamberger. He realized that photography could be more than surfaces. He discovered the underlying tension that exists between public image and private self. The portraits were published under the title "Portraits of Power" as a photo spread in *Milwaukee Magazine* in September 1984, cementing Bamberger's growing reputation as a photographer and garnering a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. His work also caught the attention of the International Center of Photography, New York, which showed eight of the businessmen in an exhibition called *Portrayals* that included the likes of Chuck Close, Cindy Sherman, and the Starn twins.

On the heels of this early success, Bamberger devoted the following year to a related series about women. The series "Seven Women" was published in *Milwaukee Magazine* in 1985. It features diverse local notables such as Arlene Wilson, a modeling agency owner; his grandmother, Bee Brill; and Bo Black, director of Milwaukee's summer festival, among others (pp. 36, 38, 39). With this series, Bamberger took another step back from his subjects, photographing them in their homes or offices, thereby adding a specific context to each composition. He further augmented this specificity by providing short interviews to accompany each photograph.

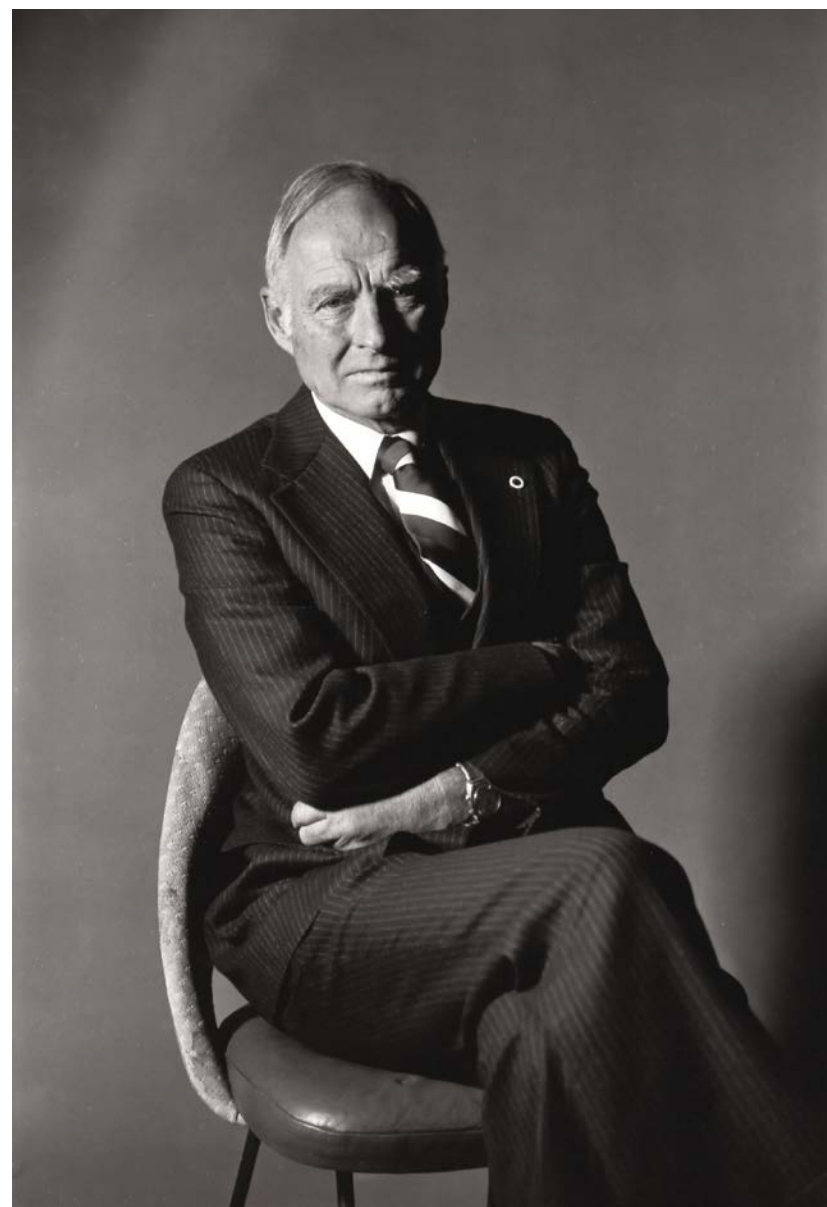
"Businessmen" and "Seven Women" mark a shift in Bamberger's photography. Moreover, they served to inaugurate what would become a long involvement with editorial magazine work in conjunction with his art practice. The two enterprises have informed and enriched one another harmoniously over the years.



