

The Space in Between

Daniel Feldman, Stefanie Klavens, and Lynn Saville

Focusing on built environments in urban settings, the images featured in this exhibition capture supposedly empty or vacant scenes in public spaces where humans are present without being pictured. The very absence of human subjects forces the viewer to contemplate the space in between these human-made structures. Where did the people go? Why are the scenes empty? What else is missing, if anything? While firmly rooted in the 21st century, these photographs also portray a timeless feel, as if the artists froze the frame at the initial moment of abandonment, preserving a particular constructed expression of culture for generations to come.

The images elicit a sense of abandonment or emptiness within the viewer. Our experience of this void stems from our current state as a nation, stuck at a space in between: surviving the recession but still seeing and feeling it everywhere, awaiting a full economic recovery without knowing what we really want for our country, witnessing increasing global and environmental concerns while still trying to reconcile the growing tensions on the homefront. Daniel Feldman, Stefanie Klavens, and Lynn Saville explore these issues through architectural images that very clearly display what humans are capable of while also revealing a deeper level of cultural vulnerability.

The Space in Between falls into three distinct categories, or themes, that provides an overarching context for the show. Images from each artist can be identified with all three themes, but the viewer ultimately decides how the photographs are categorized.

Lonely Places: features places that, by all accounts, should be filled with people but are strangely empty, places that seem lonely and haunting as if coming across these scenes after an apocalyptic event.

Storefronts in Flux: features urban storefronts or businesses in an “in between” state, going down or coming up, businesses being built as other businesses die, with an obvious visual connection to the recession.

Destruction/Construction: features destructive and constructive acts of humans through structure, showcasing buildings in all their potential or dilapidated glory.

The artists in this exhibition imbue the work with rich color, unique composition, and patient creativity, recognizing the form of the built environment in front of them while celebrating the space in between and going beyond the obvious. Viewers can immediately connect with the work without necessarily identifying why. The loss or loneliness felt in the images is often counteracted by their pure aesthetic energy. As a result, this exhibition offers intelligent, artistic interpretations of our present societal condition via the constructed realm.

—Erin Wederbrook Yuskaitis
Program & Exhibition Manager

Daniel Feldman

Artist Statement

My background is as a painter, and my working process feels as much like painting as it does photography.

Photographs I take are the raw material, the palette, and in my works I combine multiple images and many variants, manipulating them freely in Photoshop.

I'm interested in the balancing act between the work as evidence of its own making and the work as evocative of something else. I'm interested in images that, perhaps slowly, make us conscious of the process by which we work to make sense of things, to render them coherent—images that hover at the edge of lending themselves to this process, images that are always at risk of dissolving but are held together with our participation. I'm interested in works that sometimes ask us to let go of that process.

The works evolve like nature, spinning off innumerable variants, most rejected but some surviving and thriving. Over time, sometimes after extended periods, these can begin evolving further. At some point, some of them reach a state where I know they're done.

Biography

Following twenty years as an oil painter, Daniel Feldman began doing digitally-based work in 1997. This change came about following his discovery of Photoshop, which provided him with the tool he had always imagined, combining the image-capturing power of photography with the freedom and manipulability of painting. For the past twelve years, Dan's medium has been Photoshop, and his own digital photographs are the raw material for his work. Dan did his undergraduate work at Princeton University and holds two Masters degrees in Fine Arts, one from Hunter College in New York (1982) and the other from the New York Academy of Art (1990), where he taught from 1990 to 1993.

Dan worked as studio assistant to Sean Scully for three years, after having studied painting with him as an undergraduate. Dan lived in Rome and in Venice in the early- to mid-1980s, painting and studying Italian art. He has been a faculty member at several institutions, teaching studio courses, including a digital studio course he created at Cedar Crest College in Pennsylvania in 1998, as well as art history. Dan designed and headed a multimedia development lab there, and later became Associate VP for Technology. Since 1999, he has been at Brandeis University, where he led the Office of Capital Projects from 2004 to 2010. Since 2010, he has been VP for Planning and Institutional Research at Brandeis. Dan is a member of Bromfield Gallery in Boston. He is also co-author of a widely-used commentary accompanying Allen Mandelbaum's translation of Dante's *Paradiso*. He is married to Nancy Diessner, artist, printmaker, and founder of Dog's Eye Print Studio in Framingham, MA.

