



ARTIST

Mikael Levin

TITLE

Untitled

DATE

1991

DIMENSIONS

4.625 in H x 6.125 in W

MEDIUM

Mixed Media

IMAGE NOTES

Print from Still Video Image (Sony Mavica)

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1991.018

CURRENT LOCATION

1114-2D

MIKAEL LEVIN

BORN

1954

BIRTHPLACE

New York, NY

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States, France

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1991

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 71
Contact Sheet 97

BIOGRAPHY

Mikael Levin explores ways that photography and video can situate the commonalities of the everyday in a larger historical context.

Levin was brought up in a family of writers and artists, with a strong sense of Jewish cultural identity instilled by his father, himself a first generation American estranged from his Lithuanian-Jewish migrant parents. Mixed in was a Catholic heritage instilled by his French mother, yet itself filtered by her migrant parent's Polish-Jewish culture. Modernity was the glue, set within the overarching shadow of the Holocaust and the fading hope of the Zionist enterprise.

No doubt shaped by these cross currents, Levin has maintained an American / European polarity, with projects that often intersect the particulars of his family history with the general movements and major events of the 20th century.

Mikael Levin has been exhibited widely in the US and in Europe, including solo exhibitions at the Jewish Museum, Paris, 2010, the Berardo Museum, Lisbon, 2009, the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, 2003, the International Center of Photography, New York, 1997, and Fundacion Mendoza, Caracas, 1980.

His work was included in the Venice Biennial in 2003. His work is represented in major collections such as those of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the Jüdisches Museum, Berlin, the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris, and Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

circa 2018

ESSAYS

If you live on Rockcut Road your distant pen pal can imagine the precipice above your house, if you own Hillside Farm, your grocery store customers can imagine your grazing holsteins against the slope of a meadow, and when you drive on the freeway, you never have to worry about paying the toll. In written language words like rockcut, hillside and freeway describe in simple elegance, the places they identify. Yet in the practical sense of communication they become denotative markers for destinations as their power of description fades with familiarity. During his residency at Light Work this past February Mikael Levin made photographs of the familiar and populated Central New York landscape that suggest how the landscape inspires our lyrical descriptions of places. In the cover photograph two sections of a freeway merge in a valley created by glacial activity. A distant drumlin reveals the shape of its slope through the naked cover of leafless February trees as a lone traveler wheels freely toward the Rockcut Road exit, or perhaps beyond. As drumlins become platforms for housing developments and ravines become easements for highways, Levin's photographs remind us of the evolution of communication from experience to description. He reminds us that communication is based on the sensory experience of the world around us in a continuous flow of interpretation and observation. During his residency Levin also experimented with a still video camera photographing farms and rural highways. In these experiments Levin ventures into the latest technology where words of description are instantaneously linked to objects and systems in an abbreviated and formless alphabet soup of vtd's, fax's, ram's and vcr's. Levin's incongruous combination of electronic imaging and stoic iconography is again an examination of the routes between description and experience and a necessary exploration into the evolution of visual communication. Mikael Levin lives and works in New York City. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1992