

**MIT Museum presents Photographing Places: The Photographers of *Places* Journal, 1987-2009**

**Kurtz Gallery for Photography, MIT Museum**

**January 22 – August 16, 2015**



Image caption: Brian Rose/Edward Fausty, Delancey Street, 1980

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Cambridge, MA, January 20, 2015 -- The MIT Museum presents a comprehensive exhibition of photography that appeared in every issue of the environmental design journal *Places* from 1987-2009. Contemporary photographic practice was presented in *Places* through an innovative series of editorially discrete picture portfolios. The twenty-one American and European photographers whose work appears in *Places* and in this exhibition consider a wide variety of topics related to how place is created, perceived and experienced.

Founded in 1983 by architecture faculty at MIT and the University of California, Berkeley, *Places* is an interdisciplinary design and planning journal with particular emphasis on the public realm as physical place and a social ideal. MIT's School of

Architecture and Planning is a leader in architecture, urban planning, visual art and design, and the architecture program is the first established in the United States in 1865.

[\*Photographing Places: The Photographers of Places Journal, 1987-2009\*](#) is on view in the Kurtz Gallery for Photography from January 22, 2015 through August 16, 2015. The exhibition is curated and written by Gary Van Zante, curator of architecture, design and photography at the MIT Museum, with contributions by Cervin Robinson, Donlyn Lyndon and Harrison Fraker, and with the assistance of Ulrike Heine and Jon Duval.

### ***Places Journal***

*Places* has been a significant voice in the environmental, landscape and urban design fields from its first publication in 1983. The intent of the magazine was “to see places in new ways,” the editors wrote, by examining the relationship between people and environments in ways unconfined by professional boundaries and interests.

*Places* opened new forms of discussion and representation about place making through editorial innovations. Portfolios of drawings and photographic essays summarized the qualities of places. “Place Debates” focused many diverse points of view on particular locales. Contributors included both established experts, who were encouraged to address new questions, and younger, previously unpublished authors. Articles examined an unusually broad spectrum of subjects in architecture, city design, landscape planning, historical and geographical studies, community participation, and geography.

Photography was always of great importance to the magazine as a means of studying place. Prominent artists focused on place making in stand-alone essays, first published in 1987, where the photographs themselves were the story. The portfolios were an important part of the journal content, giving readers a trained photographers’ eye on the elements of place making they knew as professional designers and planners.

Conceived by William Porter and Kevin Lynch at MIT, with Donald Appleyard of the University of California at Berkeley, *Places* was edited by Porter and Donlyn Lyndon at Berkeley. The MIT Press published the first five volumes. Publication moved to the Design History Foundation in New York in 1989, with Lyndon remaining on as editor, and with Pratt Institute joining the founding institutions. Twenty years later, in Spring 2009, the last print issue appeared and the journal moved exclusively online. It is edited today by Nancy Levinson and has ties to twenty-four academic institutions.

### **Photography of Place in *Places***

The photographic portfolios in *Places* appeared with a bare minimum of text: a brief introduction by the photographer or editor, and captions identifying subject and location. No other text attempted to contextualize the photographs in a narrative or critical framework.

This format deliberately referenced a common mid- to late-nineteenth century approach in architectural journals where a portfolio of photographs on special paper was bound-in to illustrate an article. This means of presentation was then a practical necessity:

Photographic prints could not be set with type on a press. With the introduction of half-tone reproduction methods from the late 1870s, photographs could be printed together with text on the same sheet of paper at the same time. Thereafter, published photographs would be understood differently: the accompanying explanatory text contextualized the photographs, just as the text was made comprehensible with the immediate presence of the photographic illustrations.

Guided by photography editor Cervin Robinson, *Places* asked photographers to make sets of pictures to be published in distinct portfolio sections without any direct relationship to the magazine content. The portfolio subjects were not the latest architectural, urban or landscape designs as would be typically found in professional journals. Instead, the subjects often arose from ordinary situations and conditions, such as the simple presence of structures or environments, and the differences or changes in those structures or environments over time. Whether welcome or regrettable, the documented conditions were invariably provocative, and raised fascinating questions of professional, academic and public interest.

### **About the MIT Museum**

The MIT Museum's mission is to engage the wider community with MIT's science, technology and other areas of scholarship in ways that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century. The Museum features two floors filled with ongoing and changing exhibitions, currently with an emphasis on robotics, photography and holography, MIT history, and current MIT research. The Museum presents monthly programs that appeal to middle school students and older, and presents the annual Cambridge Science Festival in late April.

### **About the Arts at MIT**

The arts at MIT connect creative minds across disciplines and encourage a lifetime of exploration and self-discovery. They are rooted in experimentation, risk-taking and imaginative problem-solving. The arts strengthen MIT's commitment to the aesthetic, human, and social dimensions of research and innovation. Artistic knowledge and creation exemplify our motto - *mens et manus*, mind and hand. The arts are essential to MIT's mission to build a better society and meet the challenges of the 21st century.  
<http://arts.mit.edu>

### **Visitor Information**

MIT Museum  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
265 Massachusetts Avenue  
Central Square Cultural District  
Cambridge, MA 02139 USA  
P: 617.253.5927 [museuminfo@mit.edu](mailto:museuminfo@mit.edu)  
<http://web.mit.edu/museum/>  
Open Daily 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Closed major holidays

**General admission,**

Adults: \$10.00; youth under 18, students, seniors: \$5:00

Free Admission:

- Children under 5 (does not apply to groups)
- Last Sunday of each month, September through June
- All MIT ID Holders

**Subway, bus and parking**

Red Line T to Central Square or Kendall Square; #1 Bus

Parking is available at the MIT Visitor Lot on the corner of Vassar Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

Paid parking on weekdays until 5, free after 5pm weekdays and weekends.

Metered street parking is also available.

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