

The universal practice of photography makes the medium almost irredeemably trivial. In recent years there have been those who succeeded by exploiting the problem itself, by creating a "snapshot esthetic" and turning "hells into benefits", as Emerson said. This is what Hope Sandrow tries to do, sometimes with genuine results. Ms. Sandrow's black-and-white portraits look at first glance like the photographs people take of their friends with instamatics. In fact, her compositions look so much like that, they're a little disturbing. They cleverly exaggerate the kind of effect which comes from lack of control in a snapshot. In Sandrow's work, the background purposefully steals the show. The longer we look the more trouble we have getting our bearings. And when we finally do recover from the background enough to look at the subject we realize that he's a little weird too, with his slightly hostile look. Just as backgrounds dominate her ostensible subjects, so the photographs prove more substantial than the sort of snapshots they are made to parody.

Colin Westerbeck, *Artforum*, Soho Center for Visual Artists 1980

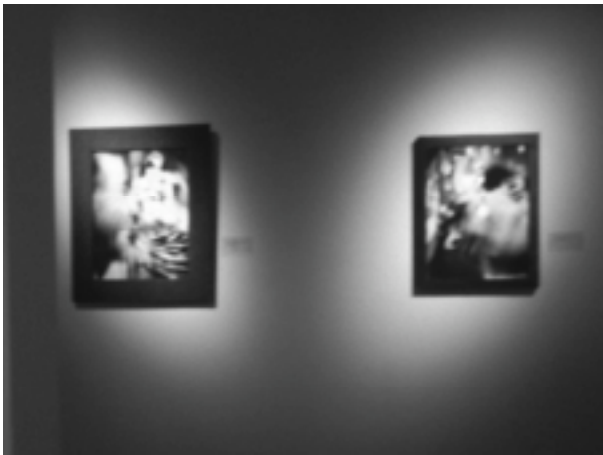
Di Leo Ricato, Golden, Goldin, Hockney, Leibovitz, Samaras and Sandrow make use of mise-en-scene. Their settings, whether interiors or exteriors, tend to read as sets - proscenium like spaces within or against which the sitter is called upon to perform. These contexts, too, can provide a sense of symbolism or allegory, as in Sandrow's looming, claustrophobic urban spaces or Goldin's down at the heels interiors.

Paula Marincola, *Investigations*,
Face to Face: Recent Portrait Photography ICP 1984

My art making involves real engagements with the world. At times my role has been that of observer, more often as participant. Early works explored universal experiences and objective issues in art criticism. Making photographs in open public spaces challenged the notion of a woman on the street as the object of the male gaze. *Men on the Streets* (1978-82) originated from the premise of a role reversal: "picking up" men on NYC streets and taking their portrait placed me in the position of 'bad girl' as well as defining their representation and context as 'everyman'. The next two series referenced inside/outside, physically and metaphorically: portraits of East Village artist friends posed outdoors amidst the moneyed corridors of Wall Street in *Back on the Streets* (1982-85). And, inside the corridors of power at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in *Museum Studies: Hope & Fear* (1981-1986). Juxtaposing artist colleagues and referencing contemporary issues with architectural and museum "masterpieces" reframed "modern" and "tradition" and re-contextualized our representation and identity.

Hope Sandrow, 1986

Top, Installation view, *The Famous Show*, Gracie Mansion 1982, *Nicolas Moufferrege* and *Futura* 2000, *Men on the Streets*, 11"x14" Silver Prints 1/5
Installation View, Greathouse Gallery, *Woman from Firenze* and *Luis Frangella*, *Back on the Streets* Silver prints 24"x20" 1/3 1982 Private Collections
Installation view, *East Village USA*, New Museum 2005, *Every Hero Needs A Woman*, *World Trade Center*, *Back on the Streets* 74"x55" Silver Print 1/3
1984 Collection Metropolitan Museum of Art



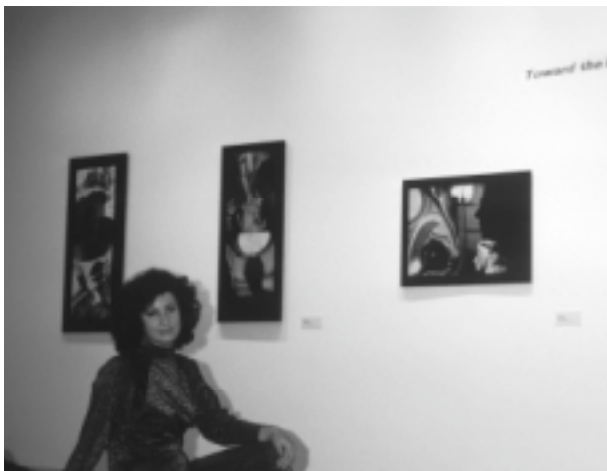
Sandrow believes the camera has the ability to merge the viewer with the picture plane because the image 'looks' real. Her photographs invite the viewer to explore many different possible realities or points of view found in the images and to participate in extending their meaning through his/her own experiences. Sandrow gives visual expression to contemporary philosophical themes identified with Nelson Goodman and others who believe that the 'world' exists in many ways through our symbol system. Artists such as Hope Sandrow expand our ability to see and participate in the world through their images. They demonstrate the need and possibilities for continual renewal of our symbols.