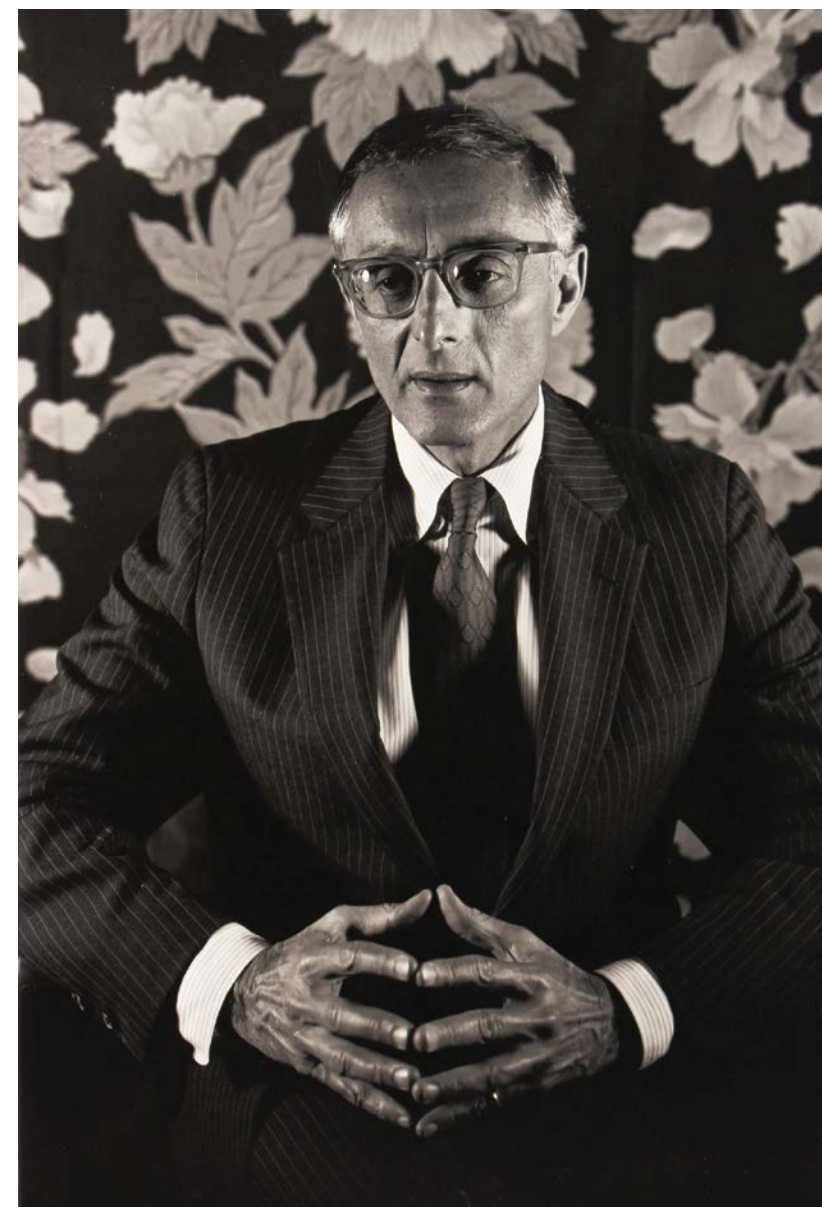
Fred L. Brengel, 1984



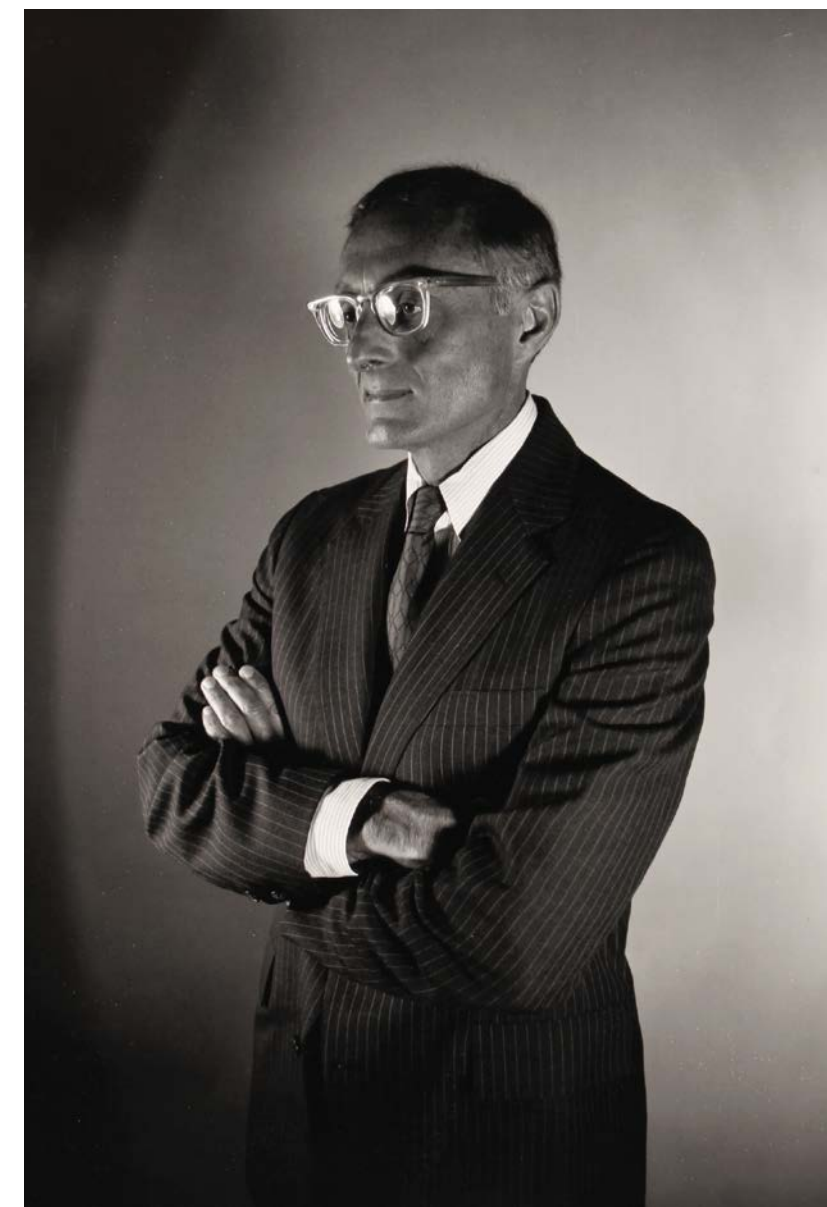
David Kahler, 1984



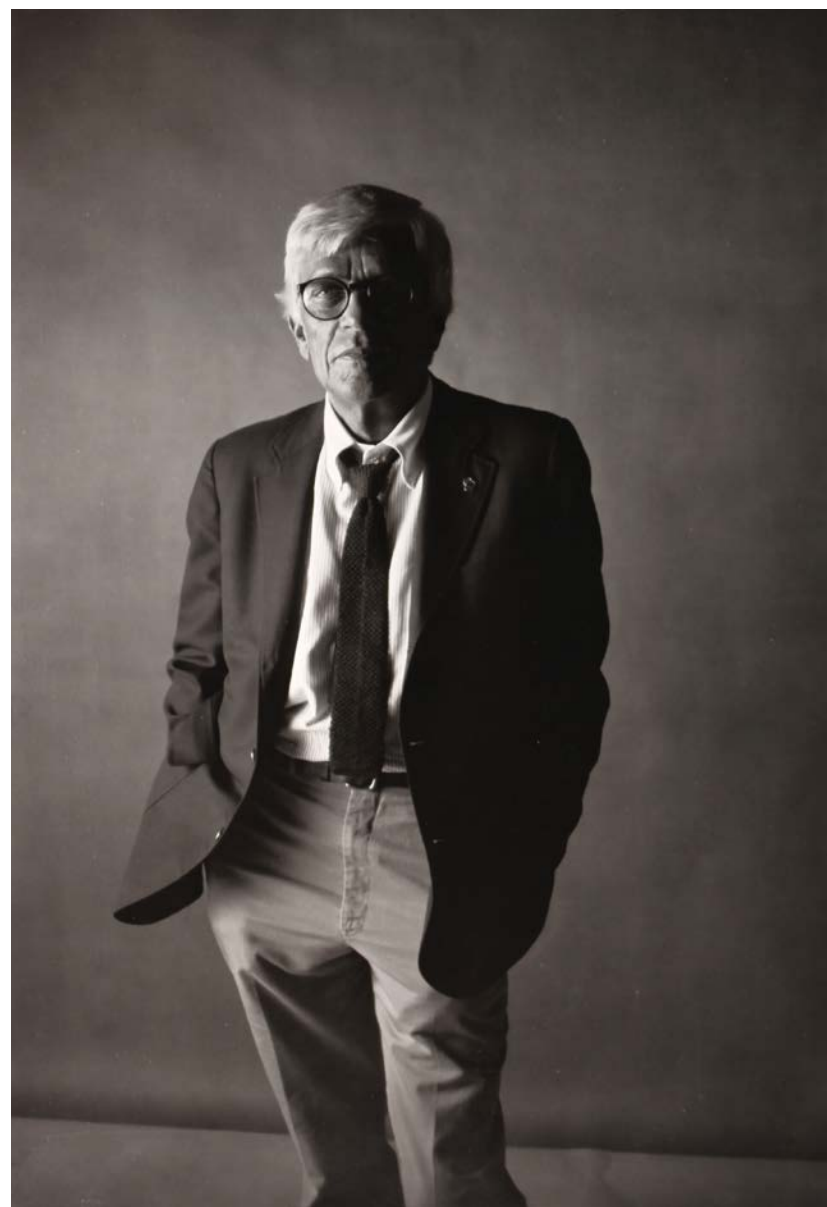
Fred L. Brengel, 1984



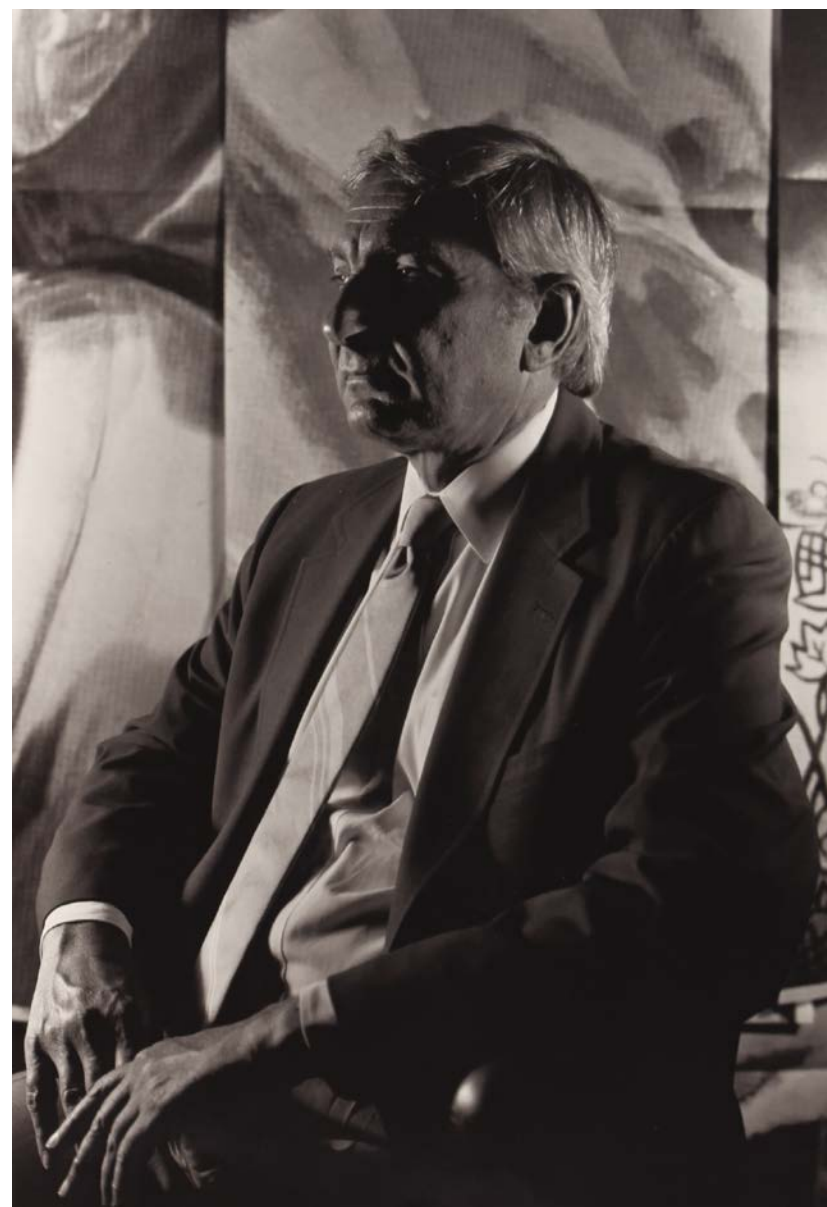
Sheldon B. Lubar, 1983



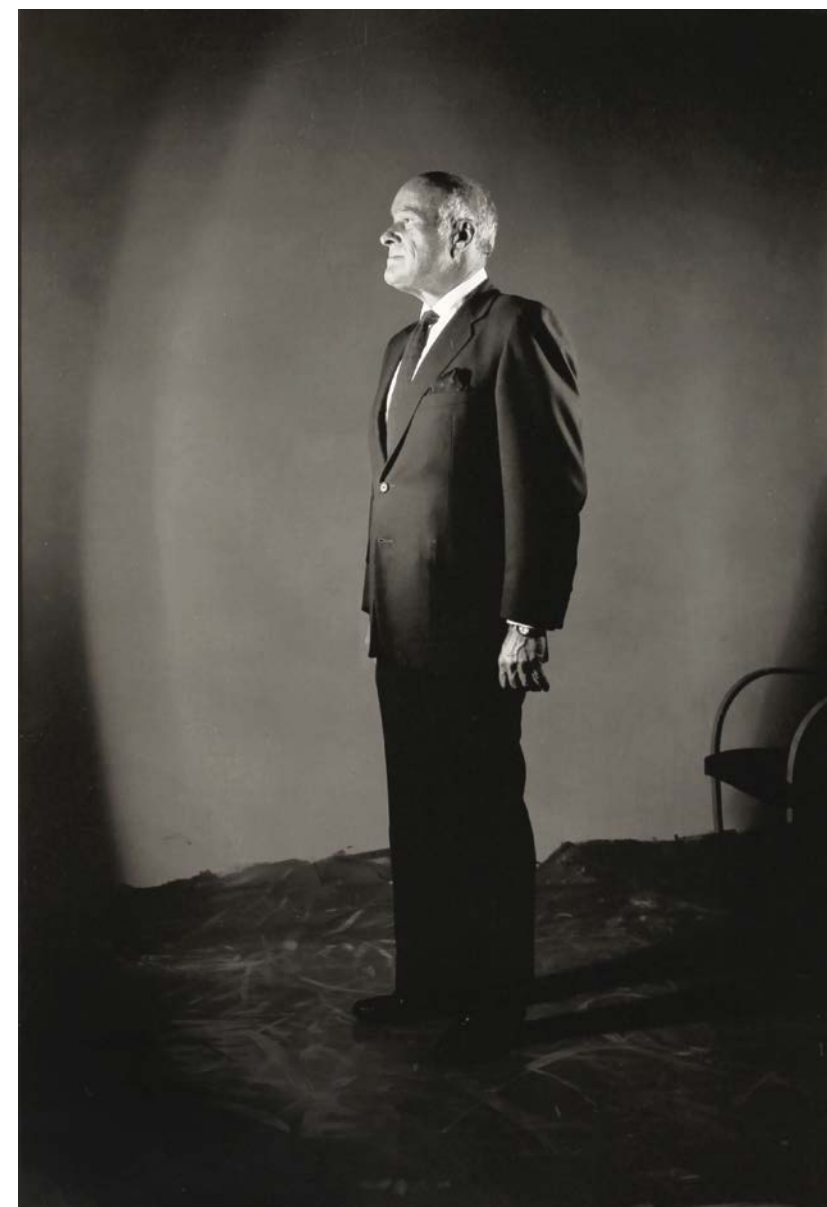
Sheldon B. Lubar, 1983



Michael J. Cudahy, 1984



William Orenstein, 1983



B. J. Sampson, 1984



B. J. Sampson, 1984



Arlene Wilson, 1985



Jill Pelisek with Her Daughter, Kitt, 1985



Jude Crowbridge, 1985



Grandma Bee Brill, 1985



Bo Black with Children, 1985

FAMILY | FRIENDS

Debra Brehmer

Tom Bamberger characterizes each phase of his career as “taking baby steps.” Although distinct, his projects are threaded through with thematic and technical evolutions rather than sharp turns. In 1985, he moved from his series “Seven Women,” which took him out of the studio into domestic settings, to similarly staged photos of family members and close friends. Perhaps when he photographed his grandmother Bee, for “Seven Women,” he found himself intrigued by a subject that