



ARTIST

Hollis Frampton

TITLE

At Sam Houston State Park, Louisiana

DATE

1978

DIMENSIONS

14.5 in H x 13.25 in W

MEDIUM

Dye Diffusion Transfer Print

IMAGE NOTES

Polaroid

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1982.037

CURRENT LOCATION

2024-2C

HOLLIS FRAMPTON

BORN

1936

DIED

1984

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Light Work Retrospective Exhibition, 1985
NYSCA Conduit Grant, 1982
Light Work Gallery, 1982
Robert B. Menschel Gallery, 1996
Group Exhibition

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 28
Contact Sheet 43
Contact Sheet 75/76
Menschel Gallery Catalogue 45
Exhibition Catalog: Light Work Retrospective

BIOGRAPHY

"Hollis Frampton is known for the broad and restless intelligence he brought to the films he made, beginning in the early '60s, until his death in 1984. In addition to being an important experimental filmmaker, he was also an accomplished photographer and writer, and in the 1970s made significant contributions to the emerging field of computer science. He is considered one of the pioneers of what has come to be termed structuralism, an influential style of experimental filmmaking that uses the basic elements of cinematic language to create works that investigate film form at the expense of traditional narrative content. Along with Michael Snow and Stan Brakhage, he is one of the major figures to emerge from the New York avant-garde film community of the 1960s.

Frampton's legendary intellect and equally legendary stubbornness announced themselves early. At the age of 15, he applied on his own volition to the prestigious Phillips Academy and was accepted on a full scholarship. Toward the end of his studies there, he was offered a scholarship to Harvard, only to have it rescinded after he failed to graduate by purposefully failing a required American history class. He spent several years at Western Reserve University in his native Ohio, studying a wide range of subjects but never attaining a degree. In 1958, he moved to New York with the intention of becoming a poet, but he soon abandoned that idea in favor of photography. His move to film in the early '60s coincided with the rise of avant-garde filmmaking in New York, centered around Jonas Mekas' Filmmakers Coop.

ESSAYS

ADSVMVS ABSVMVS in memory of Hollis William Frampton, Sr. 1913-1980 The author has come to suppose that he conserved the things represented herewith against the day when they were to be photographed, understanding them to harmonize with photographs then unmade according to a principle within the economy of the intellect. A photographic text and its proper pretext bear the following resemblance to one another, each is a sign of the perfective absence of the other. In the unimaginable and ordinary case of their copresence, an object and its picture, contending for the center of the spectatorial arena, induce, out of mutual rejection, an oscillation of attention whose momentary frequency is the implicit cantus firmus of our thought. If we understand but poorly our own notion of likeness between paired entities, we understand even less the manner in which entities are like, or unlike, or may come to be like, or unlike, themselves. This indisposition depends from a temporary defect, that we have not yet evolved to comfort in the domain of time, our supreme fiction, that parses sets of spaces in favor of successiveness. But before there were photographs, there are autographs, or happenstances whereunder bounded vacations of matter generate asexual artifacts, reproductions of themselves, necessarily incomplete, dessications, mummies, memories, traces indistinguishable from residues. Appearances such as these, found free in nature, command our attention, for they present to us, hovering at the margins of legibility, a collocation of failed instants when matter seems about to invent, in comparison and its precedent recollection, the germ of consciousness. Nature, or the customary behavior of matter, implies the photographic image at least as certainly as it implies ourselves. Accordingly, since they predate us, photographs may be treated scientifically. Fourteen argued plates are appended. The author acknowledges that their identifications are as probabilistic as the captions of all photographs, thereby suggesting that taxonomy is a statistical discipline. Hollis Frampton (c)4/82 ADSVMVS ABSVMVS, a portfolio of original photographs by Hollis Frampton, was produced under the auspices of Light Work through a New York State Council On the Arts Conduit Grant. The portfolio, in an edition of fourteen, consists of fourteen signed 16"x20" Ektachrome 74 RC prints, printed from 4"x5" color negatives, and matted to archival standards on 20"x24" museum board. Each portfolio comes cased in a hand built cloth portfolio box with a printed forward and a picture description by the artist. Train of Thought: Serial Images from the Light Work Collection Train of Thought presented the work of five photographers from the Light Work Collection, including Hollis Frampton, Arnold Gassan, Peter Max Kandhola, Judy Natal, and Aaron Siskind. Several photographs from each artist were exhibited with the intention of providing viewers, especially students, an opportunity to follow an artist through many different stages and approaches to one idea or subject and the chance to witness and consider their creative process through multiple images. Through the generosity of Robert and Joyce Menschel, Light Work recently received a donation of 150 photographs, including fifteen silver gelatin prints by preeminent photographer and educator Aaron Siskind (1903–1991). The images by Siskind included in this exhibition are strong examples of his interest in exploring the formal and abstracted views of urban decay—peeling paint, torn signs, and bits of graffiti. Like the other artists in this exhibition Siskind's work documented and ordered the world he encountered around him, with a unique ability to show us the profound beauty of the ordinary. Siskind viewed the photograph as a unique physical object in its own right, in contrast to many images today that exist only virtually. He stated, "When I make a photograph I want it to be an altogether new object, complete and self-contained, whose basic condition is order —(unlike the world of events and actions whose permanent condition is change and disorder)." Train of Thought included a variety of "altogether new objects," as each of the artists included can be said to have uniquely documented and ordered their world. Artist Judy Natal combined images made over a ten-year period while traveling the world to create her portfolio, The Hermetic Alphabet, a series of twenty-six silver gelatin prints. Natal used the alphabet as a structure on which she could organize and connect a series of seemingly random, ambiguous images. As the work moves us through the alphabet from A to Z, Natal investigates language, landscape, and travel. Arnold Gassan, a widely recognized authority on photographic processes as well as the history of photography, created the series Elegy in dedication to his mentor and teacher Minor

White. The rich, elegant surfaces and tonal range of Gassan's images are created using the labor-intensive, antiquated process of photogravure. His images show familiar rural scenes of clotheslines, picket fences, landscapes, and portraits of friends and family. The exquisite care he takes in printing points to his belief that, "the photograph often leaves a residue of un-verbalized meaning." No Birds Do Sing in Blue Sky, a collection of eighteen unique silver gelatin prints by Peter Max Kandhola, continues his exploration of death and grief, an idea he has approached with several different photographic mediums over the years. In this series the artist scratches and distresses his negatives as a visual metaphor. His purpose for manipulating the negative is described in his statement that, "images come and go, they flicker unsolved, and time builds itself around them. We invent explanations which also remain unsolved, but we also retain the meaning of episodes in our past life, a museum of images." ADSVMVS ABSVMVS is a portfolio of chromogenic prints by Hollis Frampton, an artist and educator who worked in both still photography and the avant-garde film movement known as "New America Cinema," which flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. He used his camera to record and order his unique collection of plant and animal specimens found in his travels, including road kill and delicacies from an Asian grocery. Each color photograph is paired by text of the object's Latin name, history, and mythology. Although his texts borrow the language and model of scientific classification, his version is quirky, personal, and humorous. His array of oddities and the stories of their discovery relay an artist's creative process of trolling his neighborhood for inspiration. Photographers and artists often seek an underlying structure or pattern in the world around them. As hundreds of students walked through this exhibition, some carrying cameras and a photo assignment, they were able to see how five different artists went fishing for inspiration and made, as Siskind said, "order out of chaos." Mary Lee Hodgens