

**William Parker lecture on Murray Riss, Rhode Island School of Design, 10/23/1978
(located in Special Collections at the RISD Archives)**

Last year you heard speak on the work of Murray Riss, and they might say, well Parker, don't you have any new balls to pitch in the game, or something like that? And I think I have quite a bit of new material which you have not seen even if you attended that lecture last year. In reality I have another intention for presenting this material because, as I stated, each of the contemporary photographers that I am dealing with are chosen for a specific idea. And you might recall that last week, not last week but last month, we talked about John Pfahl's work, I hope you recall it, and I spoke of various issues that spoke to, let's say a photographer using a certain type of spatial cues such as size, overlap, linear perspective, etc., that were brought to bear on his work. But beyond this formalist concern, the attitude toward subject matter which appears in Pfahl's work where he not only invents the subject: he takes what is there and he also invents the subject by imposing elements into the landscape and thus those become an integral part of his work. In other words, we find increasingly in contemporary photography a completely new attitude toward subject matter. And I chose what I consider to be not radical but certainly unusual in the sense that Pfahl as opposed to altering a landscape permanently, opposed to changing it so the parameters of its identity would no longer be visible, he literally alters the landscape and then restores it back to its original state. So that all we have in his work is the evidence not only of a real territorial space, place in space I should say, but we also have his alteration which appears quite often in the print as if it were a graphic imposition. Many of you who weren't here last time won't have a clue as to what I am talking about, but the idea of certain graphism or certain graphic appearances occur in his prints and when we realize that they are actually a part of the original landscape that he photographed and that he added into the landscape... Well, most of the concerns that I'll have during these series of lectures will deal with certain types of photo-iconography, that is the meaning of photographs much more so than the principle of technical or the purposes of photographs in terms of their usages or what have you. I might add I stated that I will deal with some vernacular images and popular images, and those will occur in time, but again, I will be concerned with them in relation to their meaning, and thus the reason for the talk today. Now, I'll approach this somewhat informally because there are two lectures: the one today on Murray Riss and the one next time, which deals with a wide variety of photographic images that still come to similar conclusions as the point I'd like to make today, which is, what is the fundamental difference between a sign and a symbol? There is one very simplistic way of describing this which would not do justice to the fields of study associated either with semiotics or symbolism, however, my purpose will be to enter into a greater clarification next time, but today I just simply want to establish the diving board for the pool of water we are going to swim in, not only today but next time. When we speak of a semiotic function in terms of the iconography of any work, and of course I am applying this specifically to photography which is often much to the consternation of many of my colleagues who insist that photographs don't have meanings, but nevertheless, when we speak of iconography, obviously we are talking about a type of image-writing: icon, image; graphein, to write. The principle of a type of meaning that we can interpret, that we can discover that meaning, we can analyze it, we can sense how

it might relate to our identity and meaning, etc. But when we talk about semiotic iconographic forms or subjects: that is the structure of something can be semiotic as well as the subject matter itself may offer us particular meanings. We are talking about a type of image that can be reducibly interpreted. That is, it can be reduced to a specific meaning. I will be showing, as I said, examples next week to further clarify this, but today I just want to get the vocabulary in here. So if I say, if you receive this in February {a heart} you are quite delighted. In essence it would equal love, or if not much more than that, the hope for some kind of relationship. If you receive this, you are not terribly delighted. It can obviously be reduced semiotically to a very specific set of meanings. Now I don't always mean one meaning, but a set of communicable terms. That is to say, if we went back and we were talking to Lord Russell and he introduced us to this, {peace sign} most of you are going to immediately say this equals peace, whereas in reality he would say, no, no, no, our original intention was to show a contained rocket...in Great Britain...the ban the bomb movement...That is to say, semiotic motifs tend to be reducible to either one or several sets of meanings that we can all at least arrive at a conclusion and say these are clearly interpretable. It is quite possible that someone may desire this and so as a result they may see this as the greatest delight imaginable. Whereas, and that wouldn't necessarily be an agreement semiotically with the way the rest of us would...And there is a whole field of not only linguistic and pictorial interpretation known as the study of semiotics, and certainly this doesn't do any more than simply indicate the meaning of a specific term. For a semiotic motif to occur, we call it basically, it is sign-like, it is a sign. It is one of the terms we use in relation to the study of semiotics: signs that communicate within a context of understanding and interpretation and leading towards collective communication. So any semiotic motif implies that we all basically are dependent upon the sets of circumstances that we have been involved in in life: political, social, economic, family oriented, whatever it may be, that we would in essence be able to arrive, by observing that sign, whether in pictorial form, or written or verbal communication, and be able to understand it. In other words, arrive at least at a set of understandings that we can say, these are generically shared. If you understand what I am saying now, in its simplistic form, and many of you say will you get on with it because we fully understand what you are saying (laughs), do you see that confidence? But the principle there would be that you are engaged in not only becoming an interpreter of the sign system of my language, my vocabulary, but that we are finding certain things that are being communicated reducible to one particular concern: that is to say, any iconographic motif, in a formal structure, or any subject matter that communicates a specific meaning that is specifically interpretable, relative to a context and a collective field of interpreters as well as interpretations, then we would say it is semiotic. Now a symbol has an entirely different function. And I take a tradition that emerges out of Ernst Cassirer, through Carl Jung, as well as those who have been attentive to the what we might call the dynamic purposes of symbolism, and let's look at its root etymology. And in fact I have already indicated this, this should be an "n," but the word comes from syn and bolein: now this {syn} means 'together' or 'with,' and this {bolein} means 'to throw.' So we can say there is no better ensign to an agree of a symbolic act, that if an individual receives from the quarterback the football and wishes to make the pass successful, he throws the football and the receiver hopefully runs toward the right goalpost and makes a touchdown. You see the principle of the symbol

is that it requires an action, it is a more dynamic principle than a sign system communicates. I trust that you are aware of the semiotic necessity of reading red as stop when you come to a traffic light. Or green is go. If you are confused over those elements, then don't complain to me about your tickets or your auto wrecks or what have you. But in this case, the principle of the symbol is that you cannot guarantee the interpretation, or even the results of the actions that occur: something is thrown together with something else. In essence, if we are talking about pictorial forms, and I might add that applies to literary forms or spoken communication or what have you, that my words are thrown together with your consciousness, and that out of that, and I might not be at all hitting the mark, the ball may not be caught, or I may be throwing the ball in the wrong direction. The point is, you are purportedly receiving that material, that language, and you are in essence receiving that which is thrown verbally and arriving at certain conclusions. Now those conclusions might have a number of possible symbolic potentials: one, boredom (laughter). That is a possibility. That would be a symbolic affect relative to a linguistic communication. One may excitement about the possibilities of what is coming next (laughs) So I have a feeling that football wasn't thrown, but nonetheless, the principle that there may well be, how will this connect: anticipation, to Murray Riss's work, if you do or do not know his work is hardly the point, but you might be connecting that, throwing together what I am saying in these introductory remarks, with the possibility of seeing work by a person that you may not be familiar with and then wondering how again this material will connect to that work. In other words, symbolic identities in relation to the study of iconography seldom are fixed, they are seldom sign-like. They may use signs as an aspect of their communication, but basically they are a dynamic potential that sets up a strain of concern: those may be psychological, philosophical, they may well deal with certain principles that are operative within a culture that we can't really name, we just simply sense as an aspect of our whole social, political, economic, psychological, theological, religious climate. And we say symbols, I like Jung's interpretation, he says that they are ever unfolding. It is just that simple, ever unfolding in terms of the possibilities of meaning. That is, symbols are not to be thought of as fixed identities. They are not sign-like in the sense that we can reduce them to a specific meaning. Let's look at the distinction again: you are reading a poem and Olympus is mentioned, and you see a little note, either a letter or a number out in the margin or what have you, and you look to the right of the page and to the left of the page and the bottom, oh, Olympus, dwelling of the gods in ancient Greece, we all know that. You have heard of words like metaphor and simile: all of those terms and specific references are basically semiotic references because they give you a specific interpretable interpretation. With symbols, generally you don't find footnotes that declare a symbol, and if the word is used appropriately. What you would find is discussion. You might find critical interpretations that do not necessarily fix, finally and once and for all, the identity of the meaning of a thing. What you would find would be perhaps a discussion of the symbolic aspects of this poem or this picture relative to the total context of an age. It wouldn't necessarily have to be an age, but of a period or what have you. And so that you are realizing that in order to understand the symbolic aspects you are having to deal with how this particular motif, this formal structure, or this kind of subject matter is becoming upon a wide variety of idioms: in dance, in drama, in music, in literature, in politics, in the streets. Where do we find such motifs

that are thrown together with one another to establish a symbolic construct? That is, a meaning that is very much dependent upon something being delivered to you and your response and yet you yourself cannot fix it finally as interpretable. It may motivate you more through the principle of feeling, or more to the principle of saying, yeah, yeah, I dig it. (laughs) I just saw *Grease*. But anyway, that is my day, hippies talk. But the important thing is that when we speak of a symbolic dimension, we are not talking about something that we can say, aha, here we have a particular motif and therefore it means such and such. Now let me read you a letter that will try to further put an edge on this, and as I said, part of this is preparatory for the next lecture. The following is from Edward Weston (laughs) And I don't need to show you *Pepper #33*, or even one through thirty- three, do I? Or those thereafter. How many of you, tell me, does Edward Weston just immediately trigger an image in your mind? Like half a cabbage or artichoke, or woman on a dune?...in most cases, we are pretty familiar with what we might call images that have been so publicized and identified that we often begin to think of the photographs that have been published as being the only ones by a photographer...Let me ask you another thing: how many of you have heard the term, straight photography? Straight photography. Raise your hands, I really want to see that. Ok, now what does that mean? Straight photography. Who will take a stab? Doug, what does that mean? (laughter)

Doug: Well there isn't such a thing, really.

There really isn't. There really isn't such a thing. In other words, the purported answer is, there is no such thing as straight photography. And yet, ironically, it is used in major texts such as Newhall, who will establish in his history of photography, similar to Gernsheim, the difference between straight and manipulated photographic practice. You know straight obviously means where, as the Newhalls state in their introduction to *Masters of Photography*, their text, they will say where there is absolutely no interference with the basic mechanical process. That would imply, sure there is quote, interference, quote, choice of camera, choice of film, choice of lens or what have you, but basically where the photographer like Weston would tend to work with an eight by ten format camera and make contact prints, eight by ten contact prints. Where he does not engage in any kind of generational systems between the taking of the image and the final definition of the print. And the term straight photography which is indeed a misnomer and I don't think we should use it and I'll try to touch upon that later for other purposes. But we all hear that associated with Edward Weston's work, don't we? We have two campgrounds, like the absurdity of Szarkowski's *Mirrors and Windows*, I don't know whether any of you have seen the recent issue of *Afterimage*? Do you remember when I told you we already have, are you a mirror, are you a window, and Martha did a brilliant job of showing the two boxes and how people are going to be identified into those two trivial categories. The same thing is very trivial when we speak of the principle of Weston as a straight photographer, nonetheless, it appears shot through the literature on this man's work. And what that really means is that even if he photographs a landscape, or a vegetable, or a human being, from a cropped or radically selected view, that is a portion of something, or whether he includes the total. The issue is that purportedly he was working within the limitations of the camera medium and being

utterly faithful to what a camera can do, having no other intentions than what: to see the thing itself, but more than the thing. And of course, I'll often say, watch out for the little elisional dots that appear in the Newhall text, when there is that dot, dot, dot, because he also says, to see the thing itself but more than the thing, the essence of the thing, the quintessence of the thing. And that is like leaving the earth and entering into some kind of nirvana when you start talking about quintessences. But, rather than stressing this any further, simply that you do understand, and you do know some Weston images, and you do know that he is often called a straight photographer, let me let you hear what he wrote. He received the first Guggenheim in photography (laughs) These firsts are very important and you too...any era of the Guggenheim. Anyway he received the first, and here is the letter he wrote following his application, when they sent his application back, they felt it was inadequate because he simply stated, I would like to work free of any other province for a year, and they just didn't think that was quite enough, so he says: "Dear Mr. Murphy." He is writing February 4, 1937. I might add, this is interesting, you can notice that his letterhead includes several important features which you might miss unless you have them called to attention: Edward Weston, photographer: unretouched portraits. You get it? Unretouched. So you know the context, and even in the 30s, the great popular portraits were retouched portraits. They had been so since the 1880s, and starting in the 70s I might add. And prints for collectors. He is a straight photographer, in quotes, unretouched portraits. Unidealized portraits and he develops prints for collectors, implying that his work is to be thought of as highly individuated, not part of the mainstream of journalistic photography or photography for the purpose of documenting family, or social life, or whatever it may be. But that really he thinks of his work as art. Dear Mr. Mo, who happened to be the chair of the committee that he had to write to in response to his application: "I now realize that my plan for work submitted to the fellowship committee was neither clear or adequate. But before attempting to remedy this, I want to explain why I presented it the way I did: first, the plan was clear enough in my mind because it involves the whole philosophy of my life and work. And second, I thought the need for brevity and simplicity because I realized that any analysis I could give in words of my viewpoint, aims, way of work, must of necessity be incomplete because it is these very things that I can only express fully through my work. In other words, that is why I am a photographer." In the first place, Weston is saying, I cannot give you a semiotic system to declare the premises of my work. It is my whole life, it is what I fill myself together with. Much of what I discover is found in the work, only after it is done. That is basically what he is stating. So he is speaking of being a symbolist. He says, "On the other hand, I can see that something more concrete is needed, and I shall endeavor to supply it. First I would like to make a brief statement on photography: it is a new and vital medium, a way of seeing which has changed contemporary vision, extended horizons, touched every walk of modern life. Obviously, as far as recording the objective world, (that world out there) its forms and textures, photography has supplanted the graphic arts. Or what I might better say, it has relieved the painter of the necessity of performing this task. This is emphasized by the fact that the lens sees more clearly than the human eye can. (He is also suggesting there a certain degree of what you might call an ontological difference between what a camera, a print, of what photography can do compared to something in painting. Obviously this more objective identification is better by a lens, simply because it can hold all things in

