



**ARTIST**

Deborah Brackenbury

**TITLE**

Binding Traditions

**DATE**

1993

**DIMENSIONS**

14.75 in H x 15.875 in W

**MEDIUM**

Chromogenic Color Prints

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

1993.013

**CURRENT LOCATION**

2024-4C

---

**DEBORAH BRACKENBURY**

**BORN**

1952

**BIRTHPLACE**

Port Huron, MI

**GENDER**

Female

**CITIZENSHIP**

United States

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**

European-American

## LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1993

## LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 79

Contact Sheet 97

A Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection

## ESSAYS

From 1988-1992, acting as a self-appointed town photographer, Deborah Brackenbury created a portrait of Archer, FL, her home for the past several years. In this series Brackenbury photographed the residents of Archer at work and at play. She photographed the public side of Archer at civic events and recorded their private times and family celebrations. Her descriptive black-and-white photographs, made with a large format camera, allow us to meet the residents of Archer on their own terms and at their own pace. After working in black-and-white for quite some time Brackenbury began to make pictures of Archer in color. The photograph on the cover shows how the change in materials has given Brackenbury the opportunity to look at Archer from a different perspective. Trying to take advantage of the brilliant pink azaleas as a backdrop for their portrait, she has placed an elderly couple facing the camera and the full intensity of the Florida sun. Perhaps concentrating more on the vibrant color of the azaleas than the gestures of the couple, Brackenbury catches the couple between poses. The man is shielding his eyes from the sun and the woman is caught with her eyes closed. If Brackenbury had made this picture in black-and-white we imagine she would have selected another frame to print, preferring to make eye contact with her subjects, a consistent feature of her black and white portraits. As Brackenbury continued to photograph Archer in color she began to take a more interpretative approach to her subjects. The portrait of the couple comes across as a frail and disoriented version of the classic painting American Gothic. This depiction, while awkward and uncomfortable, matches Brackenbury's jarring and uneasy view of Archer as it makes the transition from a farming center to a suburban bedroom community. By selecting new materials to work with Brackenbury has discovered a different way to explore the nature of the people and the place she has come to know so well, and in the process she has given us a more complete picture of their life and times. Deborah Brackenbury lives in Archer, Florida and participated in our Artist-in-Residence program in July 1993. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1993A 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