

pause | to begin

FORWARD

Susan Morelock | December 2008

In the 1950's a scientist named Russell A. Kirsch created a rudimentary drum scanner that had the ability to trace intensity variations over the surface of a photograph. For the first time in history, computer technology could effectively record the differences between light and shadow in order to create a digital photographic image. Reflecting back on this monumental invention, the implications of Kirsch's research create a foundation for a conversation about contemporary photography.

Skipping forwards to the present, the front page on the photo-sharing website Flickr indicates that an average of 5,000–6,000 new images are uploaded to the site every minute. Internet technology has rendered photo-sharing immensely prolific and easily available to almost everyone. This community exchange has rendered all determinants once made between professional and amateur photographers seemingly indistinguishable. Interestingly, the photographic medium has always been quite democratic. Beginning with the Kodak Brownie, photography has been primarily marketed to the consumer. With this in mind, questions about contemporary photography and digital technology in the twenty-first century echo those once asked by Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen, co-founders of the Photo-Secession: how does one distinguish and understand photography as an art?

Comprising a sociological history and the ongoing race towards modernity, the story of photography reflects the motifs of humanity. There is a basic and instinctual function of the photograph that was introduced by Daguerre,

being practiced by millions of photographers around the globe. Whether formally trained to use a view camera or shooting from the hip with a cellular phone, photographers are looking to negotiate the world around them by exploring and recording their surroundings. Photography, then, is a means for deconstruction. To photograph is to find reason to pay attention. Today, the photographic medium has a renewed sensibility for transmutation and experimentation. Contemporary photographers are being challenged by constantly changing innovations. Sophisticated, affordable, and widely available technologies have defined a sense of unrest within the photographic community. Apprehensions aside, people will continue to seek answers through the act of photographing; no amount of new technology will help (or hinder) this process.

Pause, to Begin is a photographic project founded on an attention to craft, detail and methodology. Seeking to celebrate images at a time when photographic definitions are inherently problematic, *Pause, to Begin* sought out photographers making thoughtful, timely,

today have commandeered, appropriated and rearranged modern photographic tenets in order to re-imagine the potential of the photograph. Despite all of this, there is a universality and poise inherent to powerful, thoughtful images. With this in mind, the fifteen photographers chosen to participate in *Pause, to Begin* each create images that articulate an impressive visual intelligence. Transcending the contemporary mantra, 'film or digital?,' each photographer showcased on the following pages is making attentive photographs that explore the human condition in the twenty-first century.

Pause, to Begin is contemporary photography manifest: beauty, insight, depth, experimentation and an attention to photographic tradition. The future of the medium is bright. Congratulations to everyone involved.

TEALIA ELLIS-RITTER

The Live Creature & Ethereal Things

After Tealia Ellis-Ritter and her husband moved to an affluent area outside of Chicago, she wondered what people thought of her looks, her clothing and her actions. This self-consciousness was the inspiration for the series of photographs titled "The Live Creature and Ethereal Things." Using a large format camera, Ellis-Ritter disarms self-awareness. Through careful previsualization and a series of specific questions directed at her subjects, Ellis-Ritter's images articulate a unique sense of style. She watches her sitters move and react – an attentiveness that seeks to prevent the experience of photographing from becoming sterile or devoid of life. Ellis-Ritter believes that to have a dream is to also have a goal – and in turn, that goal will shape how one presents him or herself. Thus, the name of each photograph is the sitter's response to the question, "What is your dream?"

-Exerpt taken from the book *Pause, to Begin*, a multimedia project curated by David Wright and Ethan Jones. Published by Booksmart Studio in Rochester, NY. Copyright 2009 by *Pause, to Begin*.