focus, whereas the human eye can't. There is going to be peripheral vision, there is going to be scanning. Then he goes on to say: "Real photography (and he has got a capital "R") Real photography in no way competes with any other expression, although some photographers attempt to make it do this, just as some painters try to make a photograph with a paintbrush. (That is pretty interesting, isn't it, if you look at the context of Photo Realism, and he is writing in 1937. It is also pretty interesting when we think of the fact he talks about real photography in no way competes with any other expression in the sense that he is talking about that opposite group of photographers who tend to manipulate, redevelop, regenerate the image and remove it from the realm of photography) "Photography justifies its existence by its own unique qualities and differences. It seems quite immaterial to me whether it is called an art or a science: the camera is a machine, but so is the piano. Neither is confined to mechanical recording. A half a dozen photographers given the same camera and same subject matter will achieve entirely different results." (Aha, hold it there for just a moment. So it is obviously not the mechanics that we will arrive at any iconographic motif based upon formal structures or subject structures. Because he is saying any number of people, say a dozen, given the same material, the same camera, the same subject, will arrive at different conclusions, or at least, effect different pictures. So there is nothing in essence reductive about the mechanics of photography, that we are guaranteed that we will end up with a collective, semiotic communication. He says, "whether the camera is a medium of individual expression or not depends entirely on the person who is using it. I am enclosing a booklet written by me which contains a brief statement on straight photography, which further elaborates my position on photography." So he states himself that he has a booklet and a commentary on straight photography which is basically an adaptation of certain concepts that emerged with Emerson and extended through Steiglitz and then finally into Weston's work. But then he goes on to say this, "Now, for what I mean by 'from beach kelp to mountain,'" he talks about how he wants to photograph everything on this tour that makes, to the west, along the coast, and he wants to photograph everything from beach kelp to mountain, to get the whole of it as it were. "My work, my purpose, my theme can most nearly be stated as the recognition, the recording, and presentation of the interdependence, the relativity of all things, the universality of basic form. In a single day's work within the radius of a mile, I might discover and record the skeleton of a bird, a blossoming fruit tree, a cloud, a smoke stack: each of these things being not only a part of the whole, but each in itself becoming a symbol for the whole of life." No one has more brilliantly in photography defined what we mean by a symbol. If you can say that life is reducible in any way to a semiotic motif then in Edward Weston's statement. He is talking about all of these elements: the smoke stack, the fruit blossom, a tree, the beach kelp, the mountain. All of these are interdependent. They are part of a total. He is dealing with units but they are part of a related, a synthesizing, meaning brought together a definition of the whole of life. And he says, and he uses the word appropriately, what he wishes to deal with is that each of these being not only a part of the whole but each in itself becoming a symbol for the whole of life. So, the blossom of the fruit tree becomes more than a blossom, it is the tree itself, et cetera. And the recording of these becomes not just documentation of any given subject matter but its sublimation. And notice that it is not the pepper, it is not the fruit blossoms, is not the mountain or the beach kelp: actually

those are parts of the whole symbol of life and that in reality the blossom and the fruit tree, etc., becomes the tree itself. And the tree itself becomes, etc. etc., the whole of life. Until finally, subject matter is not the concern, in reality I am interested in sublimating, repressing, forcing the issue of specific subject matter to not be the concern of my work. In other words, we might say he is very definitely interested in the sublime. He goes on to say, "I am interested in the revealing of insignificance. I have no desire to make a pictorial record of the western scene. Rather, I want to photograph my western scene which may include the feather of a bird as well as the furrows of the plowed field. The theme of mine can be of course be gotten anywhere, from the tropics to the Arctic. I have chosen the west, to which I really refer to the Pacific Coast because of the great variety of subject matter it offers, because I know and love it, and because I have an established base here. It would be impractical to formulate in advance anything more than an outline for an itinerary because of the very nature of my work. I had such an outline well in mind but weather conditions change plans as also the unknown quality of a new place. One location suggests its complement or its opposite, the way has to be felt as well as planned: the Mohave Desert, Death Valley, the High Sierras, the coast, the Pacific itself are ahead, a tremendous panorama the significance of which could keep one man working for a lifetime. I believe the work I have submitted will have to elucidate my plan. Broad as the scope of this project is, as it resolves in my mind the work into a well refined vein. Monumental to be sure but possible to achieve because my thirty-five years of work have been toward this one end. When I spoke to the proper publication of this proposed work I did not go into details because the whole matter was still on paper, and it still is. The project I propose to work on was really begun in 1929 when I moved to Carmel by the Sea, California. At that time, when sea and mountains, ranches and especially Point Lobos, where I made hundreds of negatives within a few square miles. Within working distance, I made the first well-defined start toward the goal I wished to achieve, but then as now this work was done for myself without thought about financial remuneration, so it has never paid expenses. The cost of materials and what traveling I can do has never been met by sales to colleges, museums, or individuals, hence my professional portraits have had to support what actually is my real life's work, and this has restricted my activities to certain localities. For the full realization of the work I hope to do, freedom to travel would be imperative. Thanking you for your interest and the opportunity to elaborate on my first plan, sincerely yours, Edward Weston." Well, I read the conclusion as a sort of paradigm for when you get ready to apply for your Guggenheim (laughs) It is a very good letter, I think you would agree. But, recall what he states: and I think it is a veritable example, proof of a kind of symbolic intent. And I think above all when he speaks of that kind of universalizing tendencies, when he first announces the issue when he says, my theme can be nearly most stated as the recognition, recording, and presentation of the interdependence, the relativity of all things. Now it is interesting because we know, if we read his *Daybooks*, I think it is very important to deal with the literature, intentional statements by a photographer or any other picture maker, but we know that this idea of interdependence of all things is not a question for Weston of a sort of casual, 1937 consciousness stemming from 1929. It persists right to the very last statements he makes in his *Daybooks* during the 20s. It persists in announcements he made when he wrote the entries for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on photography. That "EW" is Edward Weston in

case you didn't know that. It still persists, I might add, although Beaumont Newhall and others have revised it as part of his statement. It is still listed as EW, and that was Edward Weston who made that entry. And notice that he talks about...the most definitive forms of photography are those who are in the service of a symbolic effect. Those who are in the service of a significance that extends beyond the picture. And we also know that Weston might be considered somewhat an absolutist. He behaves almost like an alchemist on occasion in his language, not so much in his work. When he talks about seeing the thing, and then as if we are to so to speak have that thing so qualified before our very eyes that we in essence can go through that. We know it, we witnessed it, and then we can bear witness to the essence, and then ultimately the quintessence of the thing. And when we deal with quintessences you are talking about interdependences. You know it is interesting, it is not so much a Platonic attitude. That is to say he doesn't talk about peppers, and fruit blossoms, or Tina Modotti, or Charis, or any of the other figures, or sand dune, as representing a reflection of an ideal order. He...directly with what we might call an Aristotelian idea in the sense that, and what always bothers me, and of course it is one of those golden nuggets...when students will talk about, well what did Aristotle do? (laughs) Well he gave us differentiation. He told us about poetry and science. And he taught us vocabularies of formal orders and hierarchical orders of drama and in other words, he taught us how to differentiate things. And my science teacher tells me that every time I am involved with the empirical study of bacteria or what have you, and if I can differentiate that is because of Aristotle. In other words, he did teach us the difference between things. But also it is Aristotle who says over and over and over again, there is a universal penetration of all things. It is like Weston, in an Aristotelian manner, he differentiates the fruit blossom from the boot in the desert, from the peacock in the desert, from the person, place, thing, object: he gives us a panoply of differences. At the same time, he says they are all interdependent and universal, as if they are related to one another. If we would but see the total we would start seeing the relationships between them. I might add this Aristotelian idea of relationships of all things has very peculiar extensions in, years later has had a Renaissance, and one of them was that today we talk about auras coming from, maybe you have heard people talk about auras, right?... Hey, that's some kind of aura that guy's got. You know, that sort of thing. We know that in the development of 20th century art in the late 19th century and also the early teens of the 20th century there were people like Rudolph Steiner...and artists like Kandinsky, Paul Klee and others who were, and Mondrian, who absolutely was one of the most star-struck mystics imaginable...they were very much concerned with things like auras, emanations, that purportedly come from our head region, our body region or what have you, can be seen by the initiate or the soul-sensitive, and today if you are involved with Kirlian photography, electro-shock photography, you know like Walter Chapell (laughs) you do see auras. Well, whatever the case may be, in the Renaissance one of the supreme examples of the idea of being differentiated and yet being related to all things appears in Leonardo's *Notebooks*. Where he talks about there is indeed, all I can describe it as is a kind of a luminous body, something like an extra membrane that sheathes our bodies. And that in reality, all objects as well as human beings and animals and plants have these emanative auras that virtually work as a kind of network of luminous materials extending from their body's substance. And as I get next to this little desk, this charming little piece of

furniture here, and my aura comes close to it, that even though I differentiate, I and the little desk become one. Now that is a very primitive form of consciousness. And if you really believe that today they will lock you up and say that you are schizophrenic or that you are having problems with differentiation. Although I would highly call that we do this more often (laughs) that we let ourselves become one with simple things, objects that we despise, because we might discover that our world is still here, instead of thinking that it is disappearing. I might add that another definition was the way you knew things, this is also in Leonardo's Notebooks, he describes it, and it is also shot through a number of issues at the beginning in the 15th century and extending literally through...and this is it: how do we know? Well, here is the principle: you have pores in your body...don't tell me that story again...my students will say, Parker, you told us that (laughs) get a new one (laughs) I never repeat the same story twice, but it is like, here I am next to the chalkboard. I wish to know the chalkboard. Now I have pores in my body, all over my body...now purportedly there are tiny atomistic particles emanating not only from me but they are also emanating from the green board, lavender board, magenta board. Now, the board does not have pores so therefore it cannot receive me, thus I establish me in the hierarchical order of being the recipient of its identity. How does it get to me? Well, it sends out little particles, can't you see them, little magenta particles (laughs) little atomistic particles of chalk...and the green board, and these little particles come and they are entering into my pores. And in a magical connector somewhere in the back of my brain, they are literally passing first down my spine into what you might call the physiological center, and they rise back up and they enter into my brain. And I know now the board and I say yes...Aristotelian, magenta and green. I know this because they have given their identity to me through my pores. Well, I go home tonight, I have a meeting at 8:30 (laughs) to evaluate colleagues, which is always a terrible type of meeting, and then I go home to my wife and my dog Daphne, and the two cats, and my daughter, and I am lying in bed, and my wife says, what did you know today...specifically at 5:30 when you were standing before that group at RISD? And I say, I have forgotten. Well, how do you forget according to this theory? In reality, when you no longer become conscious, or use the consciousness of the green board and the color, etc., these little particles escape from your brain and they come out and you perspire. (laughter) And when you perspire, accordingly there is a vapor and they reengage, or they reappear back into the world itself. Now interesting enough, and I would suggest to you that this really follows certain patterns of the basic law of thermodynamics, particularly the second law. So it is not so off. I'm not going to go into that, I will if you want me to show you at a later point but not today. It also follows definitely the principles of the concept of transformation: that consciousness does have a material aspect, because to know what we know, it is certainly dependent on basic chemistry and electricity that is occurring right now in our brains. Ok? So there is a materiality, we'll call it that way, of consciousness. And as absurd as we would think of it as being, Aristotle or Aristotelian thought was impressing itself even upon Leonardo who was certainly attentive to being supremely differentiated in his anatomical discussions and his discussion of physiology, and of kinesiology, and of psychology, he was trying to show the differences in things and yet still deal with the idea that there is a universal overlappingness. That even this thing overlaps with my body, as it were. And Weston is also attempting to do the same thing. We might speak of symbols as having a

suggestive intent to become universalized. To suggest that symbols are not to be thought of as differentiated and fixed, so reductively sign-like so that we can all agree upon their meaning, they are very much dependent upon their interdependence with us, individually first and then perhaps collectively, even though there we might be more liable to respond, as I stated before, out of a kind of set psychology that we wouldn't even name. Symbols can more often move the herd to auras than a sign. Take for example, that {draws a solar wheel on chalkboard} In other words, a motif of this nature is a sign, and reductively, dependent upon if you are a Navaho Indian, it is going to be a very positive sign within that context, this would be a sign of the sun, and basically solar energy. If you are a Greek, certainly at least of the sixth century BC, and maybe even the seventh, you would see it as a sign of the Gammadion, and again you would see it as the solar wheel and as though these extended elements are emitting air or pneuma, and thus it is the solar wind, it is a fertility motif. If you are Paleolithic man or woman and you have inscribed this mark, we will never know why, but nevertheless they appear. We can't say anything about what it means but know the motif was as persistent back in terms of almost primordial time as it was in a time when it was very reductively interpretable. But we also know that we can associate this as one of the standard signs for the whole National Socialist structure of Nazism. What is it called in German imagery? What is this motif called?

