

Private Art / Public Art

PHOTOGRAPHS

from the Collections of

CITIBANK *and* JOHNSON & JOHNSON



We are pleased to present *Private Art/Public Art: Photographs from the Collections of Citibank and Johnson & Johnson*. The exhibition provides us with an opportunity to move an important aspect of our collections from the private walls of the corporation to public exhibition spaces. Corporations have been actively collecting art since the 1960s, but are often unable to share their art holdings with the public. Although both Citibank and Johnson & Johnson have loaned art to public museums, the majority of our collections remain integral parts of office buildings and are rarely seen by the public.

Photography is no stranger to corporate art collections. Citibank and Johnson & Johnson have acquired photographs since the inception of their respective Art Programs. Both

corporations have collected photography because of the aesthetic challenges as well as the accessibility offered by the medium. Included are artists who have expanded the definition of photography as well as those who work within its traditional parameters.

This exhibition reflects the specific interests of each corporate collection. Combined, the selections provide important examples from key aspects of the history of photography. As corporate curators, we have collaborated to provide an overview of photography as it relates to our respective collections. Unlike museums, the strategy for corporate collections frequently reflects the business goals of the corporation such as work, industrial development, family issues, and the environment.

In addition to the fine art collections, Citibank and Johnson & Johnson maintain changing exhibition spaces within their corporate complexes. The corporate galleries provide venues for regional and national artists as well as community and corporate exhibitions.

We are proud of our selections and especially pleased that our photography collections complement one another. At the outset we never intended to present an historical survey of photography, but rather sought to provide meaningful selections that fairly represented our collections. Many thanks to the Gallery Association of New York State for the opportunity to share our corporate collections with the public.

Michael Bzdak
Johnson & Johnson

Suzanne Lemakis
CITIBANK



Walker Evans, *Interior, Photographic Wall*, ca. 1930.
Gelatin silver print, Johnson & Johnson Collection.

Shifting between the amateur and the professional, science and art, documents and profoundly moving images, photography has long struggled to be recognized as art. Although photography has been around for one hundred and fifty years, many art museums did not begin collecting it until the 1920s. In fact, two major New York museums have opened photographic departments only within the last two years.

Corporations are more conservative in their collection policies than museums, and initially Citibank resisted collecting photography as art. Although there were a few photographs in the collection, the bankers questioned whether an image created with the click of a button could be considered art. But over the past ten years, photography's diversity of subject and image has made it one of the preferred mediums in the collection, joining the paintings, prints, sculpture and textiles that have been collected since the 1940s. Indeed, this interest in photography has resulted in the restoration and display of many of the bank's archival photographs. To date, including archival material, the Citibank collection encompasses over one thousand photographs.

A number of the photographs in this exhibit have been selected to demonstrate the shifting relationship between art and science. Eadweard Muybridge was an artist whose romantic life inspired a contemporary opera. His systematic study of animal locomotion revolutionized our understanding of anatomy and movement. Dr. Harold Edgerton, an electrical engineer and M.I.T. professor, invented the automatic flash.



Harold Edgerton, *Running Child*, 1939.
Gelatin silver print, Citibank Collection.

The strobe light picture of his son running joyfully transcends scientific illustration to become a celebration of childhood exuberance.

From its birth, photography was used to document landscape through



José Luis Avila, *Budd*, 1993. Pinhole camera image, Gum bichromate print, Johnson & Johnson Collection.

The Johnson & Johnson Corporate Art Collection, including photographs, painting, sculpture, and works on paper, is one component of an overall arts program. Through the Office of Corporate Contributions, the Company supports a large number of arts organizations throughout the United States. The mission of the Art Program is geared toward the Johnson & Johnson employee and includes educational and cultural enrichment programming for employees and their families.

The collection is housed primarily in the World Headquarters in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The Headquarters complex, designed by I.M. Pei and Partners, provided the impetus for Johnson & Johnson to officially organize the Corporate Art Program in 1983. We are proud of our efforts and are delighted to share a portion of our collection with the public.

The selections for *Private Art/Public Art* reflect the diversity of the photographs within the overall Art Collection. Unlike the Citibank collection, the photographs from the Johnson & Johnson collection are strictly from the twentieth century. An emphasis on New Jersey artists and images about New Jersey is evident in many of the photographs. Examples range from Esther Bubley's work for the Standard Oil of New Jersey photo project to Jan Staller's and Wendel White's contemporary documents.

