



ARTIST

Arnold Gassan

TITLE

Desert Plant, Arches National Monument, Utah, 1962

DATE

1962

DIMENSIONS

9 in H x 8 in W

MEDIUM

Photogravure

IMAGE NOTES

Arnold Gassan box

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1997.001

ARNOLD GASSAN

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Donation, 1997
Workshop, 1974

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 173

BIOGRAPHY

Arnold Gassan is a widely recognized authority on photographic processes and on the history of the art of photography. His two texts, 'A Chronology of Photography' and 'A Handbook for Contemporary Photography' are important resources for all photographers today. Most importantly, Arnold is a prolific and progressive photographer/printmaker of exceptional talent. He is currently Chairperson of the Photography Department of Ohio University

ESSAYS

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