

A Summer of Photography

July 8 – August 20, 2010

PRESS RELEASE

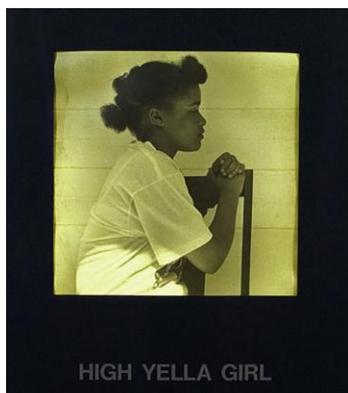
Opening Reception: July 8, 6 – 8 pm

The Flomenhaft Gallery is proud to present an ambitious exhibit of photographs by the following artists: Keliy Anderson-Staley, Neil Folberg, Builder Levy, Rimma Gerlovina & Valeriy Gerlovin, and Carrie Mae Weems.

Builder Levy's photographs of Appalachia are extremely timely in view of the recent tragedies in the coal mines of West Virginia and Kentucky. What began in 1968 as a ten-day trip became an odyssey of more than four decades of his visiting and photographing in coal mines, miners' homes and communities in the hills and hollows of Western Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, South Western Virginia and Western Pennsylvania. Visiting the region, Levy set out to experience the "real" America. These are intensely felt, richly printed gold-toned silver gelatin print photographs that manifest a visual poetry of human dignity. As the project has inspired, Levy's hope is that his photographs made over the past forty years can inspire a deeper understanding and greater appreciation for coalfield Appalachia, its people and its mountains, and its unique and significant role in our nations' heritage.



Keliy Anderson-Staley was an award winner in last year's Aperture Foundation's Portfolio Prize competition. This series of portraits seeks to raise questions about the ways photography has shaped our conceptions of identity since its earliest days. Her interest lies in finding the unique visual markers of personality and in portraying faces that reflect the diversity of contemporary America. She uses the nineteenth-century wet plate collodion photographic process, the same photo process that was used when many believed that photography could scientifically record and catalogue the racial or ethnic identity of a person.



Carrie Mae Weems has a remarkably unique way of addressing and confronting issues of identity. From the late 1988 to early 1990 Weems created a series entitled *Colored People* which celebrated the range of skin color hidden behind the term "black." The images from this series portray the terms the African American community has used to create its own hierarchies by way of color. In the triptychs she uses minimalism's formal repetitions and the 'front and side mug shot' as she says, "to better trap the miscreant." The works in our exhibit hold up a mirror to the beauty of black people's multiplicity. Another work is a four part

suite from her *Sea Island Series* of 1992. Weems had decided to create a new kind of historical chronicle for which she visited the unique folk culture of the African Americans of the Gullah dialect who inhabit the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina.

By way of contrast and to convey another mood, we are displaying several of **Neil Folberg's** photographs from the "Celestial Nights," a series of starry night landscapes with a cosmic outlook set in ancient ruins and scenes of the Middle East. This work was collected in the book, *Celestial Nights: Visions of an Ancient Land* (Aperture Press, New York 2001), winner of the New York Book Show Prize, First Place Photography, 2002. It became an Aperture traveling exhibition through 2008 in the United States and Israel. He was also commissioned to follow in the footsteps of the Impressionist artists and create a photographic view that captures their inspirations. We include several of these works in our summer exhibit. In France, Folberg discovered a community of artists linked to one another in concept, friendship and discord, and met and photographed some of their descendants. The Impressionist paintings provided a fount of inspiration and he realized that they were created in a spirit of what photography would later become but had not yet attained. He looked at modern France through the Impressionists' eyes and attempted to integrate their visions with his own in a manner both lighthearted and serious. So successful was he at the challenge that Abbeville Press decided to create a spectacular book to document his endeavor.



The engaging images of **the Gerlovins** are 'still performances' that briefly sum up trends in their art and closely link to the whole sequence of what they call their life's 'perhappenings.' They are their thoughts that became visible shown through allegoric games that transport the viewer into a theatre of consciousness. The Gerlovins feel that creativity in general is an extension of the inner qualities of an artist and they exist in all that exists. Therefore, their photographs which convey a mood are not portraits. They are not models but modules used for personification of different stages of psychological and visionary experience. They are the observers and the observed and are extended into the unifying state of being the observatory itself.

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