Stefanie Klavens

Artist Statement

How We Live

I photograph the small-scale drama of everyday life, things we pass by countless times without stopping to give them a second thought or look. These are portraits of people through the places they inhabit; home and away from home, life captured as still life. I'm inspired by the seemingly banal, the mundane that hides subtle clues and hints about how our species lives.

The everyday object possesses a talisman-like quality and forms the narrative of the human experience. The images are empty and uninhabited, yet one senses a human presence just out of reach.

My photographs don't tell a story as much as they ask a question about the experience of others. These intimate, frozen moments become pieces in a jigsaw puzzle that reflect our culture and how we choose to go about our lives. The viewer takes on the role of voyeur looking in from the outside, peering through the black edges framing each image.

As I explore both public and private environments, I approach this series intuitively and shoot with a visceral response to what I see before me. I consider this series a diary, an ongoing visual record of observations made while traveling through life interacting with the world around me.

Biography

Stefanie Klavens' work focuses on the importance of place and documentation of visual aspects of American popular culture. Her photographs encourage deeper thought into subject matter often taken for granted: historic single-screen movie palaces, disappearing drive-in theaters, and the quirky individuality displayed in private homes and small mom-and-pop places of business.

Recent solo exhibits include National Heritage Museum, Lexington, MA; Davis Orton Gallery, Hudson, NY; and the New England Institute of Art, Brookline, MA. Group shows include the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA; Houston Center for Photography, TX; Boston Center for the Arts, MA; Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston, MA; and Tufts University, Medford, MA.

Klavens, a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant recipient, studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where she received a BFA and was awarded a Traveling Scholarship in the Fifth Year program and competition. Her work has appeared in *Yankee Magazine*, *The Boston Globe*, and on the cover of *Harper's Magazine* and is in many private collections.

Lynn Saville

Artist Statement

Night/Shift and Vacancy

I have widely exhibited my photographs of cities and rural settings at twilight and dawn, the boundary times between night and day. Much of my black-and-white work appears in my monograph *Acquainted with the Night*, while *Night/Shift* contains more recent color photographs of fringe areas and mixed-use zones in and around New York City. In my transition to color photography, I came to appreciate how colors flare up near streetlights and how the intense blue of the sky complements the ambers, yellows, and greens of artificial lights.

Toward the end of my work on *Night/Shift*, I began to notice the effects of The Great Recession—even in fashionable neighborhoods, so many stores were shuttered—and this observation served to call me back from the marginal areas I was photographing. For instance, on Madison Avenue, I was struck by the image of an empty store whose glowing geometric windows resembled a Rothko painting. The contrast between such aesthetic perceptions and the subtext of economic distress contributed to the sense of a disquieting but haunting beauty.

My project *Vacancy* pursues the suggestive contrast between aesthetic beauty and economic distress, and is therefore both a natural outgrowth of my earlier work and a response to current events. Using a field camera (6x9 cm format) on a tripod and color film, I continue to photograph urban scenes at dawn and dusk, transitional times that underscore the shifting and uneasy nature of this era. However, my focus is on the patches of emptiness that honeycomb the city center, as well as on other imaginative examples of recession-induced vacancy.

One avenue of experimentation relates to the use of ghosted figures. I used to regard people as interlopers in my photographs of absence. But I have come to see how ghosted figures can intensify the theme of vacancy. I have been further exploring the use of such figures and also extending the project beyond shop windows, including, for instance, empty billboards caught on the fly from moving trains and buses. In addition, I have been working in urban centers other than New York—for example, Los Angeles, Portland, Maine, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and Houston—so that the project has a more national scope.

Biography

Lynn Saville is a New York-based photographer whose work is represented in New York by the Yancey Richardson Gallery and in Boston by Gallery Kayafas. Her photographs have been exhibited internationally, and she has published two well-received monographs: *Acquainted with the Night* (Rizzoli), a series of black and white photographs, and *Night/Shift* (Monacelli/Random House), a volume of color photographs introduced by Arthur C. Danto. Saville has been awarded grants by both the New York Foundation for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Her photographs are represented in such distinguished collections as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; the George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; the Museum of the City of Paris, France; the Museum of the City of New York, NY; the Brooklyn Museum, NY; and The New York Public Library, NY. In addition, her archives are housed in the Special Collections Library of Duke University, Durham, NC.