



ARTIST

Beth B

TITLE

Long Stairs

DATE

1998

DIMENSIONS

33 in H x 11 in W

MEDIUM

Inkjet Prints

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1999.018

CURRENT LOCATION

NA 03

BETH B

BORN

1955

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1998

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 102

ESSAYS

Beth b has never been shy about her subject matter. Past projects have confronted issues of racism, domestic violence, sexual abuse, AIDS, drug abuse, and pornography. B has distinguished herself internationally as a filmmaker and visual artist. Since her emergence out of the New York City punk scene of the late 1970s, she has crossed the boundaries of film, video, photography, and sculpture with ease. she has produced five feature films (two as director, three as co-director), over a dozen short films and documentaries, and numerous installations. In three of the artist's most recent projects, portraits (1997), monuments (1997), and landscapes (1998), b's larger than life photographic close-ups of the human body are transformed into abstracted objects through their scale and the artist's manipulation of the image. In a 1998 interview with Roberta Lord, the artist stated, 'With portraits you're looking at something that's very abstract and very beautiful and you feel, 'well, it's definitely got to be something connected with nature, something plant-like,' and then you start to realize that they're actually female genitals. When people first came into the show they didn't know what they were looking at. It's something I really like to do - manipulate images so they seduce people into an experience that suddenly alters their perception.' During her residency at Light Work, b continued to work on her landscapes series. Using a computer rather than the darkroom, she scanned and manipulated her images for output onto a large format inkjet printer at light work's computer imaging facility. Having access to this technology, and the time to produce her work, b also began a new series of work building on this same strategy of creating new conceptual and visual relationships by abstracting discernible forms and subjects. Using the computer to enhance, exaggerate, and distort existing photographs, b fabricated a new series of images centered on the visual representation of memory. Like dreams and memories of actual places or events, scenes which are partially identifiable - a staircase which fades into the distance, a silhouetted window, open and abandoned spaces - symbolize points of entry or escape in b's images, which summon a kind of hyper real state. At first, this new series of work may seem out of place when compared to previous projects whose subject matter was most often controversial and always confrontational. But for b, whose work has always been a critique of society and the time in which we live, it may be appropriate to pause for a moment to create a space for reflection. As we look back on recent history and ponder the obstacles which will present themselves with the dawn of the new millennium, are we prepared to move forward, or are we building up to a state of critical mass? In the final image, blurred house, a small white house seen off in the distance, falling out of our field of vision, arouses an impression of a quiet, simpler path that exists somewhere outside of a specific point in time. As if viewed from the window of a car speeding down the highway, it appears to be out of reach. Gary Hesse beth b lives in New York City and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence program in November 1998.