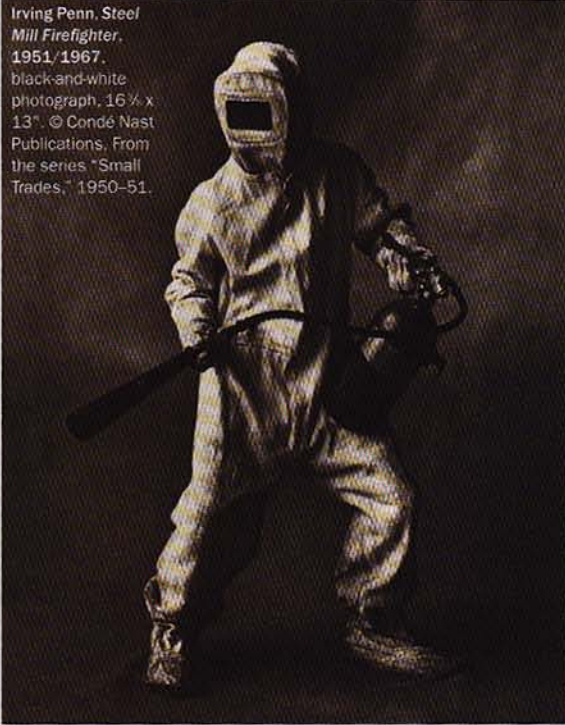




Vince Aletti

VINCE ALETTI REVIEWS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS FOR THE *NEW YORKER*. THIS YEAR, HE COCURATED "AVEDON FASHION 1944-2000," "WEIRD BEAUTY," AND OTHER "YEAR OF FASHION" SHOWS AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN NEW YORK; HE ALSO PUBLISHED *THE DISCO FILES, 1973-78* (DJHISTORY.COM).

Irving Penn, *Steel Mill Firefighter*, 1951/1967, black-and-white photograph, 16 1/4 x 13". © Condé Nast Publications. From the series "Small Trades," 1950-51.



1 **Irving Penn (1917-2009)** Penn's death ends one of the most brilliant, productive, and celebrated careers of any magazine photographer. But even if there will be no more new Penns in *Vogue*, the Getty Museum publication and show of his "Small Trades" photographs from the early 1950s (curated by Virginia Heckert and Anne Lacoste) suggest there is extraordinary material in the archives still to be revealed. The two-hundred-plus photographs in the project are more than twice the number previously published or exhibited. It's a generous parting gift: Penn at an early peak, combining portraiture and fashion—pictures of working men and women by an artist who knew what work meant.

3 **"Looking In: Robert Frank's *The Americans*"** (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) The Met squeezed this sprawling exhibition (organized by Sarah Greenough at the National Gallery of Art and curated here by Jeff L. Rosenheim) into the museum's conventional photography galleries, forcing viewers to follow the eighty-three-image sequence of *The Americans* through several small rooms. But the work (on its fiftieth anniversary) is too ornery, too tough, to be defeated by an inhospitable installation. Frank's beat masterpiece has lost none of its nerve or soulfulness and gained plenty of heft. Vintage prints of every page in the book are amply supported by work prints, contact sheets, correspondence, and the contents of earlier, equally probing publications.

Robert Frank, *Charleston, South Carolina, 1955*, 16 1/4 x 23 3/4".

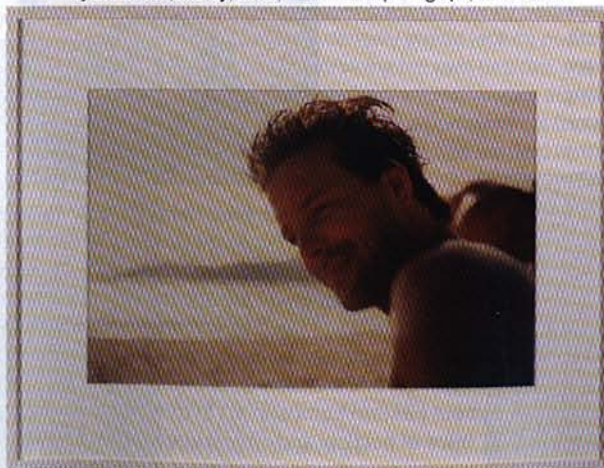


View of Philip-Lorca diCorcia, "Thousand," 2009, David Zwirner Gallery, New York.

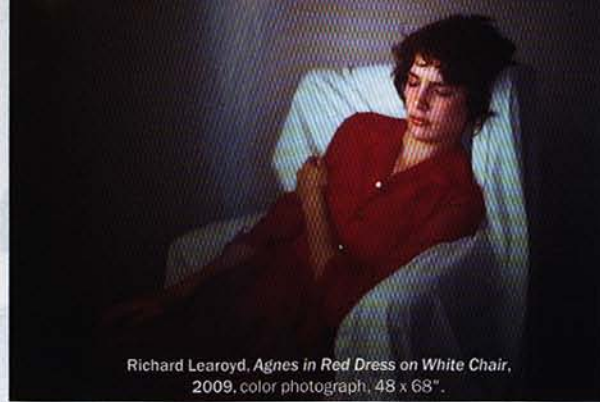


2 **Philip-Lorca diCorcia (David Zwirner Gallery, New York)** DiCorcia's "Thousand" set exactly that many little Polaroids side by side on a narrow railing that snaked around the gallery in a continuous line. The effect was mesmerizing, dizzying, overwhelming—a life and a career in pictures. Mixed in with family snaps, landscapes, still lifes, and all sorts of fabulous mistakes were preparatory shots from fashion shoots and virtually all of diCorcia's well-known series: hustlers, pole dancers, urban throngs, isolated passersby. Professional and personal work came together in a casually orchestrated (and deliberately random) flow into which the viewer could wade until immersed.