gave him specific perspective on his own life. The picture of Bee feels the most direct of that series (p. 38). Her white ruffled collar dominates the image even more than her face, making the picture feel closer to death than life.

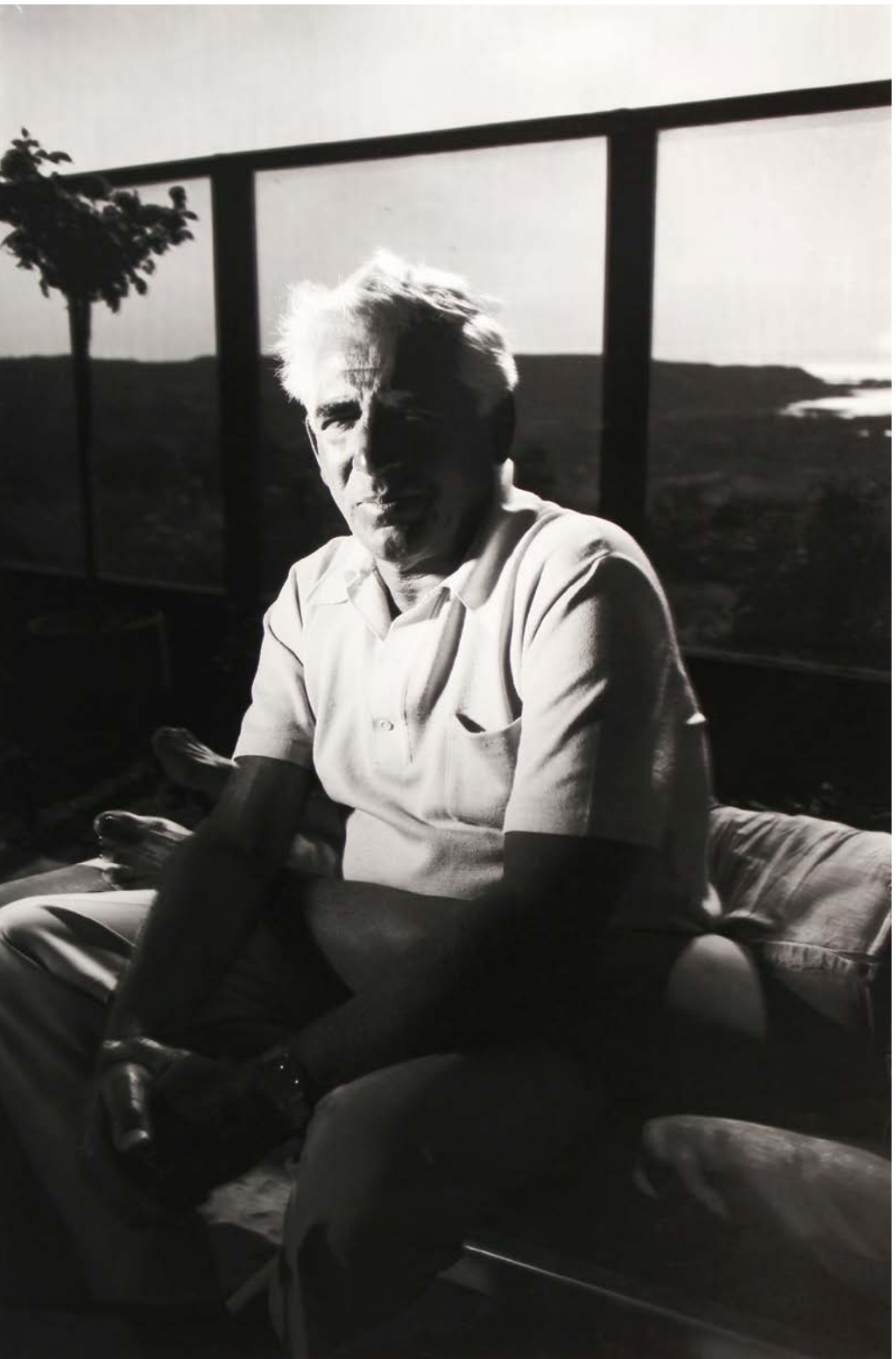
While visiting his parents in Carlsbad, California, Bamberger photographed his father, brother, and mother. He printed these images large—his largest to date: 26 x 39 inches (pp. 41, 42, 43). They are huge for darkroom prints in the 1980s and demonstrate Bamberger’s growing mastery of his materials. In the portrait of his father, Richard, the face again assumes its secondary place, this time subordinate to the weight and gravity of his seated body, which slumps slightly forward toward the picture plane. He turns his powerful head toward the camera as he sits relaxed in his own retirement villa. Like all the pictures in this series, the tonalities are dark. To fully navigate their sweeping gradients, we must adjust to their formal terms, like a night driver, and accept the peculiarities of the lighting.

