



ARTIST

Nancy Floyd

TITLE

Untitled, from the series 'Conversations with a Gun'

DIMENSIONS

11 in H x 14 in W

MEDIUM

Chromogenic Color Prints

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1998.137

CURRENT LOCATION

1620-9C

NANCY FLOYD

BORN

1956

BIRTHPLACE

Monticello, MN

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1998

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 102

A Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection

BIOGRAPHY

For a more recent CV or bio please visit the artist's website, <http://www.nancyfloyd.com>

Nancy Floyd has been an exhibiting artist for over thirty years. She has received numerous grants and awards including a 2016 CUE Art Foundation Fellowship, a 2015 Society for Photographic Education Future Focus Project Support Grant, and a 2014 John Gutmann Photography Fellowship Award. In 2016 her work was acquired by the High Museum of Art. She was also Runner-up for the 2017 Aperture Portfolio Prize and the 2018 French & Michigan Publication Grant. Temple University Press published her first book, *She's Got a Gun*, in 2008.

Floyd's work has been exhibited in numerous venues including CUE Art Foundation, New York, NY; Whitespace, Atlanta, GA; Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta; Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, TX; Solomon Projects, Atlanta; Flux Projects, Atlanta; Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain; the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center; White Columns, New York, NY; and the California Museum of Photography, Riverside, CA. Since 2009, her work has been part of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art Archive, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn.

Floyd holds a BFA from the University of Texas at Austin, an MA from Columbia College Chicago, and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. She is Emeritus Professor in the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design at Georgia State University in Atlanta and lives in Bend, Oregon.

circa 2018

ESSAYS

Few issues in this country provoke as adamant a response as gun control. In 1992 Nancy Floyd began a photographic series entitled *Stopping Power* that would begin to explore the changing attitudes of women toward guns. Her goal, and her greatest obstacle, would be striking a balance in presenting the subject of gun ownership from both sides of the issue. Nancy Floyd's relationship with guns began at a very early point in her life. The artist looks back to her older brother who was killed in the Vietnam War when she was a child. Memories of her brother, who had hoped to become a gunsmith after the war, were partially constructed through his letters and photographs containing images and references to firearms. When Floyd was older she purchased her first gun, in part to share in an experience which was an integral part of her brother's life. Floyd began to meet other women gun owners and became involved in the sport of competition shooting. Over the past ten years the sale of firearms has decreased in this country, whereas the number of women gun owners has shown a steady increase. New magazines such as *Women and Guns* reflected this new demographic of gun owners, firearms manufacturers began marketing to women, and the National Rifle Association expanded its efforts to recruit more women into the organization. In describing her project Floyd writes, "I'm interested in the evolution of women gun owners in America. I'm also interested in how these women represent themselves and how they are represented by others. By looking at women from recent history, as well as interviewing contemporary gun owners, *Stopping Power* becomes a relevant, critical look at the women who choose to enter the gun debate." In one component of the series Floyd photographed and interviewed several subjects spanning a range of ages and backgrounds and found self-defense is still the leading motive for a woman to purchase a gun. The image of Linda Parker, who stares at her gun hidden underneath her bed, expresses a fear and frustration that many women feel in needing rather than desiring to possess a gun. The opposing image of Claire Sherwood, who sits on her bed self-assured in front of her gun-rack, reveals a story of her grandmother's death as a result of gun violence. She asserts her ability to seek revenge on the man accused of the crime but remarks on the futility of such an act. In this series of portraits Floyd gives her subjects an equal voice to express their own point of view on this divisive issue, whether their reasons for owning a gun are for self-defense or for sport. The series *Stopping Power* is the first of its kind to emphasize the relationship of women to gun control and ownership. The most controversial aspect of this series is the artist's intention to balance both positions of the issue. However, as a gun owner herself, Floyd questions her own conflicted emotions illustrated in a series of self-portraits entitled *Conversations with a Gun*. In these photographs the artist sits opposite her pistol pantomiming a gamut of responses from fear, to confidence, to regret, as if the gun itself were an active participant in this debate. But it is not; it is only an extension of its operator. With each incident of gun related violence or fatality due to carelessness, we have to ask ourselves if the issue of gun control has gotten out of control. Even as this essay was being written in the wake of the shooting deaths at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, it was virtually impossible to remain neutral on the issue. However, it is wishful thinking to believe that lawmakers can simply legislate a solution to the problem without investigating the cause for these acts of violence or acknowledging the lack of instruction for individuals in possession of firearms. As women become more prominent in the gun debate we can only hope that they may become greater advocates for education and a better example for the need to bear the responsibility that goes in tandem with the right to bear arms. Gary Hesse Nancy Floyd lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence program from June 15 to July 15, 1998. The series *Stopping Power* was also supported by a School of Art and Design Faculty Research Grant and a Research Initiation Grant from Georgia State University, and a Summer Stipend Award from California State University, Long Beach. A 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