Students: The swastika.

The swastika, and there are more complex names, but basically, where did it come from? Was it something that was invented by Hitler and his cohorts? No. It was already very much apparent as an ensign of certain motifs that appeared in the whole theology of Wotanism. It did have a lot to do with planetary associations, solar associations, particularly in association with the principle of fire, a sign of primal energy. What happens is a sign becomes symbolic only by what we give it. I am certain, whether you like this or not, it is a grotesque thought but nonetheless, those who heiled and stepped or saluted, often under the aegis of a motif that led them to do things we might say they were unwitting of. We then, I would personally say the principles, the reductive semiotic nature of this now meaning something negative. I can't ever see again, no matter where I see it. I always have to filter it through that principle of horror that is associated with that motif, even when I am looking at Navaho Indian art. Or whether I am looking at Paleolithic art. Somehow first comes Germany, Nazism, Hitler, and then I get to the realization that aha, this really is a sign of benevolent energy, or fructifying energy, the idea of fertility. Interestingly enough that is why signs can become symbolic, and they can become motivators. But again, people aren't generally using this to one meaning and one alone, they are seeing it as a dynamic that proves to an entire group. All right, signs and symbols, now we are getting to the point about Murray Riss. Murray Riss, like many photographers, has tended to react against the principle that you again have all heard of, just like you knew Edward Weston. And that is the concern with what is called equivalence...before we take a break...I just want to clarify this, what to you is equivalence, as photographers? How many of you have heard of equivalence, or heard of that concept? Ok, that is a large group. All right Susan, what is equivalence, when we talk about photographic equivalence? (laughs) John?

John: I'm still trying to figure that out.

That is a good answer, we are still trying to figure it out. Who do you associate with announcing the purported principle of the equivalent?

Student: Stieglitz.

Alfred Stieglitz. How did he announce it? Does anyone know the anecdote that he records himself or that he gave to... with whom Stieglitz was talking and so on? What did he say happened to him, why did he come up with the idea of equivalence?

Student: Wasn't he photographing clouds to sum up his philosophy of life?

Well, that is what he did, but that wasn't what motivated him. Who was it...was it Rauschenberg who said to Johns, someone made a remark to Jasper Johns, why don't you take two beer cans and set them on a pedestal and they'd be considered a work of art. In other words, announcing what curators and museums will begin to identify as art, and so Johns picked up the glass, the gauntlet to the throne, and cast in bronze two Ballantine beer cans, and indeed they became art (laughs) they are kind of priceless from what I understand of their last market value. Stieglitz, a friend spoke to him, a person who was very much involved in music...as I recall...it was either his cousin or his brother-in-law. And he states, well, the reason for the success of your photographs is the subject matter. And he says, in other words, it is what you photograph that gives your photographs value, the subject matter. And Stieglitz was outraged. So he turned his cameras to the clouds, and said literally I will deal with that which is most formless, most available to all of us, and prove that my photographs sponsor a psychological, psychic level that are not dependent upon the subject.

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What I think if we were all to toss into a hat our guess we end up with most of us saying clouds...but his principle was that that was a subject matter available to everyone and he could still sponsor levels of feeling and levels of relationships. He talked about these equivalences as having a kinship to the potentialities of music, the way music affects us, and often we can't name that affect, we feel it. He talked about the equivalent as relating to states of mind, and not so much states of mind as something we might know and express analytically but states of mind in terms of feeling. Or even in terms of possibilities, that is like intuitions about what things might become. So in other words he announced the value of the symbolic...We know that Minor White, for example, not only Minor but certainly Edward Weston continued with a concern with the principle of equivalence. After all, he says smoke stack, fruit blossom, tree, etc., all of these are interdependent, they are related, they express the whole of life: MY western scene, as they are equivalents for my response to the world, and hopefully, obviously he would

hope that they could be universalized and shared by others. Minor White established a concern with the principle of equivalence. He wrote perhaps the best essay, if you have never read it, it is called, *Equivalence, the Perennial Trend*. It appears in Nathan Lyons' *Photographers on Photography*, and it is the best summation of the growth and development of equivalence, and what it means and so on. He says really it is not a feeling state or place. Or rather he calls that into question. He says the photograph is not a thing, and equivalence is not a reference to a thing. In other words, he likes to say it is definitely not sign-like. The equivalence is much more at the service of the feeling state or place...It is a kind of definition of something that has resonances deep within the human heart, the human mind, and the human body. And that perhaps we can't really name the equivalence after all. Now, having said that, there are many photographers today who have avoided the principle of equivalence. They felt photography became more and more at the service of dimensions of concern, not only in practice, the way a photographer might move out into the world and say I am now going to seek an equivalent, {laughs} Jerry Uelsmann used to say when he was in Minor's class that he would look around, and Minor would tell him to be attentive to the spirit that was within things, sort of the Coleridge idea that nature emanates psychic forces and we emanate psychic forces and these two conjoin and Jerry would say, "There it is, there's the spirit moving over there, now I just might get it but I don't have a fast enough camera!" And silly as that might sound, the point is, is that Minor truly believed that things had within them potentialities of spirit. And that we can also become receptive: we not only project the spiritual dimensions upon things but we can receive, very much in that same idea of Aristotelian ideas, the universal overlapping of things, we can receive the spiritual dimensions of things, and it was through that intermediary instrument called the camera which enabled us to be able to objectively identify those spiritual concerns. How many of you know Minor's late series of exhibits like *Octave of Prayer*, *Celebrations*, *Being Without Clothes*, *Light Seven*? Start with the earliest one, *Light Seven*. It is not his earliest commentary, in *Light Seven* he dealt with seven levels of light in photography...and I am serious folks...light that affects sensitized film, and then he'll talk about incident light, and reflected light, and then we finally end up with revelatory light, divine light. So in the hierarchical order, there are levels to light, and the last one, god light was in essence the light that sponsored the...of the most powerful order. In *Octave of Prayer*, there are eight octaves. How many of you know of this, or if you read that, or if you ever thought about it, you will realize he had a profound influence upon the development of photography certainly from the 50s onward. What were the eight levels, what do they announce? Anyone read that in here? No one ever reads that they just look at the pictures. {laughter} Well if you believe Minor, that after the fourth octave you had to give up your camera, toss it away, that Hasselblad or that Diana...because there is a point in which he stated you enter into a new psychic level, a new psychological level of realization in which camera will no longer serve you. He always used the word camera like the camera was anthropomorphized, {laughs} his camera, how do you do, you would greet your camera as a companion and think of it as motivated by purposes we would normally associate only with humans. So after the fourth octave, you would enter into that pure state of equivalent relationships.

Student: {inaudible}

No, after the fourth one, it's like Teilhard de Chardin...well he stated there is a point at which a practitioner, a person involved in photography, could conceivably give up photography because they have entered into another psychological awareness level in which they no longer photograph because they wouldn't need to.

Student: {inaudible}

In the work? not according to Minor. Not possible. I might say he knew a few people who finally achieved that level.

Student: Does one switch to another medium at that point or is there no need for anything?

I suggest it would be very much like the Indian yogi or the mystic who would no longer need to become active at all. The world would become pure contemplation. The equivalence factor would so extend, the fabric of it as well as your relationship to the fabric there would be no need to do anything. He postulates it might be the moment in which one would find that they are ready to depart, like Minor locked in Imogene's arms...going heavenward, they died on the same day. It is an interesting parallel. But the point is, whether you like that kind of talk or you think that it was the fact that men truly entered into an attempt to try to achieve a state beyond the principle of having to have pictures of things so that you could enter into that more pure state of being which didn't require activity. Well now read it for yourself. That is part of your literature, that is supposed to be what is motivating you. Anyway...{laughter, laughs} It is like the end of *Oh Dad, Poor Dad*...they come out of the closet after a huge incident and says, "what is the meaning of all this." Well let's take a quick break and then we'll come back and I'll try to make it have meaning.

Student: We thought we were going to play pin the tail on the donkey...

{laughs} And what was it all about? Well there was this man up there babbling on and he had a leaf on his butt. {laughs} Now, let me read you something from this hymnal. {laughter} I apologize. Well, if any of this made any sense, in order to introduce the work of Murray Riss, I'll read you something I wrote, only a brief portion of it: "Murray Riss has stated that his photographs ask questions, not academic questions, but those that try to ascertain the proximity between photographic possibilities (what the photograph could be of) and the turmoil in my mind." (In other words, there is a turmoil in his mind, not mine). Such word states admit an involvement in the primordial and persistent conflict between the real and the imagined, his share in the conflict act has always perplexed important image makers. His statement also declares a prime interest in discovering the potential signals to belief wallowing in the overlappingness of the real and the imagined the express need to discover the conjunction between the real and the imagined, a need to discover the meaning of their conduction in the possibility of invention become photographic fact. (Now in case that eludes you, what I am trying to say is that we are not talking about equivalences, we are talking about something being more than what it is: it being a possibility of meaning. Some image in a photograph has the potential for suggesting the reality of things that we know very well are not real. And yet because they are in photographs, and because we typically identify photographs as being insigns of the real, even

though we know that is nonsense ultimately, I hope I clarified that last year, but nonetheless, popularly, typically, people believe that photographs are in essence the best record of what was originally there in terms of subject matter). "Avoiding extreme alterational violence," (that means he doesn't alter the photographs extremely by generating them into other media or what have you) "Riss nonetheless, arrests and relocates, even arranges, and on occasion transforms, the original occupiers of his images so the persons, things, or events" (defined by his images) "will insinuate presences that are convincing as simulacra or signs of reality and, at the same time, as confirmations of the inventive acts of mind." (That is they definitely appear to be confirmed by imagination as well as the real). "Constantly seeking and confirming relational possibilities that at once deny and satisfy visual expectations, he and his photographs challenge conventions and perceptions typically brought to bear in an encounter with photographic images." (What are those conventions of perception typically brought to bear when encountering photographic images?) "The what, who, where, when, why issues of a familiar past-tense world so naggingly present in the midst of any attentive or questioning response to the mnemonic trace of the photograph." (That is, people will say, when did you take that? We don't say, ...with a painting, we don't say, when did you paint that? But often those questions are asked of photographs. What is it? How often do you hear that? I seldom find that asked about paintings anymore, they used to be, but not recently. Who is it, where was it taken, where was the subject, in Alaska, Mexico or the Pacific. Why did you take that particular viewpoint? You see those are questions that seem to be naggingly present in the midst of any attentive response to the mnemonic trace of the photograph. That is memory trace of the photograph, simply because it does give us images that tend to remember what once). Paradoxically convincing images, despite his often obvious fabrication of subject identities and relationships, Murray's photographs behave as visual fictions that influence belief rather than appealing to the typical functions of visual needs. Such fictions are more often than not, splendid visual lies that seem to convince us of their visual truths." That is very much like the work of John Pfahl. Visual lies that convince us that they are truths, such as people thinking that he has made marks on the print as opposed to him doing it in the landscape itself. "To see a Riss photograph, particularly any of those in the portfolio for which this is the introduction, is to realize an image that simultaneously confirms and denies reality as we usually perceive it. Despite such visual ambiguity, we accept his prevarications, his substantiation of visual pretexts because of our conditioned will to believe in the presentation of photographs. Murray's photographic fictions do not declare the absolute fidelity to the world we see and value, much less to the world we often dismiss as inconsequential. Instead, his photographs represent readjustments of persons, things, and events in order that we might see and understand the relationships between the world and projections of the mind as anticipations rather than as expectations." (His photographic images re-present persons things and events that readjusted or altered as they may be, always seem capable of sponsoring credibility. In short, as deliberately altered, as often his subjects are, seldom in his final print, he doesn't tend to go into what you might call generational systems beyond the basic print. But that he does, quite often, alter the subject to such an extent that we know that alteration is occurring and yet we still tend to believe that what he presents us is indeed the case, or the fact. I call the term when one tends to anticipate something as being believable or happening now in the present tense. Or even if it was like a photograph of something in the past tense, even as fictive as it may be, if we talk about it anticipating the possibility of a state of belief, we use the term prolepsis. That means really to anticipate something from the past or of the future as taking place now, right now before us, as though it were true or believable or real. I'll deal with this next time..."Proleptically, anticipatively, Riss presents us with images that make us believe we are seeing things that are not typically present." (That is the paradox: we look and we say yes, it looks like it is the case, and it is only because he has anticipated that we will believe it to be the case. Or we say, despite the fact that this seems to go beyond the realm of reality, I tend to think of it as anticipating reality, and that