Bamberger’s brother Don lounges like a movie star, a bare-chested Burt Reynolds type, handsome, virile, strong. His mother stands in a hot tub in her swimsuit. Bamberger’s technique of combining outdoor light with bright

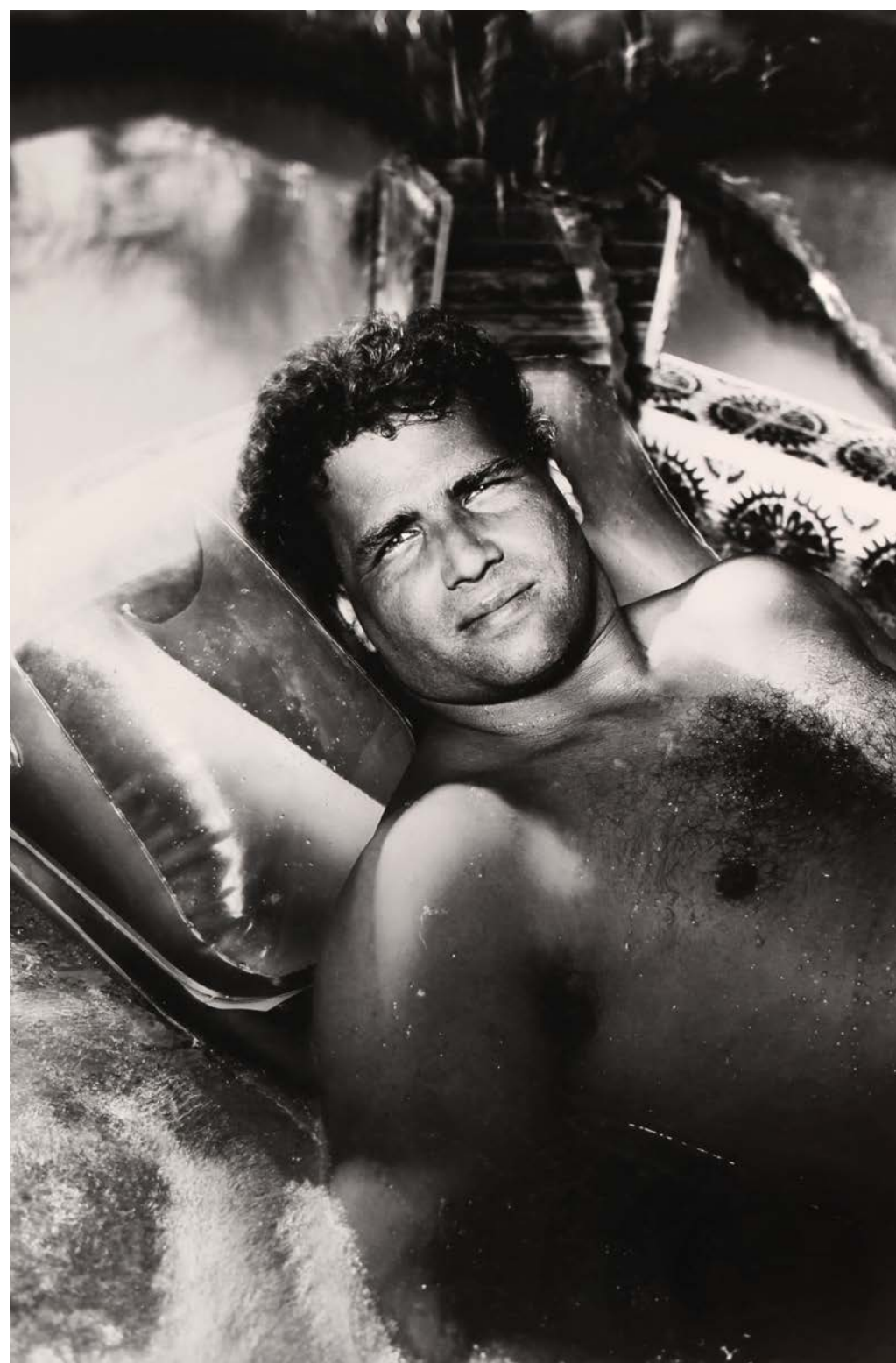
portable strobe illumination created harsh, atonal contrasts, tempting us to give the pictures a psychological reading.

The pictures of friends feel even more intimate. Bamberger and his first wife divorced in the early 1980s. In 1986, he photographed his new girlfriend, Tania Modleski, a writer and professor, wearing a bathrobe and alone in thought. She is certainly not glamorous but introspective in tender lamplight (p. 44). It could be morning or night. The time of day is never clear in these pictures, which leaves us lingering in a kind of “foreverness” of the moment. Bamberger also photographed the children of his good friend and fellow photographer Steven D. Foster (p. 45). Foster, who developed the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee’s photography department, was an important source of inspiration for Bamberger. Foster’s son Shaun is shown sitting on the edge of his bed, poised, while daughter Jessica reclines on her side in her bed. Bamberger subtly captures the languorous corporeality that sometimes accompanies domestic boredom in childhood. Even though he never had children of his own, Bamberger has always enjoyed and related well to young people, welcoming teenagers and interns into his studio and generously acting as friend and mentor.

This body of work was shown at a Milwaukee gallery in 1986, when Bamberger was thirty-seven years old. It was a pivotal period in his development: he was taking stock of relationships—personal and otherwise—and coming to grips with the undeniable presence of the human condition. This simple awareness would prepare him for the next chapter.



Richard Bamberger, 1985



Don in Pool, 1986



Mother in Bathing Suit, 1986



Tania Modleski, 1986



Jessica Foster, 1986



Shaun Foster, 1986

DINERS | SUBURBIA

Debra Brehmer

Tom Bamberger soon established a reputation for black-and-white psychological portraits. In seemingly two-year increments throughout the mid-1980s, he moved through series after series of increasingly complex groupings of figures and relationships in environmental settings.

One of the earliest works from this period, *Jane and Sophie* (1984), would mark a milestone in his career (p. 47). New York’s Museum of Modern Art purchased the work and in 1991 included it in a nationally significant exhibition curated by Peter Galassi called *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort*. The exhibition placed Bamberger alongside Gregory Crewdson, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, William Eggleston, Lee Friedlander, Nan Goldin, Nicholas Nixon, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, and others.

Jane and Sophie shows a mother and daughter seated behind a kitchen table in the corner of a room. The room’s corner divides the composition down the center and frames a window behind each figure. Their expressions, placement of hands, and the space between them load the picture with psychological and pictorial drama. Aging, generational divides, and the weight of mother-daughter relationships fill the gap between the angular beauty of the daughter and the softened weariness of the mother. The photograph conveys a kind of quiet truth often missed when the world is in motion.

