



ARTIST

Ferenc Suto

TITLE

Untitled

DATE

2001

DIMENSIONS

12.75 in H x 8.25 in W

MEDIUM

Inkjet Prints

IMAGE NOTES

sheet 16 x 10.5"

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2002.024

CURRENT LOCATION

1620-3D

FERENC SUTO

BORN

1960

BIRTHPLACE

Easton, CT

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Hungarian, Brazilian

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 2001
Robert B. Menschel Gallery, 1999
Group exhibition

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 103
Contact Sheet 117
A Just Image: Selections from the Light Work Collection

BIOGRAPHY

Ferenc Suto lives in New York City and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence program in December 2001.

ESSAYS

Ferenc Suto goes to great lengths to disturb the clarity originally rendered by his camera. In the darkroom he breaks the rules, disregards limitations, and makes visible internal pain and a cacophony of dark emotions. By covering his negatives with caustic bleach that seems not so much applied as thrown, he creates aggressive, abstract patterns of bruises and stains that infuse his portraits with layers of anger and raw emotion. Unable to arrest the bleaching process once it has started, the artist has just enough time to make one unique print before the image is lost. Like the intuitive process of painting or drawing, he feels free to take advantage of accidents that can happen in the darkroom and instinctively knows when to stop. Equating the process to cooking without a cookbook, he finds that for every successful piece there may be as many as ten that were pushed too far. Ironically, this process of destruction in the darkroom creates something quite refined. The finished prints, elaborately matted and framed, have the presence and tactile quality of a small painting. He admires the work of Doug and Mike Starn and Joel Peter Witkin, artists who take their photographs through extensive manipulations, using them as a canvas or armature on which to build layers of meaning. Like the Starns and Witkin, Suto's finished pieces are unique objects with a bold physical presence, a far cry from the objective photograph revered by photography's modernist aesthetic. Suto's male figures maintain the physical beauty of classical sculpture gone terribly wrong. As a child, the artist was drawn to the beauty and sensuality of the male body in the work of Michelangelo. But in Suto's work the beauty of the body is overcome with a dark cloud of suffering and distress. He asks the figure in Gagged and Tagged to carry messages about endurance and the temporal quality of life. Tagged like a corpse with dark and wincing eyes that convey both physical and psychic pain, the portrait hints at violence. According to the artist, "These photographs are about exploring the dark side of ourselves and human relationships. They are also about celebrating love, sexuality, and creating superheroes. The people I photograph live with a middle finger attitude rather than exist in a land of eyes averted." Football and Space Case are both portraits of Suto's mentally retarded brother, John. With his open and innocent face peering out and through a football helmet that neither protects nor conceals his vulnerable and guileless spirit, John is the ideal model for conflicting ideas about strength and weakness. The all-American sport of football is arguably the most aggressive of athletic competitions, requiring extreme physical size and strength. But John is more like a gentle giant. With his preposterous and ill-fitting helmet, his innocence is his protection. Contradicting ideas about male identity once again surface in Mexican Wrestling Mask. The physicality, sexuality, and mystery of this image draw us in, while the affliction of stains and scratches is repelling. The vulnerable and intimate nape of the neck is exposed and fills this enigmatic photograph with a deep sense of longing. Suto calls his images of men, "allegorical portraiture." His superheroes and jocks all live in an unmistakably portentous and strange deathscape where time is running out. He first exhibited his work at Light Work as part of the exhibition desire: Contemporary Photography from the Visual AIDS Archive Project. Like any artist who has experienced a serious illness, his work now resonates with the poignant truth that life is short and fragile. This knowledge only adds to the beauty and depth of his imagery. Suto's work is not without humor and his Untitled montage, makes nipples into eyes and superimposes a mouth over a crotch. The image draws parallels to the quirky photomontages of the Dadaist and Surrealists, who cast aside the obvious for the more intensely irrational and incongruous reality of dreams. Along with several other contemporary photographers, including Bill Jacobson and John O'Reilly, Suto provides us with a very different definition of masculinity, one that he rends from his photographs with passion. Mary Lee Hodgens 2002 Ferenc Suto lives in New York City and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence program in December 2001. 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