is prolepsis). "Disturbing as questions and satisfying as possibilities, Riss' photographs make us believe in facts or events of a visionary order that seem, indeed, to be the case. If we are beguiled into sharing his privileged consciousness which accepts photographic fiction as de facto truths, we also discover his inner turmoil not to be a private matter. His psychic predicament is ours as well. Particularly when we have to face not only what the world has been, but what his photography fashions the world to conceivably include or become. And if we dare to suspend disbelief, to go out of our rational, differentiating mind and beyond our more familiar world experience in the engagement of his proleptic image, reward abounds: in viewing a Riss photograph and engaging its content we see and we know, as if accomplished and as if now already existing in the world, the representation or the assumption of relationships between persons, things, places and events that seem regained from the past or, gained from the future, their impossibility having become a credible possibility, as if both magically and naturally obtained. The proleptically oriented work of art has ancient roots, realized most stunningly in the Eykian vision of the 15th century. A vision apparent in images which paradigmatically predicted the atomistic clarity of photography." (How many of you know the Arnolfini Wedding portrait by Jan van Eyck? Some of you don't, but I'll mention that next time. This is an aside of certain types of images that deal with this principle of prolepsis. That painting was painted as a sort of marriage contract and most of what appears in it could not be the case in the actual world of 1434 when it was painted. But yet it is painted with such utter clarity, such obsessive detail, that we believe what is present in the painting to be the case. No different from the type of prolepsis that Murray Riss tries to establish). "But the belief in prolepsis, that is the admission that impossible things by way of anticipation, to states that seem matter of fact, lay fallow for centuries after the late Gothic period, awaiting the medium of photography to reaffirm its force. The concept of equivalence, in itself an ancient concern active long prior to the articulation by Stieglitz (so if you did think that he invented the word or the term, deliver yourself from that and maybe someday we can discuss that and I'll prove it to you, it is a very ancient concept and word). "A concern active long prior to its articulation by Stieglitz and his subsequent devotees, relates to prolepsis in its emphasis (that is equivalence still, it relates to prolepsis) "in its emphasis upon physical and psychical interpenetrations or correspondences." (You see the physical form, the cloud, therefore we have a psychological response that really has nothing to do with the cloud but it is a state of feeling or internal emotive state or what have you that we would respond to. However, all too often in the 20th century, equivalence as a concept seems ultimately bent on viewing photographic manifestations as a, "function, an experience, not a thing, as Minor White would have it. Thus, for those who wish to spiritualize the photographic experience, as did Minor, mind and its symbolic urgencies dismiss the primarily identifiable objectness of things, seeking instead to transcend matter in order to engage in a specific and known feeling state or place." So, if you ever read Octave of Prayer, after the fourth octave, you have displaced matter, you have dismissed it, you have displaced the mechanics of camera work that would be able to record matter and you have entered into that feeling state or place independent of a need to pictorialize it. You and the world have become one as it were. "Such a feeling state or place always seems of little concern to many photographers today with the recognition of a world one can visit, as Fred Sommer has remarked. Serving instead (that is the type of equivalence that was articulated by Stieglitz and Weston and Minor White) "serving instead for their purposes to constellate wishes and insubstantial desires born from the secrets of the confessional heart or generated within the spiritualizing loins of the mind." (Isn't that a marvelous phrase that I wrote? {laughs} And the implication there is that generated is a kind of confessional sense: my life, my traumatic life, my rich emotive life, my individualistic life is expressed by the so-called imagery of my photographs and their equivalent structures. And thus by knowing the photograph, you know me and my spiritual dimension. Or, as I said, spiritualizing loins of the mind in the sense that it is a more vigorous aspect, equivalence is thought of as a sort of body level of response and often associated with things like sexual

imagery and loins imagery, genital imagery. "In recent years, many younger photographers have wished to regain the world, to make it visible according to perceived and conceived (they want to see it but they also want to conceive it, that is imagine it as what it could be, recognition) "ultimately, they accept the fact that despite their seeming difference, mind and matter are one. For these photographers, the photograph is considered to be a necessary insigne of physical reality and at the same time a confirmation of the potentials of that reality according to explicit determination rather than inexplicit desire. So one thing you can say about Murray Riss, when he sets up something that is not real but wants us to believe it to be real, he is doing it deliberately, intentionally. It is no, so to speak, confessional secret that slipped from his unconscious through the fabric of his consciousness. "Whatever the world is may be made to include or can become must be bound to the evidence of the photographic image, a state of factual evidence perceived by mind but not excused or replaced by mind. Many younger photographers seem to have placed their faith in the possibility that photographs are and include things in themselves, or at least persuade us to believe such to be so. The photograph's objectless, in fact and by references, is the one proof that the world does indeed exist and that may also be tempered by subjective intentions. For many of these younger photographers, the spiritualizing view of equivalence seems to have become, tragically, only the affirmation mind forgetting the world. Instead, a new meaning has emerged for these persons, a need to insistently find that object-photograph which makes the past and the possible coalesce. A photographic form and experience that will permit the merger of objective and subjective conditions of matter and mind, perceiving them both as a simultaneous operation of a permanently affective now. As early as 1968, Murray Riss stated that "photography is the vehicle of my imagination. But as part of the use of any medium, one must examine its form— vocabulary and method of function, then *accept*, *change* or *invent* those aspects that will specifically be suitable to oneself." Clearly, Riss neither articulated a need to transfer the world exclusively to feeling nor toward the service of spiritual aims. Rather, his effort is to accept, change, or invent a world, always as an affirmation of possibilities both in the world and in his mind, possibilities he deems primarily appropriate for the attentions of camerawork."...Ok, having stated that, what I want to show you is how a photographer set out with a certain intent to be deliberately meaningful in his work. What I am stating is also based upon the postulates that he himself announced. In his very earliest work, after he had graduated from Cooper Union as a painter, originally, and then entered into the study of photography while he was working at Pratt Institute, not actually studying there but working there. He began to become concerned with primarily that formal communication that we associate with the principle of street life: taking photographs of people on the street, usually from some rather unusual vantage points. And even at that point he felt he was trying to articulate, and show and reveal through the photograph, states of the human condition: the poor, the wealthy, the deprived, those that are privileged. Showing us views that often appear in images that are soft-focused or hard-focused, I'll call them, just to use those terms, as they were popular in that period in the 60s. An attempt to be peripatetic, move about, record what was happening in the streets of Manhattan, or the streets of Brooklyn, where ever he might be. In time, and I might add, and certainly by the late 60s and very much unrelated to the strain of photography that had been announced a decade earlier but became very popular in the late 60s, that is photographs of Robert Frank, or the photographs of Diane Arbus, take your choice, he tended to not emphasize what you might call the sense of confrontational photography. Whether it was a displaced person's attitude toward America, or whether it was a woman's privileged background that enabled her to have the courage to face these people who were certainly not within her social or any other kind of personal milieu in her development, like Diane Arbus. But he didn't tend to follow that particular approach. He tended to work with a kind of controlled, what I call, experimentalism. Seeing what would happen if you displaced certain types of subjects, or if you combined things within a photograph, like he would literally manipulate subjects, place something on something else, so

that how we might respond to the principle of their relationship, and then re-photograph them, etc., pretty much the way John Pfahl does today but not with the same visual results. He did an entire series of photographs in the period of, say from 68 to about 75, or 76 or thereabouts, in which he deliberately tried to establish levels of meaning which one might say, if we were to listen to Murray's explanations of the photographs, we would say they were definitely semiotic. Now I personally didn't view the photographs the way that he, I am using just myself as an example, the way he declared their meaning to be. But on the other hand, if I did, I would be left with only one meaning, you follow me, a reductive semiotic intent. In time, I think after he discovered that people were looking at his work and realizing there were other factors involved that seemed to show a development or a strain of interest in this idea such as prolepsis. A kind of anticipatory, he wanted the real thing and at the same time he wanted it to be a fiction. He wanted the two to come together: he wanted his imagination and he wanted also his strong belief of what the world looks like to come together in the image. He went to Israel in 76 and he stayed there a year, actually a little over a year. But one of the interesting things that happened during that period was the fact that he really only photographed, he developed nothing and he printed nothing during that period. I know he was up here and perhaps he talked to you people about that experience...wasn't he here and didn't he talk to you people about this? Ok. You know he went, taught, as he states himself, he really did nothing in terms of finding out basically what the images as they were developing would look like, that was done when he returned. And we have to recognize three things: one, that in essence the work was, it was like a teleology unfolding, acorn to the tree, in which he would not necessarily be basing his actions as a photographer on the basis of knowing what he had done along the way. Ok? That is one. The second thing we have to recognize is that his work was subjected to severe damage when he was prepared to return to America and it was placed in the hold of a ship because he did not want it bombarded by the x-rays from air transit services...because he was given to understand and I think we all know that that can be terribly damaging. So, he had it sent back aboard a ship. Well, the ship broke down in one locale and it became terribly hot, and he had the film in lead-lined cases, which would normally be highly protective to any kind of electrical or other kinds of forces. And then it was repaired and in order to continue its route it had to go into some very cold climates...and therefore the material in the hold was subject to extreme cold, because I understand it broke down a second time. And finally it returns to New York and to Murray Riss in Tennessee, and as he prepares to begin developing he discovers, to his horror, everything is destroyed, or so he thought. Basically, what he found out was that they were not light leaks, they were chemical transformations that appeared like light leak traces, great streaks of black on the negative which become great streaks of white on the print. He discovered that many of the negative materials were, again, subject to chemical, physical transformations caused by the extreme heat and the extreme cold, or at least that what he has determined to be at this point, that the density factor was either radically altered. That is a dense negative or a very thin negative. He really believed, initially, that he would have to sack the whole adventure of a year. And I trust he talked to you all quite in the same manner. Because there was that period, he certainly called me one night and said you know a year's work has just been thrown away. And I said nothing, I just said that is terrible, that is awful. Then I heard from him after that and he said I found that I can do something with these. Now this is what I would call a change in the whole meaning of his photographs, and he moved from the realm of semiotic intent into the realm of symbolic intent. What was thrown together with Murray Riss was the principle of, what he had to expect, is this destruction, what happened in the hold of the ship, the cold and the heat and so on, is it really a matter that my work is destroyed, or has some other factor followed from the world of natural events, climate phenomena and chemical phenomena, offered me the possibility of something to accept. And I think the most remarkable thing is that this man had to accept what you might call the phenomenology of events that occurred in relation to that film that was independent of him. Through the use of split toning some of the prints, through the use

of treating the negatives to densify, to re-intensify in some cases, through the principle of extreme printing down or extreme printing up, accepting the possibility that he would no longer have that wonderful zone system quality that every RISD graduate purportedly had in that period in the 60s {laughs} when they finished here, so they could do the perfect print...because he was a graduate ultimately of RISD in the MFA program, along with Jim Dow and Emmet Gowin and others of that period. He had to accept, he had to literally receive that football and find out that there was a new mode of operation. And what was so surprising was, was that he connects this to the surprise of the waiting images, seem to be only credible to him, only believable to him, on the basis of the damage that had been done, that ultimately became the boon, the benefit. A happy accident. But you couldn't call this accident, because it required what you might call the courage of acceptance as opposed to the principle of saying, well I'll make do the best I can. And of course it has radically altered his whole development as a photographer because he truly feels now that he can actually go out and photograph anything and deal with the symbolic concern as opposed to a semiotic concern. I have only seen two of the recent images of the post Israel period and they sure are powerful. I don't have slides of those but I hope to show you some. So, that is the second thing we have to realize, that much that had happened to the work has been a cause external to the photographer. And thirdly, the final thing I'd like you to recognize, that much of what I would have to say deals with what we might call the principle after to the fact of intention. A lot of it has to do with interpretation after the fact of intention. He was aware of the principle of certain image dimensions such as the mandala, which many of the later works relate to this kind of motif. Now mandala is simply a Sanskrit word that means 'magic circle.' And mandaloid structures generally consist of circular motifs. They often may be circles and squares, it doesn't have to be a circle, it could be a square. They are normally what we call quadriptych, devised into four parts, typical mandalas. But they can also be apparent is something like the image of a flower, like Paul Caponigro's mandalas which he himself doesn't title in the book publications but that is what he calls them, the sunflower or what have you. Or it can be simply a circle. In Tantric art, quite often mandaloid forms will appear to be triangular in structure with a center point, or they can be four-part structures with a center point. The point is, is that purportedly one of the most primordial motifs in the history of human visual consciousness, and when I say that, certainly it is strikingly apparent and with persistence in any locale in the primordial arts of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic periods. It is also absolutely present and was at one time in your behavior and experience and the most common motif among human beings. And I suggest that you read Rhoda Kellogg's *What Children Scribble and Why*, or Herbert Read's *Education Through Art*. The mandaloid form is not only apparent in games we play such as turning and getting dizzy so that we experience that nirvana at the center of our dizziness, in games that are primordial like 'Ring Around the Rosy.' It also can be made into cruder definitions which normally when we talk of cruder physical images at the center of such celebrations. It is a motif that is apparent whenever differentiation begins to occur. That is the child in the crib making a mandaloid gesture...flailing out, oh...coming back and touching one's...creating a recognition of the epidermal enclosure, and in essence closing upon oneself so that the...is the center we might say of the extensional capacities of one's body. Children's art generally goes through a meandering stage, and a scribbling stage, or what have you, watch your baby sister or baby brother if you are very attentive and you will find that independent of race, culture, creed, geographical location, Rhoda Kellogg is not only internationally recognized but has the largest collection of children's art from every culture and these appear without variation, despite where it is. That the first motif of an ordered structure is this...it is circular in nature, and the next motif of the ordered structure is to divide that and then concentrate somewhere upon the center like that or, to make scribbles that tend to divide it into four parts so that you end up with something that looks like this. And I don't declare or even worry about having this evidence confirmed, it has been so confirmed there is no need to even think about it. It is factual. As I said, the greatest empirical evidence is to watch a child that is of