Inspired by the simplicity of figures seated at tables, Bamberger launched a series he called “Diners,” which shows people eating in fast food restaurants and ice cream shops. With a carload of power packs, extension cords, portable strobes, and studio assistants, he would barge into restaurants and ask unwitting patrons—complete strangers—if he could take their picture. He liked that these photos contained a portrait, a still life, and often a landscape seen through windows. “What else is there?” asks Bamberger. “These are the heuristic devices that organize and make sense of our world—the one we make up in our head.”

The “Diners” pictures are more cinematic than previous bodies of work. For the first time, one sees the inkling of a distilled narrative: a police detective pauses for a hot lunch on a cold day; a man in a plaid shirt patiently waits for a check; a kid on break devours a hamburger; and two young children in an unfocused moment are awash in joyful play (pp. 50, 51, 53). These prints are also larger, 26 x 36 inches, pointing to a new boldness and maturity of technique and thinking.

Bamberger next directed his gaze to the new suburbs skirting the city—to the domain of the Baby Boomer generation. There he photographed grocery cart derbies at the local supermarket; porch sitters arguing; sunny afternoon barbecues simmering with tension; and children playing in the shadow of ominous father figures (pp. 55, 58, 59, 60). Cultural meaning surfaces in basketball hoops, newly washed cars, and placid façades in treeless tracts of new housing developments. In these photos, Bamberger stepped back once again, now bringing full vistas into his compositions, which only further underscore a paradoxical postwar phenomenon: the more space we claim, the more isolated we become. People fit awkwardly into these scenes: there are no smiling faces, no gracious gestures of friendship or affection, no sense of a community larger than the individual. Bamberger called this snapshot of Middle America “Suburbia.”

By the early 1990s, the “Suburbia” series was quickly evolving. The presence of human figures diminished in size and significance and the strident narratives of just a year or two earlier dissolved incrementally with each new photograph. Empty streets and intersections, patchwork views of rooftops, and broad expanses of open fields replaced the human condition (pp. 62, 65, 66). In the photo *Mound* from 1993, the social and familial angst of the “Suburbia” series has been reduced to a simple curving horizon line pierced by a single fragile sapling (p. 67). The horizon line would become Bamberger’s next subject.



Jane and Sophie, 1984



Margo and Pat, 1987



Barbara Recht, 1986



Officer Storney, 1986

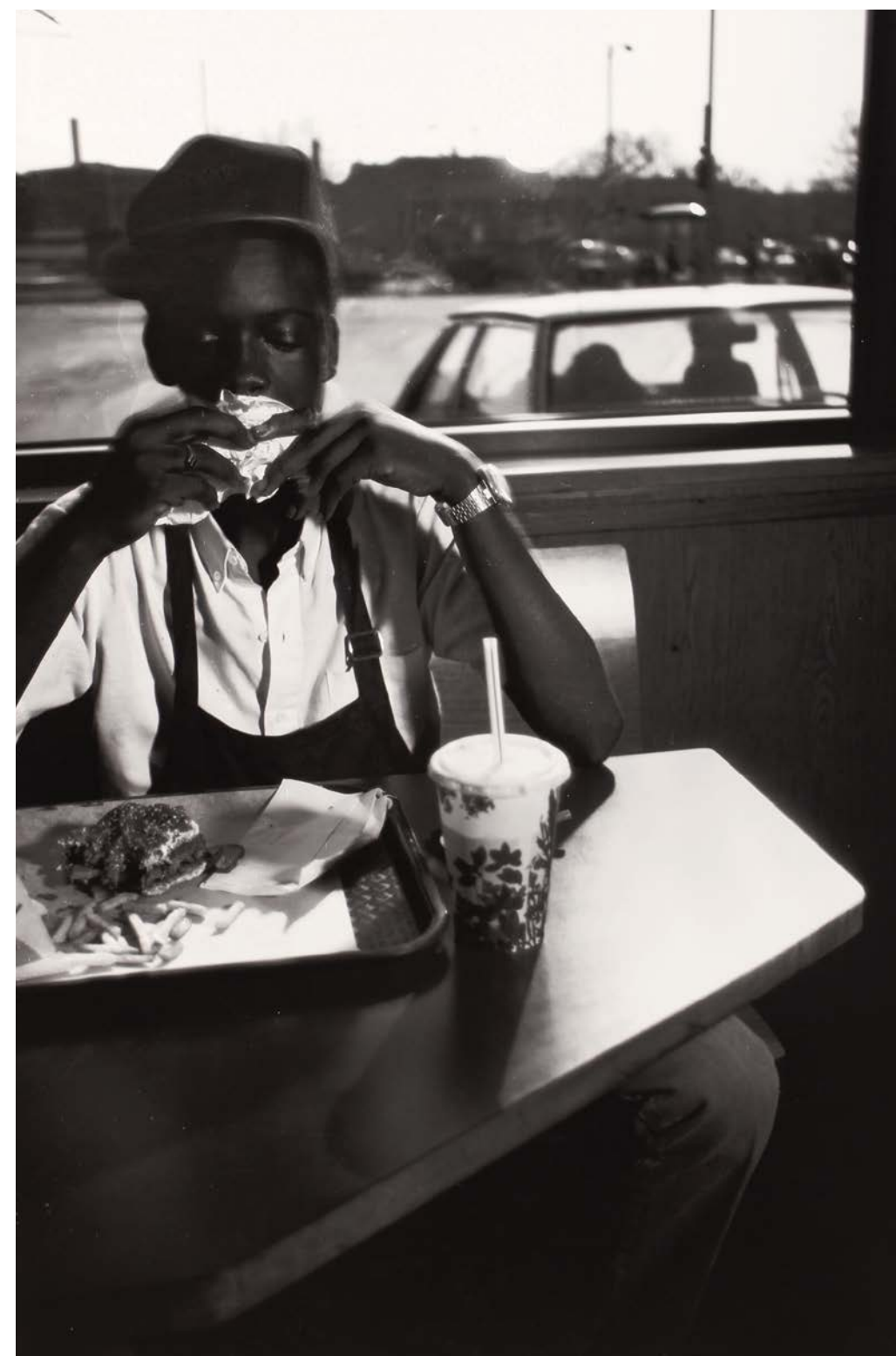


Guy at the Knick, 1988



Man with Straw, 1988

Family at Al's, 1986



Guy at Buddy's, 1989



Boys in a Cart, 1990

Shopping Cart Derby, 1990



Woman with Her Newspaper, 1991



Man on His Lawn, 1990



Porch Couple, 1991



Grilling in the Suburbs, 1991



Sprinkler Boy, 1991



Man, Grill, Boy, 1991



The Masterpiece, 1994



Teutonia Looking West, 1992



Driving Range, Brookfield, 1992



Looking Down Locust, 1992

Cul de Sac, 1992



Milwaukee Flowers, 1993

Milwaukee Homes, 1994





Baseball, 1994



Mound, 1994

HORIZON LINES

J Tyler Friedman

By the early 1990s, just as he had done many times before, Tom Bamberger pulled the camera lens steadily back from his subject until the mises en scène of suburban life disappeared altogether, leaving only empty fields and open skies. He would later exhibit and publish this series of landscapes as “Horizon Lines.”

The retreat from the narrative of suburbia happened over a five-year period between 1994 and 1999. Early photographs in the series such as *Pretty Wisconsin Landscape*; *Untitled (LA)*; *Untitled (Migrant Workers, California)*; *Untitled (California Eden)*; and are recognizable as specific regions, but gradually they would be shorn of local markers (pp. 70, 71, 72, 73). The photographs would become devoid of symbolic charge and visual pathways. “I wanted to get away from meaning,” says Bamberger. “There is no path through these pictures. Your eyes keep panning with no place to land.” In most of the photographs, the human element is altogether suppressed and places have become entirely placeless. Signs of civilization are increasingly negligible.

Untitled (Lonely Guy) from 1996 is a pivotal work in this series (p. 77).

