The eight photographers represented in this exhibition share no single stylistic ideal or goal. Instead, their participation here is based on a collective individualism through a shared belief in the process of photography as a major art form of our time. The emphasis in their respective works is on the viability of the final print to be the output of a controlled, calculated, and applied series of predetermined thoughts and actions. The role of the photographer, in this context, has become that of director, and the image is meant to be read as tableau, eschewing formal, technical, or other pictorial issues in favor of a transcriptive document.

The document presents a portion of the photographic imagination, accepting through the set-ups, situations, and castings the acute artificiality of the photographic print. That which is seen is always only a portion of reality, and within its limited scale and scope can only, truly suggest the semblance of a whole. Thus, with this in mind, the photograph is open to a greater range of intuited productions.

The conceptual aspects, as well as narrative schemes and fictional nature of their photographs have obvious precedents; particularly in the works of such artists as John Baldessari, Jon Loder, Duane Michals and William Wegman. But they have moved one step further within the context of the "art world," venturing to bring to the photograph the impact and staying power of much commercial photography in terms of their respective use of color, texture, and drama.

The two structural aspects that are key to deciphering the works are alteration and appropriation. In the work of Richard Prince and Cindy Sherman, the photograph is constructed from sources that are culled from the pages of magazines or film stills. Both imitate and by doing so either by means of directly borrowing from pre-existing commercial images (Prince) or by surrounding the protagonist (Sherman herself) in a world of real-life fantasy. For Jimmy De Sana, Don Rodan and Laurie Simmons this level is achieved to the elegance, style and wit of contemporary fashion photography. The set-ups in their color photographs alter the objects which surround us to depict a world perfected by visual and physical sensations. Each brings to the photograph a symbol of myth and erotica which are the tools of the fashion photographer. In their hands the story holds several meanings, shifting between fact and fiction, playfulness and seriousness.

In the work of Aileen Basis and Lewis Stein the photograph has a didactic quality; teaching us the basic lessons of vision and sight as if seeing were an acquired talent. Basis implores the image, marking it with dye or paint to suggest not only the act of an outward glance, but the sensation of a returned reflection. Stein counts and formulates his lexicon of pictures. The complete tabulation of combinations with his toy dolls and cupcakes would be seemingly astronomical.

Finally, Jim Casebere’s photographs of studio made constructions read as black & white prints from newspapers or billboards. Yet the unusual context, where proven facts or unsolved mysteries, are these illustrations after the facts, are here to suggest a stage set for events to occur?

The direction, possibilities of their investigations suggests an additional dimension to the growing tradition of photography in America. Within this new sensibility photography is leaving behind the ruminations of technique and style for ideas that are at once provocative and timely.

Michael R. Klein
New York, 1981

3 APRIL - 1 MAY 1981
USF ART GALLERIES—TEACHING GALLERY
ART DEPARTMENT, COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA,
TAMPA, FLORIDA 33620
1. **Aileen Bassis**
   untitled, 1980 b&w photo 14" × 17"
   courtesy of the artist and Rh. Oosterom, Inc.

2. **James Casebere**
   Typewriter, 1980 b&w photo 15" × 18 7/8"
   courtesy of the artist

3. **Jimmy De Sana**
   Aluminum Foil, 1980 c print 15 1/2" × 23 1/2"
   courtesy of the artist and Stefanotti, New York

4. **Richard Prince**
   untitled, 1980 color photo 20" × 24"
   courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

5. **Don Rodan**
   Echo, 1977 Polaroid SX-70 3" × 3"
   courtesy of the artist and Castelli Graphics, New York

6. **Cindy Sherman**
   untitled study for Film Still, 1979 b&w photo 11" × 14"
   courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

7. **Laurie Simmons**
   untitled, 1980 cibachrome 11" × 14"
   courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

8. **Lewis Stein**
   untitled, 1978 cibachrome 8" × 10"
   courtesy of the artist

---

EIGHT CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHERS

USF ART GALLERIES—TEACHING GALLERY