Curtis L. Carter, *Hope Sandrow: Silverprints* Haggerty Museum 1986



She will take you to many fragments, sculpture restored by time to the condition of the sketch. She will have you extremely close to cases of small bronzes and to the largest statues so that you may see the monumental possibilities in miniatures and miniature passages in monumental works. Her vantage points are like a sculptor's, or a lover's or nature's. These pictures are portraits. But not in the traditional sense. They are not sittings but scenes, glimpses of the characters; moments from their shifting, on-going self portraiture. Impressions, memory sketches and elaborations of the surroundings... serve them variously as mirror, chorus, backdrop and symbol.

Ben Lifson, *Museum Studies*, 1986



Fundamental to the Baroque as a historical style was the invention of a new kind of space in which the clear distinctions between the perceived space of the work of art and the real space of the viewer broke down. This characteristic also unites all of the work of Robert Morris, Hope Sandrow, Frank Stella, James Turrell. The art of seventeenth-century Rome succeeded in breaking through the picture plane in order to encompass the space of the viewer. In her recent photographs, extreme shooting angles create a strong sense of compositional dynamism, in which figures appear to tumble backward into, or push forward from deep spaces. The photographs in this exhibition are from a series shot at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in which the possibilities suggested by that building's architectural and temporal juxtapositions, further add to our sense of dislocation. She achieves, in fact, a mingling of realities consistent with her allegorical themes of innocence, knowledge and desire.

Phyllis Rosenzweig, *Hirshhorn Biennial: Toward the Baroque*, 1986

Top, Installation view, detail, *Hope Sandrow: Silver Prints* 1986 At the Met, IV and V 20"x24" Silver Prints 1/3 1984 Haggerty Museum of Art Installation, Indianapolis Museum of Art. *Painting and Sculpture Today* 1986, *Love Perishes, Not Art* from the series *Museum Studies* 23"x41" Silver Print Installation View, detail, *Museum Studies: Hope & Fear*, 1986 *Toward the Baroque* Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



A Force Unknown to the Public was the result of a commission in which the artist was asked to photograph two daughters who were leaving home, one for marriage, the other for university studies. Sandrow created less a portrait of the sisters than scenes which express something universal about sisterhood and about the essence of parenting, the holding and letting go. In the top panel... the sisters' fists, which almost touch, express a solidity and comradeship. Behind them is a fragment of a David Wojnarowicz installation piece with a smashed television set and globe, the latter further reinforcing the "of this world" quality. In the bottom panel, all is insubstantial and blurred.... is actually a William de Kooning abstraction, a painting which, as Sandrow said, seemed to her "of the mind", encompassing moving and changing ideas. The two panels represent, among other things, the realms of the body and the spirit and the tangible and the fleeting.

Roni Feinstein, *Contemporary Diptych's: Divided Visions*
1987 Whitney Museum at Equitable



Hope Sandrow raises issues of the museum as a place of cultural ordering. The late eighteenth-century development wherein natural and cultural specimens were extrapolated from the world, reordered and displayed according to unnatural principles of classification became, a century later, an unclassifiable display as photography built its "museums without walls". Sandrow's classifications of the past are based on visual similarities that trigger mental associations and reanimate the inanimate. But positions are never fixed, despite their suggested affinities. Contours are softened in the blur of movement as bodies shift during times of exposure: Sandrow's configuration of, in her words, the "coexistence of everything at once in flux". From far away, an overall view explains the image. Closer, component stories emerge and disappear. As in much postmodern photography, objects become personified and persons objectified.

Julia Ballerini, *SEQUENCE (con)SEQUENCE*
Blum Art Institute at Bard College 1989