A single isolated figure is traversing a broad expanse of desert scarred by tire tracks of heavy machinery—a legacy of human presence. Bamberger titled the image in the same year he made the print: 1996. It is a sentimental title, to be sure. Interestingly, to date, this marks the last human figure Bamberger has photographed in his professional work—the final vestige of humanity before it was banished.

Bamberger was now following his minimalist impulse to its logical conclusion. The eastern Colorado images, for instance, have distilled the genre of landscape photography to its essential elements (pp. 82 – 85). Titles aside, they are not photographs of any particular place; they present landscapes in

their purest form. What happens in Bamberger’s horizons finds an apt artistic analogue in minimalist music. Instead of digging into the depths of harmony, composers such as Steve Reich and Philip Glass exploit the hypnotic powers of repetition and overlapping patterns. The power of these meager resources becomes apparent in their ability to draw us in and engage us with simple formal elements.

The challenge of the “Horizon Lines” is also their achievement. Each photo juxtaposes two planes—sky and earth—divided at the horizon. A salient feature is the tonal contrast between these two planes: it is accurate, but inadequate, to classify the photographs as black-and-white, since their range is tantamount to a color photograph. But color film would have tied the images too closely to reality. Adding to the tonal richness is a pronounced textural contrast between the planes. Bamberger says admiringly, “Someone has plowed lines in the ground to the horizon. That’s better than any artist could do.” By contrast, he increasingly erased clouds to create flawless skies that blend imperceptibly into the white expanses of the photographic paper.

The horizon line itself is the central element in these compositions, both spatially and conceptually. Bamberger has situated the line at the horizontal center of the images. By printing the dark rectangular photographs onto 20-by-24 or 40-by-48-inch sheets of unexposed white paper, he created his own rigorous formal language which both references a minimalist vocabulary and challenges the metaphor of photography as a window to the world.

The role that Bamberger played in constructing the “Horizon Lines” anticipates his “Cultured Landscapes,” which he would even more assertively manipulate. Whereas Bamberger has here played documentarian to the found visual rhythms of the horizon, he would fabricate his own rhythms with nature’s raw materials in his next body of work.



Untitled (Road and Field), 1996



Pretty Wisconsin Landscape, 1996



Untitled (LA), 1997



Untitled (Migrant Workers, California), 1996



Untitled (Organized Field), 1997



Untitled (California Eden), 1997



Untitled (Silver Desert), 1996



Untitled (Silver Desert), 1996



Untitled (Death Valley), 1997



Untitled (Lonely Guy), 1996



Untitled, 1996/98



Untitled (Eastern Colorado), 1998



Untitled (Field and Tree), 1998



Untitled, 1998



Untitled (Southern California), 1996/98



Untitled, 1996/98



Untitled (Eastern Colorado), 1998



Untitled (Eastern Colorado), 1998



Untitled (Eastern Colorado), 1998



CULTURED LANDSCAPES

J Tyler Friedman

Dirt, from the “Horizon Lines,” was a significant nexus in Tom Bamberger’s oeuvre: the past is summarized, the future anticipated, and Bamberger’s unconventional methods are epitomized (pp. 84 – 85). This black-and-white placeless place falls within the tradition of the horizon photograph. While the subject matter is familiar, *Dirt* inaugurates a new scale and new method that Bamberger would explore for the next decade.

The photographs comprising *Dirt* were taken on a road trip through eastern Colorado. Using a tripod, Bamberger pivoted the camera to capture three contiguous, discrete images (pp. 82 – 83). One day, noticing that their horizon lines and furrows aligned perfectly, he felt compelled to seam the three images together. With a wildly expensive and labor-intensive drum scanner, he scanned the three negatives, creating digital files that he assembled in Photoshop to create half the picture. He then cloned that image, reversed it, and married the mirror images into a single long photograph. “You do all these stupid things in art to see what works,” says Bamberger. “With *Dirt*, I was just trying to extend the horizon line.”

This act of replication, which Bamberger calls “cloning” or “culturing,” is the signal characteristic of the “Cultured Landscapes.” The inspiration for the process comes not from art history but from Bamberger’s abiding interest in technology and science, especially the work of Charles Darwin. “I’m interested in the relationship between the organic and the synthetic—between the patterns of nature and the regularity that human beings achieve,” says Bamberger. He compares his cloning method to the way that DNA reproduces, the way a scientist cultures bacteria in a petri dish, and to the invention of interchangeable parts that triggered the Second Industrial Revolution toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Cloning should not be mistaken for mere replication. Each photograph is the product of innumerable small changes meant to establish equilibrium between nature and human agency, while avoiding the appearance of overly consistent replication. To simply connect mirrored images as,

for example, in the case of *Brown Grass*, yields unsightly seams that must be painstakingly removed (pp. 94 – 95). The process of making things less obvious is time-intensive, sometimes involving copying a single blade of grass and moving it in front of another.

These small changes are only one instance of Bamberger’s prioritizing quality over convenience. Early “Cultured Landscapes” were shot either with a 35mm camera or a 4 x 5 camera (pp. 88 – 89). Then, as with *Dirt*, Bamberger used the drum scanner to create digital files for cloning. Around 2005 – 2006, he acquired an 8 x 10 camera that was capable of capturing greater detail and taller images, as in *Fall* (pp. 102 – 103). Had Bamberger bought one of the many digital cameras on the market, he could have avoided the labor and expense of the drum scanner, but the self-styled “density freak” was dissatisfied with the resolution of digital technology at the time.

Early examples such as *Wires* and *Aspens* find Bamberger honing his new methods. *Wires* emphasizes replication: the symmetry of the photograph is beguiling in its geometric perfection. In Bamberger’s mind, he built the picture in the way that actual vineyards are constructed: by simply expanding on what is already there. The image is not of an actual vineyard but an *ideally constructed vineyard*. In *Aspens*, certain clusters of trees recur in the foreground, which we sense at first glance but confirm only after close scrutiny. In effect, the photograph tickles consciousness with stimuli situated at the threshold of palpability and perceptibility. Bamberger feels he followed nature’s lead: “I did exactly what the Aspen grove itself did—reiterate itself.” In *Windmills*, two years later, he introduced a degree of variety and mastery that enhances the photograph’s verisimilitude and the amount of information to be digested (pp. 100 – 101).

The “Cultured Landscapes” anticipate a transition to digital photography and an interest in documenting the changes that nature itself undergoes over time.





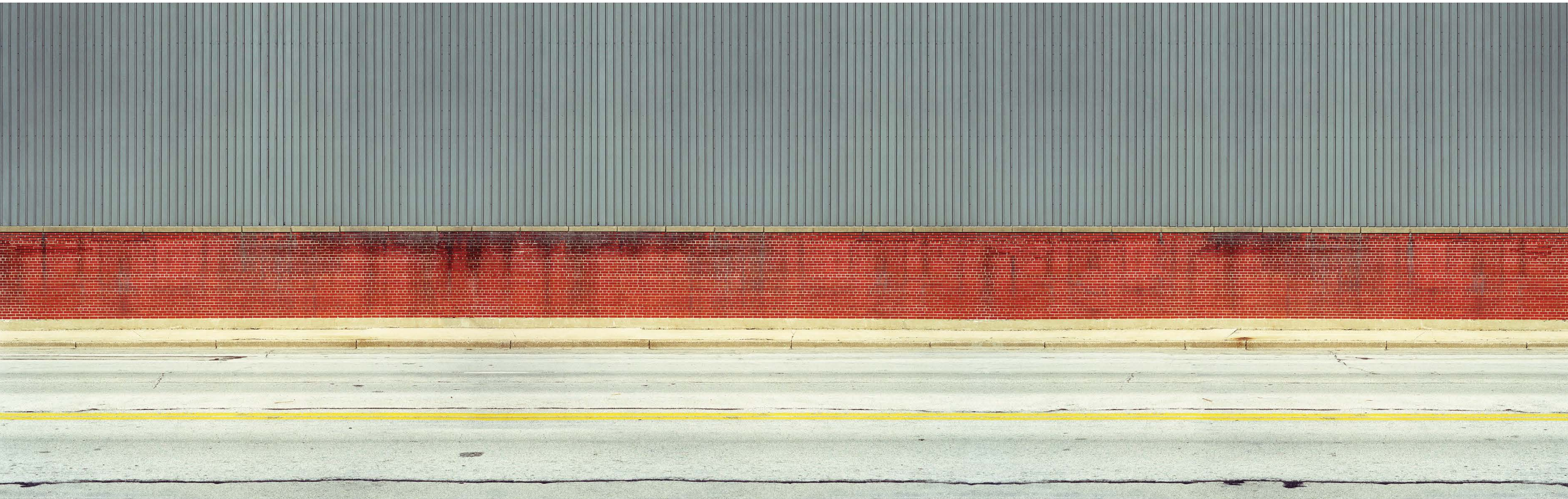
Wires, 2002

Aspens, 2002









The Building, 2003



Red Grass, 2003



Windmills, 2004



TIMESCAPES

J Tyler Friedman | Laurie Winters

Tom Bamberger’s “Timescapes” confound our experience with traditional photography. Around 2012, Bamberger purchased a robotic GigaPan camera, produced in partnership by Carnegie Mellon University and NASA to make extremely high-definition, panoramic photographs of the surface of Mars. The GigaPan operates digitally by dividing a landscape into a grid and creating a composite of hundreds or even thousands of photographs recorded successively over time. The panoramic capability of the camera was a logical extension of Bamberger’s previous work.