the age, starting about two to four. Does anyone have a brother or sister two to four? Tell them to start saving the material. Or go out and find a child and don't get accused of being a molester. {laughter} And watch them and you will see it happen. And if it doesn't happen pictorially it will happen in terms of the way they play games and deal with their bodies and so on. And out of this figure will emerge a human figure...Well, Murray Riss seems to, he was aware, of what you might call that principle of the idea of the circular structure, suggesting a relationship to forms in art, and other picture forms that would suggest the idea of the imaginal and the symbolic. What occurs is the fact that his intentions were somewhat diverted, that's the only way I can say it. What he thought he had captured had to depend upon this idea of acceptance before they became truly, visually powerful enough to suggest a mandala structure that could offer, or throw together with us, potentials of meaning that even he didn't suspect. And that will be my intent to show you, a few examples of the transitions in his work from the semiotic level to a symbolic level. Ok, first slide, I am going to go through these fast. And in a way I hope that you all recognize that part of my intention, by the way let me just clarify one thing for you, that most of these works that I will show you initially extend from the 64 to the 68 period. In fact the earliest one here, I just want to check it in the machine, the earliest one is... 67 and the latest one in this group is 75. I'll just point out that this is a very early work, and this one is 64 in which he shows us, I'm sorry this is 67, I keep confusing the issue...we will be dealing with this, and much of his work precedes this, I'm not going back to the work he did in street photography and so on when he was still in New York, before he even came here. For the work he did here it is best for you to go look at his thesis in the Research Center, and you can see the kind of work while he was at RISD. But the main thing is that we have against a field of crumpled, printed aluminum foil, because you can see these flower motifs against this wrapping paper, this aluminum foil type wrapping paper, he has placed a xerox of a slain soldier. Now, there are a number of things to be stated about this work, but what I'd like to say is this is an attempt for Murray to be in essence meaningful, and I am not meaning to demean the work either when I say this, but in other words the distinctions are drawn rather clearly. We have the mechanistic world, the idea of the machine age of xerography. We have the idea of industrialization. We have all those terms that he would, in essence, hopefully define for us something that is meaningful in a new order, but all the premises of his choices of media to re-photograph, such as the gift, the decorative package, the industrial age wrapping paper which is made out of aluminum foil, and yet decorated with a rather antique group of nosegay flowers, tying the past and the present and the kind of unbalanced or unhappy relationship, or uncomfortable relationship between them. And yet at the same time, in the midst of this artificiality in the continuously reproduced image, as in the xerography, and the anachronistic pattern appearing on the aluminum foil, the two come together, and what do we have, the sign of the tragedy, the great event such as hate, and war, and destruction, and maiming still occur. Now you might think the picture is nifty for its own sake, or you might think, well that is neat, I like the thought process behind that. But what I am trying to suggest to you according to the terms of his dialogue, of works of this nature, and according to the terms that I might say his insistent interpretation, he was attempting to be symbolic but in reality, being semiotic. And I don't think much about what I would say, it would not be a conclusion that most of us would reach once we have analyzed the materials used, the way in which the modes of images were generated, and then looking at what is finally an 8 x 10 silver print, having photographed those things in conjunction. Let me give you one more illustration of this particular semiotic intent. What we have here, what we have very evidently, a portrait of, for all we know semiotically, that is Spiro Agnew. And what do we have below Agnew, we have a doily, we have a peacock feather, and we have this taken against kitchen plastic tile, or acrylic tile. And then we also discover that even in this tile we have a series of repetitive mandaloid structures, because it can be just a formal pattern and you are not being mystical to call it mandaloid, it is quite an appropriate term for this use of design. That is, it is a four-part structure, divided into four parts,

there are four modes as it were, triangular sections that include these leaf-like motifs or tendril patterns. And even the doily itself, the paper doily is a kind of mandala with little mandaloid structures with their four-part crossed centers and their spoked wheels appearing and you would know that is the center, and would be obviously a repetition of the same motif, and even the peacock feather has a tendency to suggest, at its terminus, this idea of a round-like structure in which, in essence, we tend to look toward the center of it, even though it is not truly what you might call, it is not a central motif but it suggests that principle. And then above that we have this, just block with your hand, the portrait of Agnew and notice how the interest in the image considerably changes. So that we have something that is extremely anachronistic, argumentative. This does not seem to have any apparent relationship to these other structures, agreed? So, what is the meaning of all this, we will ask again? He is intending to be semiotic. If he understands that mandaloid forms, structures, and so on, suggest the idea of wholeness, you can go to your own dictionary of symbols...mandala: magic circle, Sanskrit word...we have the meaning of wholeness, completeness, a form for contemplation or what have you, he is aware of that factor. That these are all mandaloid structures and suggest the principle of primordial completeness and totalness and the idea of togetherness. And I mean by that where things are unified, not togetherness like in the mind, but where all things arrive at their harmony which is associated with certain basic conventional meanings, semiotically, in a circular form, particularly when the center is emphasized. So why is Agnew there? What is he suggesting to you? What are you supposed to be aware of, collectively, reductively? Any thoughts? Well, you would agree that the image of Agnew is in opposition to the motifs that are apparent, right?

Student: {inaudible}

Oh, he would like that. In other words, he would say yes. The artificiality of the paper doily. The artificiality of the journalistic photograph cut out of a newspaper and placed in that context. There is certainly no apparent direct relationship that we can make, but we start reading it semiotically. And finally we say something about the artificial: including the artificiality of the kitchen tile, the artificiality of the paper doily. The kind of popular exoticism of a peacock feather. Do you understand what I mean, the kind of banal...it may be very beautiful...but the point is it is often a popular motif. There is hardly a person pretending to be Bohemian that hasn't had a peacock feather in a blue bottle on their bookcase. {laughter} Or pretending to be a ...whether they are a fan dancer...or some star-struck avant garde. But what else? What did Agnew say? You have to put this into context. Many of you may have been experiencing other delights at that age.

Student: {inaudible}

Yes, he insisted this shows Agnew's, that his disassociation...he is forcing, whether or not you agree with this, you might still be a Agnew supporter, but this is the man's viewpoint. Here we have motifs that purportedly are artificial and at the same time they are reflective of the sign of organic totalness, relationship, harmony. This almost represents, to Gil, the body structure, and as Frieda said, almost like an egocentric using the term centered, identity...in its artificiality. Murray thought it more of the idea that, a man that would declare, quote, now I am basically giving you the drift of his thinking, a man who would declare that there is a silent majority. And you know the truth is if you disagree with the silent majority, you are just simply a peculiar pervert, invert, revert.

Student: {inaudible}

Exactly. How does that go? I was going to try. A nabob of negativism. A what?

Student: A nattering nabob of negativism.

Yes, A nattering nabob of negativism.

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Begin 1998_47_107_a}

Now you might think that is a rather extended form of symbolism. From his view, I think we have at least a few hints that you are edging very close to exactly the intent of the image. And as we have proscribed, that is the intent. It was basically to be reducible to a specific meaning. It was not to be cryptic, not to have possibilities, but to be basically concerned with the idea of an explicit kind of relationship to be read out, as it were. Read out. Next please. Now, in a whole series, again, almost happening simultaneously with those works of 67 and 68, he began, when he moved to Memphis, Tennessee, it is almost nine or ten years ago, he began exploring a wide variety of approaches to things that didn't seem to leak. And some of them might ask for questions than they do declare premises that we can purportedly understand if we but analyze them out like we tried to do with the Agnew image and the previous motif. Here he has a group of faculty at the Memphis Academy of Art standing out in the landscape. He approaches them very directly, it is a group portrait. It is what we might call an *en face*, face to face presentation. There is no attempt to try to establish any kind of principle of making the landscape or the people look unusual, or to transcend the basic identities except what, asking them to move their heads back and forth. And thus, making the exposure which encompasses what you might call the stability of things as well as confirms the instability of things. And only in several cases do we find certain members of the subject troop suggesting the idea of a certain degree of lack of cooperation, for example, that figure, and that figure. Now, what is the meaning of this? It is harder for us to say, because he himself could not declare. And this to me is one of the first photographs that offers, articulates the possibility of a symbolic effect, the idea of how he asked those people to move their heads, otherwise it is a rather ardently simple and rather conventional portrait study. And yet he found it meaningful, meaningful enough to include it as the opening image in a portfolio that was published relative to his work. And I don't mean the one that I wrote the introduction to, it is not in there, I am talking about one that he has published as recently as two years ago in a form of slides and a form of portfolio to declare the premises of his work, at least pre-Israel, up until 76. Let's look through a few of these. Next please. Others though, contrary to that, seem to have a little bit more specific reductivity, like the Agnew form. He did a whole series of faces of women, ripped from *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue Magazine* and other periodicals, and he virtually placed them into tree-scapes, branch-scapes. And let's see the next one for another closer view, as you can see there are a number of varieties where he was taking closed-cropped views where we don't really know the landscape field unless we can definitely see their places in the branches of the trees, or the bushes, or what have you. And we see that these faces become like grotesques, as if they are, the way I term it, or at least the way I refer to these in the portfolio in which these did appear, I stated, "Girls from *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, their magazine-page semblances crushed and wrinkled to become grotesques, their disembodied freak-faces pinned to leafy branches, their cosmetic allure turned to offensive flowers." Just as a way of trying to give a read-out of how I respond to these. Obviously, the faces in their original magazine identity, as a part of hype for merchandizing cosmetics and hair sprays, things of that nature, would not have intended to appear to be grotesques, freak-faces with all of these twisted lips and crumpled cheeks and caved-in craniums: things of that nature. That is, by pinning them to the trees, we do associate them in

some way, at least I did, reductively, with the principle that they might be like blossoms on the tree, or fruit, or in some way associated with feminine, get it, the alluring feminine associated with Magna Mater, and now she becomes ugly. She is mother nature, ugly, etc., and yet somehow there seems to be something there that I couldn't quite pin down reductively. I would say this is more reductive in its potentials of collective interpretation, more semiotic, the for example the group of faculty members with their heads moving. How many of you would agree? I am just curious. Do you think the heads moving in the first faculty photograph, that is, would appear to be less explicit, less clear in terms of its intention, than this one? Yea or Nay.

Students: Nay.

Nay. All right, Gil, give me your thoughts on that, real quick.

Gil: Well, if you put it into the context of...the bushes, that picture becomes readable...man in the landscape...

All right, now there now there I think you are getting into an interpretive level, that later he will feel very strongly about people in relationship to environments or even objects in relationship to environments in which their sense of relatedness is either posited only in the head, or the lack of consciousness so the head moves and shows it is not actively involved with its identity, body identity, the trees, the world, or what have you. Here though I think he draws the distinction of potentiality clearly. I think we might extend this almost to the level of a kind of polemic, opposing the principle of let's say of cosmetic allure and the promotional hype of periodical images and what have you. But I think perhaps if we were to think in terms, and it was, a declared intention to have that mean more than what was apparently there. My sense would be that his intent here is to draw the distinctions where it might be more clear than our being able to grasp the immediate meaning of the one with the heads moving. I am sure it can be interpreted either way. But somehow, we find this kind of what I'll call bipolar moving between the more potentially clear intent and the less clear intent.

Gil: ...That obvious discrepancy calls for a verbal explanation.

Right.

Gil: Whereas what is striking about the symbolic, it is more difficult to formulate.

That is right.

Gil: And it makes verbal explanation...

Right, I would say though, what I was asking you, do you feel like the heads moving require less verbal statements? You do, or no?

Gil: I do.

