

Thomas Barrow

A Restless Mind

November 12 – December 10, 2010

Reception Nov. 12th 5 – 9pm

Joseph Bellows Gallery is pleased to present Thomas Barrow: *A Restless Mind*. The exhibition will feature selections from Barrow's career, from his Cancellation Series to his most recent work. It will be on view from November 12 - December 10, 2010. An opening reception with the artist will be held on November 12 (5 – 9 pm).

Born in Kansas City, MO, Thomas Barrow studied at the Institute of Design in Chicago, with renowned photographer, Aaron Siskind. He graduated with an M.S. in photography. He began his career as Curator of Exhibitions at the George Eastman House, and then became the museum's

Assistant Director in the early 1970s. Later, he moved to New Mexico, where he was the Associate Director of the Art Museum at the University of New Mexico. In 1976, he began teaching photography in the university's Art Department. Barrow received two NEA Photographers Fellowships in 1973 and 1978. Thomas Barrow: *A Restless Mind* presents a survey of the photographer's career. It examines work from the 1970s through to the present.

Thomas Barrow has been at the forefront of a generation of photographers who came of age during the sixties counterculture. It included Robert Heineken, John Pfahl, Betty Hahn, Jerry Uelsmann, among others. Abandoning traditional photography, in Barrow's hands the camera becomes a liberating, experimental tool that incorporates mixed media, text, assemblage, photograms, and the altering and combining of negatives. His photographs reference other art practices, such as the Dadaist and Surrealist movements. They are also aesthetically linked to the handcrafted work of the Bauhaus, not lost on Barrow, a student of the Institute of Design founded by Lazlo Moholy-Nagy in 1939.

Barrow's photography represents an important trajectory in photographic history in which the camera, as an expressive tool, reflects both an imaginative and theoretical approach to photography's complex properties.

Early on, he understood how all photography was a matter of subjective selection. This added layers of intellectual rigor to his imagery that challenged the fundamental nature of the documentary photograph, mass media's seductive veneer, and the false imposition of 'editions' by the art market on the photographic negative's endless reproducibility. His brilliant Cancellations series addresses this directly; Barrow cancelled his negatives with a scratched "X" across their surface before printing, a witty challenge to the marketplace and a nod to Walter Benjamin.

Fundamentally playful yet also cerebral, Barrow's images take the viewer through a visual maze of references from art history and magazine and billboard advertising to cinema and contemporary culture. "Barrow is both an avid collector and relentless critic of material culture, and postwar American society has offered him a limitless variety of subject matter," writes Kathleen McCarthy Gauss in *Inventories and Transformations: The Photographs of Thomas Barrow*. "He recycles material and imagery, returning it to us in a dense, multilayered format that demonstrates the complexity of modern life and what an inventory of cultural detritus can reveal."

Thomas Barrow is Professor Emeritus of Photography at the University of New Mexico. His photographs are in the permanent collections of the George Eastman House, the Los Angeles

County Museum of Art, the Museum of Photographic Arts, the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona, Tucson, where his archive is also housed, and other major public and private collections.

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