



ARTIST

Eric Breitenbach

TITLE

Sanford, Florida

DATE

1990

DIMENSIONS

12 in H x 12 in W

MEDIUM

Gelatin Silver Print

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1990.003

CURRENT LOCATION

2024-5B

ERIC BREITENBACH

BORN

1956

BIRTHPLACE

Pittsburgh, PA

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1990

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 69

Contact Sheet 97

A Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection

ESSAYS

Eric Breitenbach's photographs are measured by his steady timing and resolving judgment. He is comfortable working on extended projects where he can focus his attention on the character of his subjects. The photograph to the right is from a series about the black neighborhoods of Sanford, FL, completed in 1990 with a grant from the Florida Endowment for the Humanities. Like most American cities, Sanford is divided into a monochromatic spectrum of black and white. During the four months he spent on the project many of the images he produced echo the intrigue and respect that he found in the quietly industrious outdoor barber shop pictured here. In an enlarged essay about Florida, Breitenbach often paused at the State's infamous beaches. In a moment at Fort Lauderdale, Breitenbach captured with uncanny melodramatic precision the ticklish and tender results of combining adolescence and alcohol with a week away from home. In the photograph titled Immokalee, Florida, three men invade the picture frame blowing hot air music at a young girl who seems neither distracted by, or interested in the commotion of attention around her. The delicate costume folded over her arms is the only evidence of her connection to the celebration that is about to begin or just recently past. Centered amidst the music and machismo Breitenbach fashions a tenacious description of distracted innocence attracting boisterous attention. Photographers can hardly change the world they describe, but as we see in the work of Eric Breitenbach, they can give us the opportunity to pause and look brightly at our fears and fascinations. Eric Breitenbach lives in Sanford, FL and participated in our Artist-in-Residence program from July 15-August 15, 1990. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1990A Just Image As it plays out in the headlines, justice means equality, fairness, and the rule of law. Yet beyond the events broadcast on television and the news alerts flashed instantly to laptops and PDAs, there is a large realm of justice that eludes reporters. Throughout daily life - at home, in school, doing errands, tending children, making dinner, playing sports - perceptions of justice often float just below the radar. The Light Work Collection offered plentiful proof that photographers frequently make images of routine daily life and its relationship to a sense of justice. However, as members of the Fine Arts 395 "Art and Identity" class noticed, scholars seldom extend the concept of justice into aspects of living that are legal, but sometimes ethically questionable. Counselors, social workers, and therapists seem to take over where the justice system stops. Nevertheless, the line between the legal system's purview and personal life is not fixed. Class members were careful to insist that the law is often less subtle in its grasp of situations and unaware of complexities than are the images included in this show. Nowhere in the law is it written that by embracing a stereotype one can sometimes achieve influence skin to contesting the mold. Thoughts and feelings such as these coalesced as the subject of this exhibition. Work and family emerged as sites where what is fair is not always what is equal, and what is equal is not always fair. However fair or unfair, the triumphs and annoyances one experiences at work mostly fall below the threshold of the law. It is conventional wisdom, not the IRS, which suggests that wealth carries no guarantee of happiness. Creating this nuanced exhibition about justice in everyday life led the class into hearty and un-nuanced discussions about the slights, snubs, and rebuffs of an ordinary day. The students chose the title A Just Image for this exhibition before they read about the expression in Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida. With the phrase, he and they recognize that art coaxes the world of appearances to create symbols signifying ideas for which there are no words. Just an image becomes A Just Image. Mary Warner Marien A Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection is the result of a collaborative effort by thirty-one Syracuse University students enrolled in Professor Mary Warner Marien's "Art and Identity" course. The exhibition examines the Fall 2007 Syracuse Symposium theme of justice. The students chose images from the Light Work Collection, considering the personal and societal meanings of justice. They have created an interactive exhibition, where, as the students write in the exhibition catalogue, "ironically... the viewer is still judging." A Just Image invites viewers to explore the photographs and rethink their definition of justice. As the students of the "Art and Identity" course discovered, though justice is a universal concept, it does not necessarily carry the same meaning for everyone. This can be seen in the different perceptions of stereotypes, families, occupations, and leisure activities, which are some of the topics examined by the class. According to the students, "The Pictures we have chosen require more than just superficial judgment; they require the viewer to acknowledge their own stereotyped projections." Roslyn Esperon