Historically, many photographers have been intrigued with the diverse personalities of New Jersey. Photographers such as George Tice have

photographs than any other subject in the bank's collection ranging from nineteenth-century albumen prints to colorful dye transfers. This range of landscapes is represented by a number of prints selected for the exhibit. By meticulously dating each work, Mark Klett continues the documentary tradition but his haunting image is no more documentary than the mysterious landscape of receding train tracks in the desert by Richard Misrach, or the dramatic boulders at Martha's Vineyard by Aaron Siskind.

For years, artists have explored the tension between the photograph's deadpan reality and their own fantasies. A number of artists in the exhibition stretch the medium. Duane Michaels' *Fairy Tales for Adults: When Squirrels Ruled the World* is staged to make its point. Romare Bearden, one of America's foremost African-American artists, discovered in photcollage a new way to make images that raised public awareness of social issues. Widely known as a poster, this unique picture was commissioned for the cover of *Fortune Magazine* in 1967 and entered the Citibank collection soon afterwards.

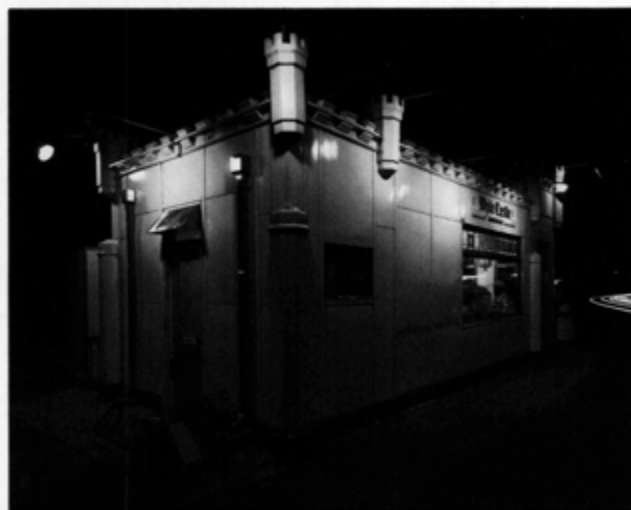
It is only in the last ten years that the bank has gone from simply decorating its walls to deliberately collecting work that reflects our business and pleases our clients. Some of these photographs have become talismans, such as the Bulatty and Lomeo dye transfer for the Stock Exchange, and they will be sorely missed. We are pleased to remove these works from our walls to bring them to a wider audience for their appreciation.

Suzanne F.W. Lemakis
Curator, Citibank, N.A.



Richard Misrach, *Tracks, Colorado Desert, California, 1984*.
Ektachrome print, Citibank Collection.

Garden State. More recently, David Graham revealed many of the visual and social incongruities inherent in and around coastal areas such as Atlantic City. His photograph of a no longer extant pier in Atlantic City reveals the tension between painted illusion and photographic illusion.



George Tice, *White Castle, Rte. # 1, 1973*.
Gelatin silver print, Johnson & Johnson Collection.

Other works were chosen to reflect additional aspects of our collecting strategy. Given the nature of Johnson & Johnson's business, images of mothers, fathers, and children remain a focus of our collection. Judith Taylor, Elliot Erwitt, and Andrea Modica explore the multi-faceted dynamics of children and families, emphasizing the psychological power of postures and gestures.

In addition to the traditional approach to photography, the Johnson & Johnson collection includes examples of alternative process images. Geanna Merola, for example, transforms photographic images by using other media such as paint and pencil. José Luis Avila, on the other hand, experiments in the historical gum-bichromate process with the pin-hole camera.

It is hoped that the art, while on the walls in our buildings and offices, will provide a thought-provoking environment for our employees and visitors. We also hope that these photographs, while on loan to various institutions, will encourage viewers to learn more by exploring the multitude of art and photography venues within and outside their communities.

Michael Bzdak
Curator, Johnson & Johnson

Private Art / Public Art: Photographs from the Collections of Citibank and Johnson & Johnson

Curated by

Michael Bzdak, Curator, Johnson & Johnson and Suzanne F.W. Lemakis, Curator, Citibank, N.A.

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Cover illustration: Louis Emille Durandelle, *Paris Opera*, ca. 1869. Albumen print, Citibank Collection.