Ok, The majority of us do. In order to continue this, I ask you for your reasoning, you haven't given me a reason yet. You see I feel like this requires a verbal explanation and yet the possibilities of interpretation reductively are clearer than what we might require of the heads moving. I feel we can describe what is happening. We can even tell the signals that were given by the photographer but the meaning is less apparent. It automatically posits a potentiality of

meaning that we will give to it. Whereas this I think has certain parameters of what he gave to it. Unless you feel that is not the case, I want to hear a clear distinction about...

Gil: Well, my response to the head moving one is a function of the context of the work. And seeing this one...earlier ones...it seems that a specifically reductive interpretation is required.

Oh, I see what you mean. In other words, that we might wish to because of the context of his work, the earlier work or even later work, but I would say it eludes us. It tends to elude us. It eludes us collectively, Gil. How would you explain it then? What would be the semiotic intent of the heads moving in the group portrait?

Gil: What I was trying to say earlier, that the relationship of man to the landscape, man's illusion that he is not part of the landscape, that he is not part of the ecological system.

All right, now, how many of you would have come to that same conclusion? Here is my point, Gil, I agree with you. I quite readily agree that it has a greater potential, I think that is what also clues the development of his later work, even the Israel work...this totally new attitude towards the landscape and what the landscape might mean to him personally as well as what he might think it might mean to us collectively. But you see, I think it would be less likely that we come to an agreeable conclusion out of the collective group of this entire, every individual in this room, in the group with the heads moving, the faculty, than we would here. You see I think the potentialities of interpretation here might be more collectively the same. Frida, what were you going to say?

Frida: I was going to say a couple of things. My interpretation of the heads moving is different because...it is de-substantiating that which we see...you have that mandala back a while ago...and we go zip into the center because we are so drawn to the representation of the human form, the human element, my eyes were drawn to...if I were glancing at it, that is where my eyes would go, so I have a slightly different interpretation.

Let me try this out to confirm one thing you are saying...go back to that landscape...right here, stop. You see, I have asked people about this photograph...what I am saying is, that it is either, which might relate to some degree, and I think there are a lot of variations within this, but the fact that the sense of the moving heads removes the identity of what you might call consciousness, and so the human being stands in world but is not aware of the world. Many people say they don't tend to look at the figures because typically in a group photograph we tend to look for the identities of the faces more so first before even bodies, and that people begin to say, staring at this, begin to concentrate on what is going on in the background. And they say it is kind of paradoxical, that after all, you would expect to look at the figures and their faces, but instead they almost forget them and move back towards the landscape behind it. In other words, what I am suggesting is, he intended this to have meaning and he himself couldn't explain why it was meaningful to him.

Gil: Right, but clearly, by disturbing the ability to pick out the individuals he has posited that the picture is now the relationship of man, unidentifiable as individuals to the landscape, which is also unidentifiable because there are no specific features.

Now Gil, I completely agree with you. But that is a reductive interpretation that I think is even broader, has greater philosophical, psychological possibilities than even what we are stating. But I am saying, how many people in this room would have necessarily arrived at the same conclusion? This is a trap for more varied interpretation.

Gil: Are you saying therefore that somehow semiotic reduction is a function of democratic agreement, or consensus agreement?

Definitely, consensus agreement is the hallmark of semiotic interpretation. It is a function also of...

Gil: It is a function of, to whom the maker of the picture addresses the message.

It is a presumption about the context of meaning based the democratic, consensus, that those to whom the picture is addressed will all agree upon its potential meaning.

Gil: But what if there is a didactic intent or a pedagogical intent in that?

Then indeed, if he intends that, and it doesn't satisfy a similar form of interpretation amongst all of us, that is to say, from one to one, I would not need to ask, I could just point to someone and say, did one of those shadowy figures in the back think in terms of ecology or perhaps the lack of consciousness of the human in the landscape, or did some of you think, like I could point to someone over here in the shadows and say, did you think of the potentiality that you would normally look at the faces and identify the figures but then did your attention go off into the landscape? You see, I feel here that we have more variable possibilities and that you are quite right about one thing: that he started, as he states himself, with the intention of making a group photograph of the faculty for a folio, a brochure, and he wanted to do it in a sort of nostalgic way, make it appear to look like a typical group photograph. And then he chose to use this, and he said, somehow this has meaning to me. And he did talk about the lack of relationship of human beings to the world and the whole principle of ecology and it rearing its ugly head at that time. But you see he could not arrive at a conclusion and I think that the meaning of it also extends beyond what you might call the greater potential for conclusive interpretation. I would call this definitely more symbolic than semiotic. Although if I were to interpret it like you I might say, according to our analysis, we might arrive at a shared semiotic conclusion. But I would say the potential for this having variable meaning is greater than having one meaning, ours or someone else's.

Frida: The other thought that I had...was the fact that the other photograph...the gesture is the photographer's. If we can all imagine tearing all of those photographs out of, I mean if we all get paint on our faces we can start imagine ourselves being in paintings, and when the photographer tears the photographs out of magazines, crumbles them up and sticks them up in a tree, I think that we can all participate in that gesture.

Here it is a subtle distinction, now let's go to the next one just for a moment. I'll suggest as a postulate, we don't need to come to any conclusion here, but I would say this is more semiotic than symbolic, than the previous one. I am getting now to the point about the figures in the background...how would you interpret this if you did accept the premise that he intends to photograph to be meaningful beyond the principle of just basic recognition caught in a tree from some magazine page. What are the potentialities for determining that those women's faces, and I think that you would agree that you imagine, and once you know the premises, because he would title them, in fact here he said, 'faces in the trees.' And if we look carefully I think that most of us would have a context into which we would associate these since they don't appear to be tabloid images, I know it is difficult to tell just by observing this, but that it is tabloid in terms of the cruder press runs that we would associate with girly magazines or what have you. Most of them are of faces, go to the next one and they might appear to be more typically the kind of

thing we would find in advertising: cosmetics, hairdos, etc., etc. And once we know that indeed they were taken from *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* that we might suggest some kind of peculiar relationship between this and the trees. But is it that peculiar? You see here we know his action has taken place: he has crumpled them up, he has placed them in the trees...even though he ordered them to move their heads, but still, they are making the movement in the previous photograph. Well, how many of you, Gil, you and I will discuss this independently, I am not trying to prove a point or win a point. I am trying to say, how many of you feel this is more accessible as far as a possible interpretation? Raise your hands. I want to see it high. Ok. And how many of you thought of the idea of, you might have asked why, but what would a crumpled cosmetic ad face on a tree mean?

Student: {inaudible}

Artificialism. Is it the same thing?

Student: Ephemera.

Yes, ephemera. It is like, Murray was very much, he talked about, as did Bob Heineken, I mean talked not just verbally but by pictures, about the artificiality of our advertising world, and that women are hell-bent on being made artificial. Whether it is the latest gift from Helena Rubenstein or Max Factor or Taboo or whatever cosmetic industries exist, they build masks, personas, under the cause, as John Berger would say, that men insist that they become the sight, so it is inevitable that they have to become sights that aren't a part of their own surfaces. And he is also making a play on the theme of ecology: the artificial plants, artificial flowers, the world of plastic is overtaking the world of reality and so he deals with what I would call a rather simple insigne of raw nature in which the blossoms on the tree become crumpled faces that are also like artificial faces. And by transferring them out of their context and they are purportedly salable reality, or at least provoking sales of a product...they become associated as flowers, artificial flowers on real trees. In other words, that seems to me to be a more collectively identifiable and reductive motif than let's say, the heads moving. You may or may not agree, but at least that seems to be, the polarities of the development of his works successively during this period of the pre-Israel photographs. All right let's go on and look at a few more. This is hung, it is a newspaper, a double-page newspaper advertisement in which he has accordion-folded, it is hung by plastic line so that it appears to be much larger than it actually is, and it is hung in front of this street, and so to speak, given a kind of location that would make it appear as though in this leaf-strewn and cracked sidewalk flanked street we have this kind of billboard announcement of the latest edition from GE, commanded by that lovely delight who comes with the car, who obviously by virtue of her appearance invites you into that sex machine, while other automobiles appear to be, in essence, functioning as utilitarian objects parked on the rest of the street.

I would call this, again, maybe to a degree subtler than the previous one, because of the paradox of the scale of this thing and where it is located, that is a paradox. There might be a symbolic potential in the very formal relationships that are occurring here, that is to say, scale changes that are, to the naïve eye, they don't know how things like this are done, not commonplace, they are unusual, they provoke a response that we might want to contemplate and think about or spin our fancies about. But at the same time, the principle of relationship to me becomes much more reductive and semiotic. Let's look at another one. Whereas here, to take a picture of his wife standing in the backyard, and to impose upon it, and again hang an open page of *Playboy* in front of her, suspended, against all the images of domesticity such as the draped clothesline and the backyard in Memphis, begins to introduce a principle of contiguity. Again, this kind of overlappingness of things. That is, again, speaking to the

potentials for dialogue, changing what we might call the picture reference into verbal reference, we might suggest the idea of, here all the ensigns of the work-a-day world of the wife, are there, are present, having been considerably amplified: Elly worked hard to keep those clothes clean {laughs} you get my crude image. At the same time, she is also seen as an object of desire that transcends the normal state of her identity as domestic mother and wife. She becomes, in essence, the figure that would delight, so to speak, as a fiction of a possibility within the photographer's mind as opposed to the reality of what she appears to be. Again, there is that kind of an attempt to try to have something become paradoxical, and yet at the same time, once you start thinking about what is presented, you see that he is working quite consciously, and he was, because he can lay on this the most reductively clear analysis of exactly what he was trying to achieve. As a result, sweeping away, as it were, the symbolic potentials. Except as posited within individuals, and maybe two or three of us come to an agreement that this has a hell of a lot more meaning than he intended. But the intent was to be iconographically significant through the principle of reductive semiology, reducible elements. Next please. We know that he worked with issues that were shared by other photographers. Emmet Gowin would have a child lying in a landscape surrounded by seashells, and dolls, or whatever. And then Murray would have a child appear, pressing against the screen, the doorway, lying against the ground or up against the wall, whatever it might be, and then literally imposing upon the child these kinds of garlands and falling leaves and other elements. And then the idea of the intent is much more apparent here, the idea of the imposition of things is much more apparent, and yet the potentiality of the relationship between the child and the vegetative matter is less clear, unless you want to talk about nature girl or nature boy, or the child of nature, or some other level in which again you would tend to follow through with what I'd call reductive reasoning. Next please. Some of these became extremely paradoxical: the taking of the children's toys, signs that were hung on the wall of the room and again hanging them so that the scale was misunderstood...and you have all seen what people hang in children's rooms. And that by introducing the mannequin, back behind the underwear, or the Bugs Bunny against that black cloth in that setting, and then having these motifs, like stones and rocks and tables and benches and so on, so to speak, be in the same environment where we might not expect them. In other words, there might even be more of an intent to suggest that there is chaos here, but at the same time that chaos looks predetermined. It doesn't look to be what you might call the typical detritus of abandon where children have been playing and mother has been hanging the wash. There is an intention given to a kind of inner penetration or the relationship between things that are not normally thought of as in relationship, and certainly again the scale factor has been radically altered, it we know exactly what signs are there. So there is an attempt to try to move toward a potentiality of some particular motif structures that impinge upon one another, relate to one another and start sponsoring meaning. But quite often I think his intentions are far more explicit than his discovery of what might emerge out of the construct of the forms themselves. I might say you will notice a very peculiar thing: you notice that the figures with the moving heads were in a sort of semi-circular motif. Agreed? You might have noticed that even the pinned flowers also suggested, seldom were they in a geometric modular structure, they tended to follow a kind of circular structure. Things like...will often appear in these works suggesting this idea of a proto-circular structure. Whether or not that was known, intended, or otherwise, he certainly doesn't know it. And whether or not we can take a few examples from a group and say it is there, but at least I think it is interesting to know that at a later point in his development, in his most recent stuff, he will pay less attention to the idea of what you might call the chaos of a world and an environment and deal much more where things are placed in a more logical, structural pattern. Next please. He begins to explore the possibilities, again, of paradox in scale. He hangs things again on fishing leader line, and things like toys that tend to be close encounters of the eighteenth kind, and follow these domestic backgrounds with the automobile and the house in Memphis and what have you. It's again as though that principle of the stable,

meaning the stabilized car even though the automobile door is open, and things seems like, the house has weight, and the tree relates to the ground, and then suddenly this little plastic tricycle appears to float. In his talk with Walter Rabetz, and he stated to me that in reality he was dealing with the phenomena of re-visitations of childhood memories. He said my mother was insistent upon certain attitudes, that I keep my toys neat and organized, and I was properly toilet-trained, etc., etc. And he excused this away by stating that these photographs are about memory traces of how he would have like to his toys and other elements appear to be thought of...from his childhood, that is in an abandoned state of chaos, fancy, fantasy: surreal rather than real. Now whether or not you agree with that, that was part of his stated intention. I kept stating, I don't dig it, and I am never going to read anything that traces back to your relationship to your parents. I find it interesting, again, more from the phenomenology that there is suddenly a potential in objects that does not require them to be located in a normal position or order, or a state of weight, a state of relationship to an environment as we would normally expect. And unless one fashions that this was thrown by a child or suddenly miraculously started levitating heavenward, or what have you, which is far more in the realm of possibility of our own personal interpretation than it would be fact. And yet there seems to be something factual about the relationship of that tricycle to that particular environment. Next please. In other words, these images don't, once we know the fact that something is hung in midair, giving you that peculiarity of scale, once we see the relationships between the forms, we would say at least the clarity of purpose is not drawn as distinctively as those with the flowers pinned to the branches or even with the motifs that might look much more intentional such as the Bugs Bunny or the other elements in the backyard. Next please. There is a period in which he will return back to things that are somewhat reflected similar to his photographing various types of people in various types of dress within environments that he associates with the urban landscape. And during this period, it is almost as though it is a recall of certain paradigms that he had already accomplished very well and with great attention from a period five or six years earlier.