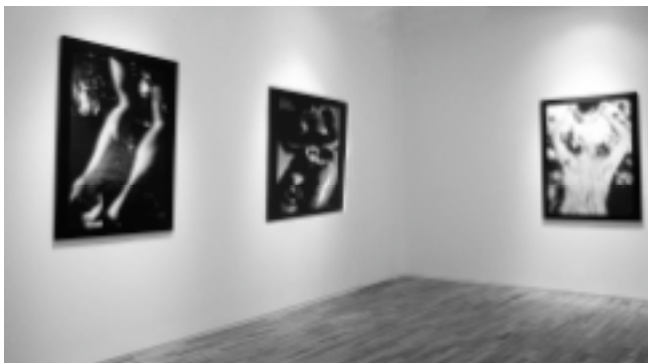
A blurring of the distinctions between fantasy, the real and the surreal permeates the work of Hope Sandrow. Her carefully constructed photographic montages feature several prints placed edge to edge in horizontal or vertical panels that suggest the insubstantiality of things not as they are seen, but as they are remembered. Recent work represents a new departure for Sandrow, with its deconstructed images each separately framed and re-presented in dynamic configuration, enabling her to accentuate the depth and distortion of the photographic image and the space-time relationship. The mysteries of time are also evoked, a product of her shadowy film-noir style in which images hover in the ambiguous regions of the unconscious only fleetingly before departing into our fragmented reservoir of memory.

Trevor Richardson,
Fantasies, Fables, and Fabrications Herter Gallery at Amherst 1989

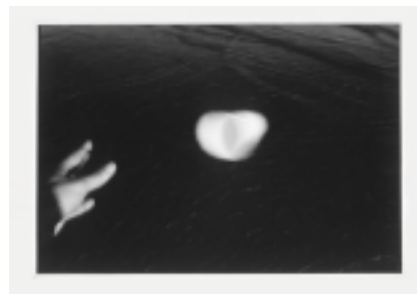
Top, Installation, Whitney Museum at Equitable, *Contemporary Diptych's, A Force Unknown to the Public* from *Museum Studies* 42"x30" 1986 Collection Adriana and Robert Mnuchin
Installation view, *Sequence(con)sequence:(sub)versions of Photography in the 80's*, 1989 *Measured Chaos* and *They Can Only Give You Answers*, Silver Prints, 65"x60, 69"x19"
Settings for Human Interaction: Portrait of the Joannou Family: Dakis, Lietta, Maria, Christos, Ellie, Stellios Athens, Greece 1986 Collection of Dakis Joannou



Artists like Barbara Ess, Hope Sandrow, and John Schlesinger transcend time by exploring the deep historical, psychological, even mythological experience behind perception and vision. The fuzziness and visual complexity of their pictures not only reflect their origins (pinhole, reconstructed imagery, movie images, respectively) but also simulate primordial and unconscious states of vision. It is interesting that these photo artists see the camera less as a sophisticated technological instrument than as an antenna, and appear to be returning photography to issues of visual perception present since the time of its invention. Joshua P. Smith, *The Photography of Invention* National Museum of American Art 1990



Hope Sandrow exhibits photographic installations which investigate Man's passive nature to an endangered environment. Sandrow explores this subject through a study of our relationship to water, indisposable garbage, and an evolved insect life which has adjusted to make a home within deteriorating conditions. Sandrow's images juxtapose items of found plastic garbage such as bottles, egg cartons, and Styrofoam containers with human subjects, whose fragility is threatened by the eternal nature of material which will never decay. Sur Rodney Sur, 1989



In her own art making, Hope Sandrow takes a more impressionistic approach to social issues, resulting in works of a less overtly political nature. At first glance her photographs and photographic compositions seem to be of a very personal nature, offering deliberately obscured, fragmented views of existence, connection and memory. Uninterested in freezing moments on celluloid, Sandrow uses her camera to explore reality's ambiguous, experiential qualities. Seen from the through her lens, life does not unfold in clear and logical sequence, nor is it immediately interpretable; and in contrast to most photography, in her work time almost never stands still. Sandrow, whom one reviewer called "une virtuose de bouge," (a virtuoso of movement) was making work another reviewer called "extremely perplexing". These writers may have grasped something essential about the work that others who gushed about its "romantic" or "nostalgic" qualities perhaps did not. *Hope & Fear*, a series of arranged and composed pictures taken at the MET-juxtaposes the museum's version of reality with Sandrow's own. To say that the making and marketing of art was not immune to the kind of general cynicism expressed everywhere from Madison Avenue to Wall Street is not to imply that artists are wrong to seek and receive recognition and fair compensation or that the only "true" artist is a starving-or better yet, a dead-artist

Andrea Wolper, *The Spirit of Art as Activism, Making Art, Reclaiming Lives: The Artist & Homeless Collaborative* 1995

Top, Installation View, *Circumscribed Vision* Silverprints 67"x19" from the series *Museum Studies* in *The Photography of Invention*
 Installation view, detail, *Installation: New Work* 1989 *Gracie Mansion Water Bottle Spilled, Beetles, Leaf Water, Misdirected Use* Silverprints 1/3; 54"x35"; 47"x27 Collection Buhl Foundation; 60"x43 Collection Penny & David McCall
 Artforum Project Page, Summer 1990 10.5"x21" *Homeless Artist at Union Square Subway Station*
 Installation View, detail, Grey Art Gallery, New Work 1990, *Disposable Cup*, Silverprint 11"x14" *Installation*