Civil Twilight from 2013 is a study of a day’s dying light (pp. 106 – 107). The title derives from what meteorologists and aviators refer to as “civil twilight”—the point when the sun falls below the horizon and a golden light lingers. Bamberger selected the Oak Creek site outside of Milwaukee for its gently arcing horizon line with only minor points of vertical interest. Over a thirty-five minute period, he used the camera to create a composite of more than three hundred individual photographic cells that are digitally seamed together. Somewhat unexpectedly, Bamberger recorded not only the bucolic vista but also the changing effects of twilight as the sun dropped below the horizon. This highly detailed physical and temporal composite defies definitions of still photography.

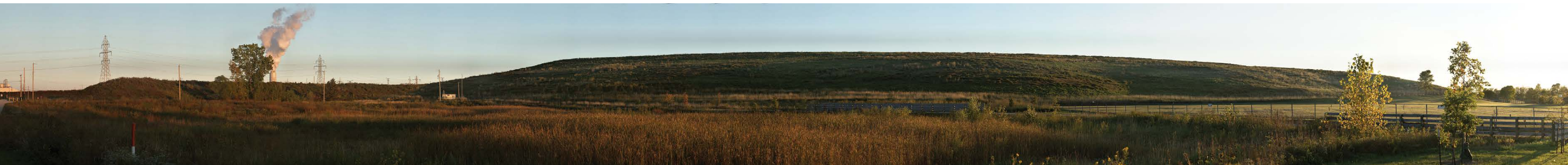
Habit has trained us to see photographs as moments wrested from the flow of time, so Bamberger’s “Timescapes” require an adjustment in outlook to be fully appreciated. At a monumental thirty-five feet in length, *Civil Twilight* is Bamberger’s largest photograph and it demands active participation. Its sheer

scale and the absence of a fixed focal point require the viewer to meander from end to end to absorb the entire composition. Unlike conventional film, where time unfolds scene after scene, each disappearing to make way for the next, here time stretches out in a visual continuum more akin to an Asian scroll unfurled.

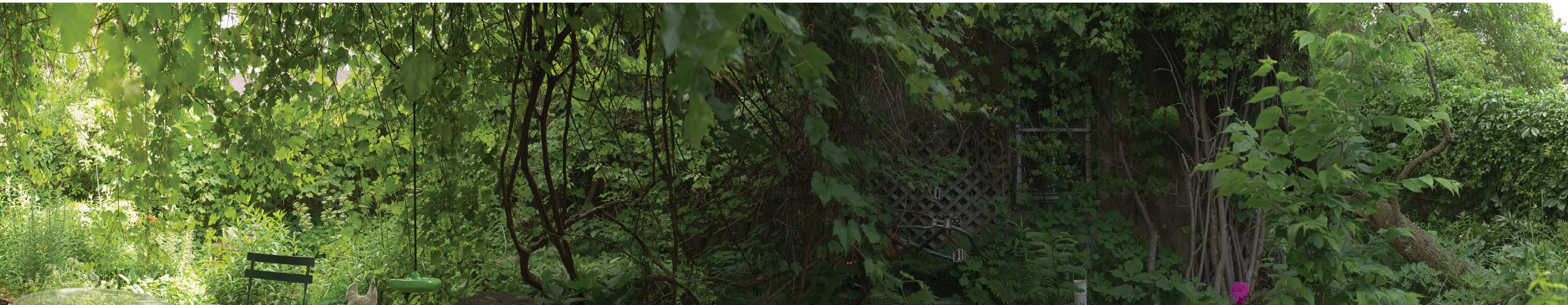
Pete’s World was taken a year later in a friend’s backyard during the height of summer (pp. 108 – 109). The twenty-two feet of lush green vines and trellises took roughly thirty-five minutes of camera time. Midway through the photographic process, the sky darkened for a brief shower, casting the right half of the photograph into shadow and leaving behind traces of not only changes in time but in atmosphere. Rain droplets are visible on leaves in the right side of the composition. Bamberger altered branches and leaves throughout and erased an unsightly pole and other excrescences to create the perfect backyard.

Pete’s World and *Civil Twilight* in many ways achieve the status of archetypal Wisconsin landscapes—on steroids. Their unframed, extended horizontal formats resting against white museum walls evoke the earlier “Horizon Lines” and “Cultured Landscapes”—long rectangular boxes surrounded by expanses of white that objectify and distance the subjects. Even though “Timescapes” are topographically precise, they attain as a result of their format a stature of universality and read as being both here and nowhere. Viewing the works is an almost mystical experience: an impossible moment containing duration.





Civil Twilight, 2013



SEQUENCES

J Tyler Friedman

The digital video *white.blue* (2009) finds Tom Bamberger continuing the thread of his earlier “Cultured Landscapes” (p. 111). In a brief minute plus one second, Bamberger transfigures the initial image of *white.blue* by the same method he used in his “Cultured Landscapes”: making individually negligible yet cumulatively transformative changes. The absence of an explicit narrative in the field allows the change to go unnoticed. Only when the video’s first still is compared to the last does the scope of change become apparent.

Bamberger’s work *Ok* has been in development for nearly a decade (pp. 112 – 15). In curatorial terms, it is a multi-image digital installation, but initially it was just Bamberger’s screen saver. Whenever an image caught his eye, he would add it to a folder titled “Ok.” Over time, he began to notice a common response that led him to pursue the work in a more systematic manner: “No matter whether they’re art historians or the Fed Ex guy,” says Bamberger, “there’s a sound people make when they watch it—‘hm.’ It’s the sound of something making sense but not in any linear way.”

The simplicity of *Ok* belies its hypnotic effect. Three screens play host to a revolving set of images, drawn randomly from a bank of approximately eight thousand. Each image decays after eight seconds with the transitions slightly askew so as to present different combinations in an unending, kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria. The images come from countless sources, including Bamberger’s own body of work. He leaves few of them untouched. In some cases, he plays preservationist by adjusting contrast or fixing minor flaws. In others, he subtly and wryly manipulates details, such as re-restricting a Southern water fountain for “Coolred only.” Some images are perversely small; others are so large as to obscure their identity. Taken as a whole, the work constitutes a visual compendium of Bamberger’s myriad interests: mathematics, art history, science, architecture, graphic design, philosophy, flowers, fish, historical documents, letters, and a wide variety of explosions.

Ok lends itself to different types of experiences. Most basically, the individual images themselves are engrossing and enjoyable to watch. “Each image

is an assertion,” says Bamberger. “They are percussive.” There is also pleasure in recognition, in identifying a film still from *The Godfather* or the distinctive face of tenor guitarist Eddie Condon. When we view all three simultaneous images as a triptych, instead of individually, connections emerge. A porcupine sets up a visual rhyme with the spiky seed balls of the Sweet Gum Tree. An abraded painting, decrepit wall, and wizened face show their wear and tear in concert. The images begin to refer to one another and their relationships become meaningful even when their connection is impossible to articulate.

Ok is Bamberger’s return to meaning. Bamberger wrote about meaning in regard to his early portraiture: “I marinated these pictures in ‘meaning.’” But as he moved farther away from the subject in his landscapes, meaning also receded into the distance. His move away from meaning reflected Bamberger’s qualms about its place in art: “Meaning in photography has to be a fantasy, especially if you think it is somehow attached to the subject or picture.”