Student: It is interesting looking at this knowing the context of the other images, because the humans become like the tricycle.

They almost appear to be like visitants within that world. I would say also, if you notice that they are very distinctively set at the center of the picture plane, or at least approaching it, and there is that kind of centroidal definition of their appearance in the great thrust, we'll put it that way, of these motifs including their own body thrusts, so that we tend to concentrate upon their identities right in the center of the plane. And obviously working in this case with a 2 ¼ by 2 ¼ format, as he had in most cases, except for the very early work which was 35 actually. But the point I am trying to make is, here we find this often happens, with a person working with an intent, and what I'll call shopping around for meaning, suddenly, intentional meaning gets lost. And one tends to revert back, and I use this as one example and he himself admits that there was a period in which his work seemed to be the representation of several Murray Riss's. The attentions were given to a variety of things, and yet there might have been a link. And perhaps to me...leads to most of the later work is this idea of concentrating in a whole series of portraits he did of the figures placed right in the center of the plane, or at least associatively because of field forces and organizational formats, we associate the figure as being centrally placed. Next please. He worked a lot with his children. And he was fascinated with tracking their responses to one another. Shanna has come to the door, the glass door, the sliding door, she was standing just outside the screen, the child is squalling, her brother, she can't get in. Murray tells her to stand there, directs her to stand there while he photographs. She is trying to get in at first to help her baby brother, and that the child is screaming, and he insists that she stand there while he takes this photograph. What he was trapped by was this sort of dissonant shadow that you see right here. This kind of blocking shadow that he thought of as sort of heavy, spooky,

mysterious. This kind of barrier between the sister and the little brother. You may or may not share that, but that was part of his intent. He was struck not by the phenomenon of his child wanting his diaper changed or whatever...cholic or gas or anything else, or even his daughter trying to get in, but asking her to stop because he saw that strange configuration that he felt was a kind of additive factor, and hardly more than the profile-ism that we find so commonly used in Cubist paintings. Or so commonly apparent when we have anyone standing close to a reflective surface, where you get that dual figure, full face and then profile. But he saw that as a kind of symbolic additive that became the purpose of the photograph. Next please. So he began to think of the possibility of adding those symbolic potentials. In other words, here we have the man photographing the young girl against the tree, and then we have the child, and she has not been to the circus and is on her way home, he has deliberately taken her out pinned to her, balloons, so that she appears to be like potentially capable of floating, levitating. Or being associated in some way with the principle of, even her leaning, a lot of this is very directed, to start articulating the possibilities of meaning that he felt were sponsored by the images he was doing of the children in seeing things like shadow traces as in the work I previously showed you. Next please. Letting formal configurations occur: such as the shape of the leaf is configured in the shape of the way he has placed the leaves. You see, that is that, the shadow being the shadow of Shanna's face, but at the same time, something that does not become her face. It is an additional factor. It is almost like saying the gestalt of the shape of placing the leaves, when they fell off of the vines, and placing them in a configuration that really is a reflection of their individual unit configuration, so that he not only has the larger shape that he determines to be reflecting in the shape that nature determined. It is a much more abstract principle of trying to achieve a certain level of meaning. It is more than formalism. It is an established relationship to the principle that he organizes things that will reconfirm the things out of which this gestalt, this whole form, is made. And so indeed the whole is not more than the sum of its parts, the whole is exactly what the part is. How many of you see that playing with the idea? Next please. And he begins to introduce things like painted rocks, at a roadside restaurant that suggest the idea of crypts, coffins, nests, eggs: a lot of signs of what he would call incipency, the idea of something being born or coming out of the earth. Or else suggesting the idea of a casket's closure, enclosures, things that we would associate with returning to the earth. Next please. He returns again, not just way of his sequencing them. He will go back to the backyard and have Elly in that foreground, in very large scale, with some rocks. The child imitating to some degree the gesture of the mother. This idea of, just like we saw the leaves were imitated in the way he placed them in that structure, therefore somehow within the formal attempt to suggest the relationship, it is not always identical a relational imitation. That is, forms begin to find not equivalencies, but they are the direct mimesis, or mimetic imitation of the form that is apparent, generally closer to us. Next please. Often he will show, again, returning to that nature theme that we find the hands of, obviously children's hands, reaching in and holding two little fern stalks, that one is basically related to the actual fern and so the child's fingers just simply go around the stalk, the other one has been plucked from the world of nature and held next to it. Again the idea of the natural and the idea of the removal from the natural and the form has become displaced. Often very simple gestures to indicate this idea of the real and the artificial, or at least the real and the disturbance of the real by virtue of some human gesture or what have you. It is again, to my mind, a much more abstract theme but nonetheless reducible to specific intents, if we deal with his intentions. Next please. How a face, in essence, by virtue of the lens attitude I'll call it, when we start from the nose and tend to work around and see the extensions of the face, the physiognomy, somewhat similar to the same structure that we find by looking into the hydrangea and the center of it and then looking out from it. That there are parallel relationships between things. This is his bid to suggest the idea of equivalence. It is much more of a formal equivalence than it is a psychical equivalent. At least that was his stated intent. So again we have an abstract issue perhaps but nonetheless there is a greater degree of intent to be meaningful according to the

principle of thinking about and intending it before the fact of picturing it. So there is an analytical mode of symbolic intent here, and therefore I say it is less symbolic than it is semiotic. Next please. Again this play upon the reflection of reality against the world of nature, the relationship of man to nature, and then obviously the man holds the leaf that has been plucked from the tree and what we have now is no more than the insigne of its original reality in the shadow cast against the region of the heart. The man was not without literary instincts, not without anecdotal instincts. And his attempt was to try to tell not only a story, but not in the more obvious sense of storytelling, but a sense of the relationships that will provoke the mind to wander into the realm of meaning, just as one might want to wander in terms of just the pictorial interest that might be there for the eye, or not be there, but nonetheless the story would be as important. Next please. You see, again, the use of, and many of you may know his work, in which he has the whole cartoon set from Walt Disney, not only Bugs Bunny but Mickey Mouse going up next to the nude woman, appearing to run along the wall and appear to pounce upon her shoulder, or Mickey will appear on a tee-shirt and then the child's head is blocked by the leaves: the comic against the real, the idea of anonymity against the realm of identity. That is, things people wear to identify their own interests. These were all things very consciously thought of as a kind of vocabulary of potentials for meaning. Next please. And they gather increasingly toward the principle of, as I said, here we have...on a street just opposite the one where we saw the automobile, the next street over, we have this man who was delivering, he worked for a pharmacy, he has delivered a prescription to a house, he comes out, Murray is walking on the street and asks if he can take his photograph, he stands, and of course, and what he does is bleach out the negative, by masking and bleaching and removing of the emulsion so he gets this totally black definition of the face. And against that yawning curve of the porch behind and that rather peculiar cloudscape, by virtue of association with the blackened face we might get much more of the sense of the ominous or the anonymous, whatever words you would like to choose, anonymity or the ominous nature of this figure, looking as if it is wearing a medical coat of some sort, this sort of mysterious surgeon, whatever it may be. The point is, it is still an attempt to reduce the meaning, or to pre-intend. And he stated to me, he said I worked a hell of a long time to get exactly the meaning, and he saw it as an ominous figure, a threatening figure, and you may or may not share that but that is what I might call the deliberate intent to mean according to certain preordaining principles. And I don't know, we could take the time and ask ourselves, and we would all deliberately let our minds move across this picture visually and declare what if we accept that premise that he intends it to mean something, what will we arrive at. I wouldn't suspect that one would say it was a cheerful image. You might say it has all sorts of meaning that I wouldn't be able to conjure up as to what this would be, but I would suggest somewhere lurking about are premises of interpretation that would be a similarity, or a reductive similarity. Next please. He was very proud of the birth of his son and particularly when the child reached the point where he thinks of the child as indicative of progeny for a father that has been developed in a Judaic tradition. This is extremely meaningful, a very powerful meaningful form, that the male son achieves primacy in terms of the principle of lineage and promise in what is called *synteleology*, that is, the child is that which extends the future of the father more so than any other member of the family. Whether or not you agree with that, he did a series of pictures where the child is held aloft by Mom, Elly, and then he uses a flashlight, to what? The genitalia of the child and to identify that as the future of himself. Once you know the principle, you know the belief and you know the intent, then it is not as unusual as it might appear. It might appear as obvious to some of you, but there is a greater attempt to suggest the idea of the child, the newborn. The fact that the child is seen in silhouette. It is not so much the child he is identifying but the potentiality of things, the possibilities of the future, therefore the future cannot be named, therefore the future is seen in silhouette. The features of the future will eventually be filled out. The child will sponsor further progeny and thus my name, my identity as a person, will continue through the male lineage of my own spawning. So that the idea even of the silhouette becomes

more significant when we think of it in those terms. Next please. At the very same token, the idea of playing games with a simple idea such as the chenille bedspread that is obviously draped over Elly, the wife, it is not a question of changing scale here, and then having the child's dress appear in front of that draped, spook-like figure. A kind of imitation, again, of the young girl eventually emerging toward, she is arriving at the age where she is beginning to have the pretensions of behaving like Mom. So as a result, he starts playing that visual game with the principle of how a child's dress will look as though it imitates an adult's dress. You may not think so but that is the way he felt about it. Or that the gesture itself against the potential figure of the adult scale, the child's dress shows a gathering toward that scale. Next please. And I think this will clarify it to a degree. The photographing of Shanna as she approaches her own stage by a few years, pre-pubescent, but nonetheless, but where she strikes a pose that has a certain hint of the erotic within its structure, and he is aware of this. She doesn't dance around with the abandonment of youth, without her clothes, she tends to strike poses. She herself is becoming the insigne of the potentiality of the feminine that might relate to the idea of the erotic. Just like his wife could be the pin-up girl in the *Playboy* magazine, etc., etc. I hope I don't need to draw the distinction further. Next please. That is a very coy and alluring pose. At other times she seems to be much more intentional in her mysterious divining of a world: holding instruments, spoons and forks. Piaget, he wrote about this, he talks about how children use things, play toys and so on, how they use this as a measure of the world. And so you have Shanna, appearing with the spoon standing against this...one-point perspective sidewalk as though she is looking out at something, using the spoon as a kind of magic instrument, some kind of talismatic instrument. But there is an attempt there to try to deal with the idea of states of mind and states of identity that he feels is meaningful and hopes that we will arrive at the meaning which he intended. Next please. Even when Elly appears somewhat like the man in the pharmacist's coat, somewhat de-corporealized, this kind of spectral visitant with that rather loose, diaphanous gown against these silhouetted bushes. A kind of announcement, like a stage that out of nature comes this sort of mysterious definition of...

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...a commentary on what pictures are to us and how we respond to them. Next please. Well, in Israel, I am just simply going to give you a few hints. I am going to go through these very rapidly. I don't want to discuss each one. He virtually, in Israel, and you've got to keep in mind those three things: all of these are printed after the fact. They have been assisted by the principle of accepting certain things that happened to them materialistically on that boat...But nonetheless, he knows, he said to me, in essence when he got there for a period of time, he could not work and recapitulate certain things he had done as much as a few years earlier. And I might add, except for the toning, which was later done, the split-toning, which he wasn't necessarily sure he would do that on the Portriga, that he was really dealing with ideas that were very much apparent in his work as some ten or fifteen years earlier. And as I've said, some of them reflect the kind of issues you can see in his own Resource portfolio here. Let's just look at a few of this group, of where he began, Ok Keith, just go through them rather rapidly. That is such a typical Riss, had it not been in Israel you would think that it was done in 1964 or 63. That is a distinct echo, a parallel to the past.

Student: {inaudible}

No, but he has done a considerable amount of masking and manipulation of the print. I have seen the negatives to some of these, and you wouldn't believe that. It is unbelievable how.

Student: So he chose not to clearly, not show his intent.