Troy Brauntuch, *Mickey*, 1985, framed color photograph, 23 1/2 x 31".



4 **Troy Brauntuch (Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York)** Brauntuch looked good in the Met's "Pictures Generation" show, but he was easily overshadowed in the hectic mix. In this fascinating solo retrospective, however, the mix was entirely his own and included collages, drawings, handwritten notes, rubber stamps, appropriated images, and paintings, many of them never before exhibited. Brauntuch works at the edge of perception, with pictures that hover between legibility and obscurity, meaning and mystery. Seeing the range of his source material—close-cropped, mostly photographic images of war, sex, disaster, and fame—only deepened the mystery.



Richard Learoyd, *Agnes in Red Dress on White Chair*, 2009, color photograph, 48 x 68".

5 **Richard Learoyd** (McKee Gallery, New York) The subjects of Learoyd's big portrait photographs have an uncanny presence: They're not only close to life-size, they're unnervingly lifelike. That impression has a lot to do with the works' shallow depth of field, which renders one layer of the image in incredible detail while the layer just behind it goes soft. Learoyd achieves this look using a unique camera-obscura setup, and the results combine the studied formality of nineteenth-century studio portraiture with the freeze-frame immediacy of a snapshot. Despite their scale, the photos are quiet, with a coiled intensity that reverberates long after you've left the room.

7 **Sally Mann** (Gagosian Gallery, New York) Mann's photographs of her naked husband, Larry—a solid, bearded man whose body is beginning to show the effects of muscular dystrophy—are about what endures. Made with an old-fashioned wet-plate collodion process that invites accidents and abrasions, her prints suggest the ravaging of the flesh as well as its strength. Larry is seen in fragments (a flank, a torso, a broad back) that recall classical statuary—ruined, perhaps, but still heroic. And erotic: This is not a memorial, it's a celebration.



Sally Mann, *Kingfisher's Wing*, 2007, black-and-white photograph, 15 x 13 1/2".

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2009, mixed media, 97 x 26 x 20". Photo: James Prinz.



9 **Nick Cave** (Jack Shainman Gallery, New York) Cave's installation of dementedly decorated "Soundsuits" was where I wanted to live earlier this season. Shrouded mannequins, their robes rising to cone-head peaks, filled the gallery as shamans, mummers, and shaggy-haired, multicolored relatives of Cousin Itt. Other figures wore bodysuits that erupted in sequins and crocheted patches or sprouted dense arrays of fake flowers, porcelain birds, or tin noisemakers. If this was a sci-fi version of *Project Runway*, extraterrestrials won.

10 **NY Art Book Fair** (P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York) In its fourth year, this gathering of independent publishers, entrepreneurial artists, and rare-book dealers exploded, filling every corner of P.S. 1's main exhibition space with works on paper. For anyone concerned about the short life expectancy of the book, the magazine, or the limited-edition, hand-bound portfolio, the profusion and variety here were reassuring. Print lives—and Printed Matter, the venerable artist's-book outpost that produced and nurtured the fair from its modest beginnings, has a hit on its hands. □

6 **"Intersections Intersected: The Photography of David Goldblatt"** (New Museum, New York) While not a reporter in the conventional sense, this South African photographer practices a sophisticated sort of photojournalism, recording the beauty and brutality of his country with a clear but critical eye. The survey (organized by Ulrich Loock for the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves in Porto, Portugal; here curated by Richard Flood) covered some fifty years of work that, from the very beginning, has been subtle, thoughtful, and deeply felt. Though his photographs deal with apartheid and AIDS, Goldblatt avoids polemic and embraces complexity. This doesn't mean withholding judgment—it means never looking away.



David Goldblatt, *JOIN! OUR CLUB for only 12.94 a month and receive over 13 family benefits including a funeral plan, Ellerines, Beaufort West, in the time of AIDS*, 14 March 2007, color photograph, 38 1/2 x 48 1/4".

8 **Huge** The title of this Japanese men's magazine is misleading, perhaps deliberately. Its subject is fashion, not sex, but there's really no way to separate the two (see August's "Be Naked" issue, with photographs by Larry Clark, Helmut Newton, and Ryan McGinley). *Huge* calls itself a "hi-end style magazine," but it has a hipster sensibility and a sharp mix of culture and commerce. Its handsome design is rooted in a classic black-and-white photo aesthetic, as interpreted by a roster of mostly homegrown talent, notably Yasutomo Ebisu, Taro Mizutani, Katsuhide Morimoto, and Satoshi Saikusa. In any language, *Huge* redefines masculine chic.



Cover of *Huge*, 60 (September 2009).



NY Art Book Fair, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, 2009. Photo: Boru O'Brien O'Connell.