With *Ok*, Bamberger has re-engaged meaning in a different way. He is not trying to impute significance to the images or to uncover their own inherent definition. Rather, he has created conditions under which we can construct meaning. Of *Ok*, he says, “Everything is out of context or placed into a different context, which changes the meaning. By their nature, pictures are fragmentary, unbounded, they don’t tell the whole story.” Like watching cloud formations or responding to an inkblot test, the brain kicks into action when confronted by suggestive stimuli. Basically, in order to make it “ok,” we are hard-wired to seek to establish a narrative for each triptych.

Bamberger calls his digital works “Sequences.” As the title suggests, these works, and the series that make up the totality of his career, are related and continuous. Sometimes the changes come slowly and are virtually imperceptible; sometimes they are dramatic and come explosively every eight seconds.



white.blue, 2009 (video stills)



Ok (random digital screens), 2008/2017







PROFILE

BIOGRAPHY

Tom Bamberger has been a working artist for almost four decades. His photographs have been collected and shown at many museums, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. His work has been reviewed in *The New Yorker*, *Art in America*, and *The New York Times*, and Bamberger has been the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Wisconsin Arts Board. He is represented by Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects in New York.

Bamberger is also the author of many essays and publications on photography, architecture, and urban design. During his more than twenty years as a contributing editor for *Milwaukee Magazine*, he has written hundreds of articles about the visual world that have garnered numerous honors, for example, from the Wisconsin Press Club for criticism, and the White Award, a national press award for city and regional magazines.

While working at the Milwaukee Art Museum as the curator of photography for more than a decade, Bamberger produced more than thirty exhibitions and publications. Among the shows that received national recognition were the first museum exhibitions of Andreas Gursky, Anna and Bernhard Blume, and Rodney Graham, which traveled to multiple venues and were accompanied by publications.

AWARDS FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

- 1983 Wisconsin Arts Board Project Grant
- 1984 Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship
National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship
- 1985 Wisconsin Arts Board Project Grant
- 1987 Milwaukee Artist Foundation Project Grant
- 1995 Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship

AWARDS FOR WRITING

The White Award for writing on photography, a national competition for city and regional magazines (silver, 1985; gold, 1988, 1995, 2009)
Milwaukee Press Club (2002, 2009, 2015)

SELECT COLLECTIONS

- The Art Institute of Chicago
- Bank of America
- Citibank, N.A.
- Cleary Gottlieb Steen Hamilton LLP, Washington, DC
- Cleveland Museum of Art
- Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa
- First Bank Minneapolis
- Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York
- Hanley-Wood LLC, Washington, DC
- Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin
- Milwaukee Art Museum
- Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

- The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Museum of the Photographic Arts, San Diego
- Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend
- Progressive Corporation, Cleveland
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- Thelan, Reid & Priest, New York
- Weil, Gotshal, Manges, New York
- Williams and Connolly LLP, Washington, DC

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend
- 2016 Green Gallery, Milwaukee
- 2006 Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York
- 2004 Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York
- 2003 Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago
Herter Art Gallery, The University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- 2002 Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York
- 2000 Judy Ann Goldman Fine Arts, Boston
- 1999 Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York
- 1998 Institute of Visual Arts, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Carol Ehlers Gallery, Chicago
- 1995 Michael H. Lord Gallery, Milwaukee
- 1993 Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia
Carlsten Art Gallery at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, Wisconsin
- 1992 Ehlers Caudill Gallery, Chicago
Michael H. Lord Gallery, Milwaukee
- 1990 Michael H. Lord Gallery, Milwaukee
- 1989 Michael H. Lord Gallery, Milwaukee
- 1988 Mednick Gallery, University of the Arts, Philadelphia
- 1987 Milwaukee Art Museum
- 1986 Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin
Michael H. Lord Gallery, Milwaukee
ISIS Gallery, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana
- 1984 J. Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
- 1983 B.C. Space, Laguna Beach, California
- 1982 Woodland Pattern, Milwaukee
- 1980 Perihelion Galleries, Milwaukee

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2015	Roulette, Brooklyn, New York, <i>Carried Away</i> (traveled to Stansbury Theater, Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin)
2014	INOVA, Milwaukee, <i>Sight Readings</i>
2011	Wild Space Dance Company, Pritzlaff Building, Milwaukee, <i>In the Space Between</i>
2010	Wild Space Dance Company, Oregon St. Warehouse, Milwaukee, <i>Accident and Necessity</i>
2008	John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, <i>Stretching the Truth</i>
2007	The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, <i>Utopian Mirage: Social Metaphors in Contemporary Photography and Film</i> INOVA/Kenilworth, Peck School of the Arts, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, <i>Renatured: Works by Tom Bamberger and Kyoung Ae Cho</i>
2006	The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, <i>Shifting Terrain: Contemporary Landscape Photography</i>
2005	Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York, <i>Pairs, Groups, and Grids</i> Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, <i>Out There: Landscape in the New Millennium</i>
2004	Jim Kempner Fine Art, New York, <i>Outside</i> The Art Institute of Chicago, <i>About Face</i> The Suburban, Oak Park, Illinois, <i>Poster Project 2004</i> Downtown for Democracy, Max Fish and Bronwyn Keenan Gallery, New York, <i>A More Perfect Union</i> Lothringer-Dreizen, Munich, <i>Spacemakers</i> Milwaukee Art Museum, <i>Artists Interrogate: Politics and War</i>
2003	The Hunterdon Museum, Clinton, New Jersey, <i>Extreme Landscape</i> City Gallery of Prague, <i>The View from Here: Recent Pictures from Central Europe and the American Midwest</i> (traveled to Riffe Gallery, Columbus, Ohio; Spaces, Cleveland; Minnesota Center for Photography, Minneapolis; Erie Art Museum, Erie, Pennsylvania)
2002	Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, and Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montreal, <i>Regarding Landscape</i> Ludwig Museum/ Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, <i>The View from Here: Recent Pictures from Central Europe and the American Midwest</i> Center for Photography, Woodstock, New York, <i>Imaginary Homelands: Reconstructed Narratives in Digital Landscape</i> The Pond, Chicago, <i>Ideal Avalanche</i>
2001	Dorsky Gallery, New York, <i>At the Edge: The Horizon Line in Contemporary Art</i>
2000	The Art Institute of Chicago, installation Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, <i>Photography About Photography</i>
1999	Robert Mann Gallery, New York, <i>Blind Spot 13</i> Ehlers Caudill Gallery, Chicago
1997	The Museum of Modern Art, New York, <i>American Photography: Recent Acquisitions</i> Ehlers Caudill Gallery, Chicago, <i>Midwest Landscape: 8 Photographers</i>

1996	Michael H. Lord Gallery, Milwaukee, gallery artists Paolo Baldacci Gallery, New York, <i>Blind Spot: The First Four Years</i>
1995	Bonni Benrubi Gallery, New York, <i>Summer Salon II</i>
1994	Elhers Caudill Gallery, Chicago, <i>Picture Perfect</i> Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, <i>Amenities</i>
1994	Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, <i>Image Making: Photographic Selections from the Permanent Collection</i>
1992	Elhers Caudill Gallery, Chicago, <i>Group Show</i>
1991	The Museum of Modern Art, New York, <i>Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort</i> (traveled to Baltimore Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati) Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, <i>Vertical Axis: Photographs from Central States</i>
1990	Milwaukee Art Museum, <i>A Decade of Acquisitions</i>
1988	The Museum of Modern Art, New York, <i>New Acquisitions</i> Milwaukee Art Museum, <i>100 Years of Wisconsin Art</i> 333 Gallery, Chicago, <i>Individuals: New Art from Wisconsin</i> Haggerty Museum, Milwaukee, <i>Photography on the Edge</i>
1987	International Center of Photography – Midtown, New York, <i>Portrayals</i> (traveled to Herron’s Gallery, University of Indiana, Indianapolis; Sewal Art Gallery, Rice University, Houston) Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, <i>Third Triennial</i> Burden Gallery, New York, <i>Mother/Daughter</i>
1984	ASA Gallery, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, <i>Contemporary American Portraiture</i>
1983	Neikrug Photographica, New York, <i>Rated X</i>

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Details

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