That is right. Well, wait a minute, on the contrary, he said that wasn't the case...but he talks about that as an issue. These are like in essence recovered images, not discovered images. And most of them have gone through a high degree of wither intensification or alteration in some way in order to get the image to become what it is. He said that in many cases these were very normal exposures, much of the material that is silhouetted was not, so that even something as conventional as this, you can see the echo of the clothesline and so on, without...but nonetheless, it is the same kind of point of view. But in many of these, such as the definition of the light in the background is a deliberate attempt to use a lot of masking in his printing, a lot of manipulation of the printing approach.

Student: But the idea is the... accident in preparing in the visual...

That is right, he wants you to believe that these are not accidental. Do you understand what I mean, in their final phenomenological appearance. But he tells you right now that they are but affected by: like if you could see the negative and the prints you are not going to see a direct parallel relationship there, so these are highly worked on.

Student: It is just an interesting choice to make given the circumstances, to choose to have, I don't know, I have to, maybe it couldn't be made visually manifest, maybe it is just what they come up with a peculiar, altered, unreal sense to the visual sense.

Well, I think the nature of the light here declares itself as absolutely clear cut, to my mind. That this is a manipulated print for the simple reason the way the light is behaving is rather peculiar. In other words, we can say, where is this light, so to speak, coming from. You might say these phenomena are usually noticeable, what about this printing down in here, where you expect the light to be brighter. You see there are many things that require whole patches of areas would appear to be muddy or diffused. He has had to go through and purposely print down, mask off, print up, things of that nature. I can't explain all of the processes completely. But even the split-toning, the bleaching process, and the selenium and the bleaching process causes things to differentiate things highly, so you get a sort of brilliant, reduced degree of tonal range and he is giving you also a very increased tonal range in other areas. And what you look at these, I might add that the slides do not encompass it and I trust you remember from what you saw on the walls downstairs. I noticed that when I saw the show he had most of the earlier...and...later. But you do get some of those...tonalities against those silvery tonalities...if he printed the negative in a standard manner, some are toned...split-toned, even re-toned, but he gains something that we begin to believe as being natural when in reality they are somewhat forced images. He wants them to appear to be. Next please. There is one thing that begins to occur: he announces that he found himself in a period of about eight or ten weeks as not being able to photograph anything, and it was like all he was doing was repeating in other locales, certain paradigms that he had done before. He talks about only when he starts backing away from the landscape, at first, and tries to play the role of a kind of detached documentarian and deal with it as it appeared to his eye...you see the figure with the long raking shadows, it is a wonderful structure to my eye, but nonetheless, that is not uncommon in the development of his earlier experience. Next please. Even objects in isolation and elements that would appear to be so typifying in what we might call early salt prints, particularly those of the Frith images, Palestine and so on, and Murray is aware of this, he is not innocent in terms of historical evidences. But then notice this now: he starts going out to the Mount Carmel district, and particularly where you have not only very foliate forms, but then right next side to that is the desert. He talks about an attempt to try

to, this is what I call the reductive semiotic intent of things like the automobile accordion fold, or the Agnew approach...you have generally an article of clothing, normally his own, but it could also be the children's, because there are several variations, I just have a few of them, in which against the field of stones and pebbles he will put this sign of human life, as it were, like the child's dress pressed against the chenille bedspread and then put against it some strange configuration like a root or a petrified branch, or something of that nature that suggests the idea of appendages or some strange relationship that he wants to make a comment about that landscape, his visitation, the sign of human life, and the idea of age. It is a petrified tree branch, next please. He follows this through by just doing one after the other. There are approximately fifteen or twenty of these. He does a number of things in which, again, after the fact when he says here he did intend to try to capture the sense of climate of this locale and then only later did he say it never would have dreamed to me to give it the heat that it appears to have: that this was an acceptance of the negative that was obviously, could only have been printed by masking off...darkening...things like this, and this, and this. So that you can get a high degree of postulation of the windows being entirely different from the rest of the landscape. In other words, that would not meet the canons of the photographic, has details in all the shadows...so many of these are working toward that potential to get that kind of calcified, absorbent, dry quality. Next please. That is just a wonder to me now, whether you share my opinion or not. Here is one he really had to accept because he maintains that the density level of this was extremely rich when he took it, and it had nothing to do with those previous two, although they were intended to be much more light, in that scale. And what we discover in this kind of configuration in the tree and so on, you could see yourself, where this is not typifying of something that can be conventionally achieved, even with flash in daytime, or with a certain type of lens, or even a certain type of film. It certainly doesn't have the principles of graphism. It has the principle of something that looks assisted. It is assisted here by chemical change...and this is another one...again he has to accept after the fact, he said he took this as an extremely developed value range, the photograph of the Carmel woods, the interest in these campgrounds, and yet after the fact these strange things that look like light-leaks or differentiated tonalities are part of what was there. He said that this was so thin that he used re-intensification which makes the atomistic particles get more dense, and therefore he gets a greater degree of identity, and at the same time more diffusion. But he accepted these kinds of bursts of light that filter into the center and cut across the bottom which was never there in the original exposure. Next please. He began to discover, he said he was tired of photographing portions of monuments and walls, and landscape elements, and began to notice this distribution of rocks in the landscape, and bushes. Again, he never anticipated that quite often there would be a kind of light or glow in the center of things...But in time, all of this, even this strange branch-like structure that moves out there, this element, is damage. But this element is damage, it was not part of the original light, but he accepts it because he was fascinated by the idea of these circular formations of these rocks, with lead-in rocks and branches in established circular arcs which he originally had intended to develop with a considerable amount of value scale. It is as though nature gives forth these orbs of light, and where do they come from, folks, but the effects of nature, if you will use that as a metaphor. For the accident. **I am not so sure I want to call it accident, I'll call it acceptance. Because you see it was a phenomenon of the change of the film emulsion to the principle of cold and heat. And it is also the apparent identity of a form as the result of a person's acceptance of that change: that the world itself through itself together with something that is made up of the world, that is chemical structures, material structures independent of the syntax or the intentions of the photographer. His acceptance is the greater act of inventiveness here.** And then his enabling that phenomenon to become apparent and these circular motifs that will become persistent. Whether they burst above the center, whether they send light trails diagonally or again they relate to branch work that repeats their contours. He said most of these had nothing

to do, he said he never really dreamed of the potential of this kind of four-part extension of those branches, although he knew what mandalas were. All of his intention was to suggest what was happening in this strange structure underneath the circularity of that and the way that this was altered, and the way the light was effected also by bleaching and doing other elements create this strange central motif in the center with these four radial motifs working out from it, the branches...He stated that he became fascinated by even finding these kind of orb-like or circular structures even though he did not know why they would phenomenologically appear in the final prints. But things like the man working on this circular garden area, and then with the mandala right in the center. Look at that documentary definition, the man at work, not even thinking of the linkage of the fact that here again we have a circular motif with the central point where the man is working on. He wasn't thinking of that link. This came out of a continuing concert, or like again, against the architecture, these piles of stones that are orb-like and that even their clustering together becomes circular-like. Next please. Strange, I like the butt-end of this broken tree, as it were, and suggesting this idea of a floating-like disk, which he thought of originally, the important thing was again, these kinds of vertically located banks that gave these radial lines and much of that tend to be suppressed within the final image, and suddenly things like this he could see as becoming apparent because of the damage, and because of his acceptance. Again, remember back to the backyard, this kind of structure, and then the idea of the extreme silhouette, and the loss of density and the loss of detail, which is so atypical of his work for anyone who knows it. Go back and think in your mind about that work that had been done eight years prior to this of that painted rock by the restaurant surrounded by those blossoming grass ferns or whatever they were. And think about that same kind of strange configuration: the rock is no longer suggestive of death, or life, or anything else. In fact, you could almost say that these are configurations of that: this is like the one pebble writ large, that is like the little leaves in the shape of the inverted heart.

Student: But it is not a picture of the rock anymore, it is a picture of what the rock does within that particular context.

I quite agree. And I would say that it is not only, it is like, what is obviously identifiable is suddenly beginning to suggest a structural principle or a phenomenological relationship of part to total or part to individual unit that we can't really name or define around the principle of intention.

Student: These are much stronger.

Of course they are. They are more symbolic, and any symbol is far...

Student: These are related in terms of form to the earlier Agnew picture.

Oh yes. He picks up the paradigms of form from his earlier work, but now he has left the realm of intention and lets things happen according to the principle of occurrences that have happened after the fact. Next please. Just keep going, I'll tell you when to stop...He says to me, as he walks to his case in his home in Memphis, and says look at this strange thing. He picked it up, it looks peculiarly like some kind of strange head, some kind of ritual head. He said, do you know what that is? He said that is petrified camel dung. {laughter} I would have thought it was right out of *The Exorcist*, it is the head of Pazuzu that he picked up in the desert. He said I reached the point where my intentions, and he is talking about before the fact of what he saw he had, I just felt that I was not able to photograph with a sense of freedom and I wanted a gift. He said I was walking along, and literally, and Murray Riss is not prone to behave this way psychologically or personally, I have known him for a long time, he says I was walking along

and I literally called out and said, give me a gift. I want to see something that I can believe in, and he kicked up this piece of camel dung that looked so remarkably like a mysterious head, some sort of ritual head. And he said from that point on I just went around photographing the gifts that were given to me, of the things that were there... Campgrounds demarcated by rocks and stones and make these circular configurations, by multiple units or circular configurations by contour units, and again, the circular configurations often appear with a burst of light, which he feels were gifts. Not much unlike the group of people moving their heads against the landscape and away, except now the reverse... Next please. I said, now come on Murray, you moved a stone. And he said, admittedly, I did. {laughter} But the maximum number I ever moved were two {laughter} And he said, this one in particular because these two rocks here were now over to the side. But notice this now, that slab in the center of the circle. Next please... A dog coming up to an obliterated or disrupted circular motif. Next please. Looking out over the water seeing this beach campground, the charred ashes in the very center of the mandaloid structure. Next please.

Student: {inaudible}

He sure did, but he doesn't match... how it will appear. As far as he was concerned, he was much more interested in the idea that these were, again, configurations that were circular. But it is the phenomenology of whether they were light or dark or what has happened to the contribution of the typical and molecular changes of the emulsion itself. Even for instance this light wraps around and create a circular form. Next please. All of that would be so foreign to Murray Riss' intention, it is just absolutely not within any paradigm of his prior work. That extreme silhouetting, a lot of that was because it was so severely damaged that he would have to print down... in order to arrive at this kind of thing. And I would say without the split-toning, without all the processes, he is a master printer in that sense of being able to use various processes and getting advisements on what he could use to densify, how could he effect the principle of trying to retain certain motifs... others he would try to print down. He was able to achieve something that we find credible. That is, it might look more intentional than it is born out of a principle of the gift that was given. By doing so he could then apply that to the work he is doing now. He doesn't have to send his work, as everyone is asking him, comically, hey Murray, what are you going to do with your next group of film, send them around the world in a boat? Have them go to the Arctic and then come back to the Tropic of Cancer? Then come back to you? Next please. But this sense of the circular motif and finding this stone within the center, and then notice how the stone by virtue of the damage done looks more what I'd call incipient as a potential stone, as a possibility of that philosopher's stone or that kind of manifest solidity in the center of the mandala, that gem hard to obtain. It is not manifest as though you want to document a stone in the middle of a circle. Again, by the very nature of its dark, dense appearance we tend to want to identify that, our eyes are attracted to see its surface. Next please. Often we see this surface from a very close view and have nothing but these little glowing motifs within it, where again, whole areas of emulsion have been darkened, and in other cases where they disappear, so you either get black or intense white bursting out of the surface. How many of you remember this print, it was so dark you had to stand in front of it like an Ad Reinhardt painting and let it finally emerge, and these little sparkles, these little scintillae all through here appear to emerge out of the rock as though it is emitting some kind of revelatory light. Or this again, what might remind you of a light-leak from severe damage, but he lets it occur. He admits it, as though this finger of light comes against the... wall and then touches stone above. Next please. Or finding these little shards, and he places them very much like he did with the leaves of the trees as if it were some hieroglyphic message, that out of these stones and the presentation of their identities, pebble upon huge granite concretion and then allowing these little shards of clay, pressed stone, to appear again in a kind of textural reference. Next

please. Or as has happened in the last batch: radically, admitting the principle of a complete obliteration in one half of the unit, moving away from what you might call that specifically circular motif and allowing the entire landscape to appear, but suggesting the relationship of the rock in the center. Half residing in the realm of light, half residing in the realm of reference, creating a principle in which he can suggest that he is not going to be subtle the definition of the accident of nature that threw itself together with his work in order to sponsor a symbolic affect that says it is not based on intention. It is based upon accretion, upon phenomenological happening, upon the throwing together of the automatic effects of climate and temperature with the ensigns of the natural world that he wanted to cultivate with his camera in order to affect the eye perhaps less or more convincingly than the earlier work. And finally, more often than not, people tend to respond to these less on the basis of how did you do it, what for, what is it, why? And are much more moved simply by the picture itself, **not the picture as a symbol, as a sign**. Anyway, that is an approach to next month's lecture so we'll stop there.

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