



die Zusammenfälle häufen sich

P H O T O G R A P H I C N O T E S

**CHRISTIAN
VOGT**

Swiss Institute, New York

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CHRISTIAN
V O G T

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

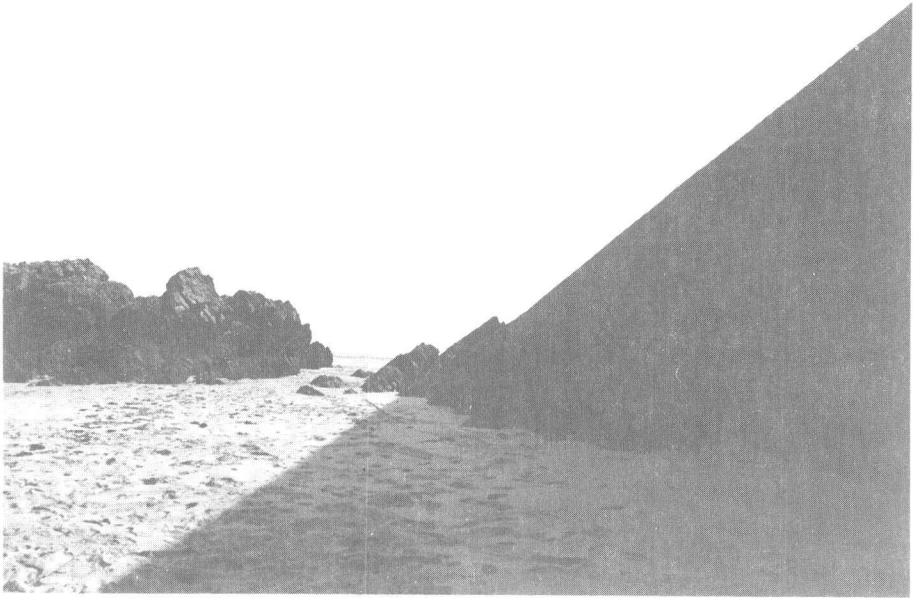
1989 is the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Photography. Around the world countless exhibitions celebrate this artistic medium, and demonstrate the multitude of aspects and directions the photography has taken during this period.

The Swiss Institute is pleased to present the exhibition "Christian Vogt: Photographic Notes" on this occasion.

My gratitude goes to PRO HELVETIA, Swiss Council for the Arts for having funded, in part, this project and its publication. Melissa Pierson's editorial skills highlight this catalogue. I am indebted to her for her fine work, patience, and flexibility.

Susan and Christian Vogt were responsive and enthusiastic from the inception of this project, and always welcomed my questions. To them, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks.

Z.W.



die Zusammenfalle häufen sich

Fig. 1. *Die Zusammenfalle hauefen sich*
(The coincidences accumulate), 1983
3³/₈ x 4⁷/₈ inches

PHOTOGRAPHIC NOTES

Visitors to Christian Vogt's exhibition of Photographic Notes will encounter a series of tiny photographs, each approximately 3 x 5 inches, purposefully hung very closely side by side. Each photograph represents an apparently unrelated occurrence, usually a product of chance or created by some ungovernable power.

Vogt's Photographic Notes are individually noteworthy because of their visual impact, striking composition, and expressiveness. Installed together, they yield a single work of art. Confronting this intriguing installation, the viewer is reminded of alphabet tables, musical notes, mathematic series, or perhaps simply of notes taken during a meeting or a lecture, where meaning is revealed by sequential reading of the separate, ordered elements.

Although Vogt's installation of his Photographic Notes is visually ordered, however, its conception is overtly defiant of constraints. We are made to wonder what *The Coincidences Accumulate* (fig. 1) has in common with *The Children's Room* (fig. 2), or with *CatShadowHare* (fig. 3). How are they to be considered parts of the same work?

The Coincidences Accumulate depicts a beach scene. On the right in the photograph a structure—part of a sea wall—enters from the upper right corner and moves diagonally toward the center. On a sunny day, obviously, the sea wall casts its shadow, but it is only in the specific moment captured in this picture that the shadow so precisely continues the

sea wall's diagonal. If one misses this ephemeral event, it is gone for the day.

The Children's Room shows a naked woman standing in a room, in front of an upright piano. Her left arm supports a cello, while her right hand carries a bow. Ingre's paintings of nude Odalisques, and his passion for violin, are immediately brought to mind. More startling in Vogt's picture is the compositional relation between the scar on the woman's lower abdomen and the sound holes of the cello. The photo's title piques our interest further: What does "children's room" refer to? Is it the room in which the woman stands, or is it the woman's womb, or perhaps the cello's interior?

Catshadowhare, an inverted photograph of a cat jumping, plays with still other ambiguities. The shadow it casts on the ground looks like the image of a running hare.

This tension both between the disparate images and within individual pictures makes the Photographic Notes as fascinating as they are. The series recalls other postmodern works, such as David Salle's, in which a single painting is comprised of several incongruous parts.

Of paramount concern to Vogt is the notion of chance: the chance that an occurrence can take place, as in *Untitled* (fig. 4); the chance that two or several occurrences can take place simultaneously, as in *The Coincidences Accumulate*; the chance that we make an event happen that would not have otherwise, as in *The Children's Room*. Then there is the chance that an event is simply identi-

fied as such, as with *Paris 1979, St. Moritz 1983* (Fig. 8), which points to the chance of being present at the right moment to witness a particular occurrence. Finally, "chanciest" of all is being the artist who identifies the chance and captures it.

Vogt has stated "Coincidences are like the shadow of a sea wall, whose diagonal continues, visible only from a specific point and at a particular moment. Many things are like such coincidences, subtle and hidden: If you turn your head to look at it, it is gone!."

Beyond this cerebral element, however, the photographic Notes feed other human desires. They are carefully made to be alluring, engaging; they offer moments exemplifying the unexpected, the unusual, the astonishing, and the disappointing.

Vogt is as much interested in the reaction of his audience as he is in the work's own properties. His Photographic Notes often bear handwritten comments, as if to clarify the situation, but they frequently add further ambiguousness. Sometimes the words inspired Vogt to create the particular work, while in others the situation reminds him of a text, an idea, or a sentence. In every instance the viewer is challenged to find an answer to the riddle.

The following are some of the ideas which have inspired Vogt to create corresponding Photographic Notes.

People with longings

Projections and how they are conveyed

What one can not want

The amazing feelings I had as a child

What, when and how things come together
Things interdependently determined
The non-visible behind the visible
Nothing is important,
but everything is important
The simultaneous
Andy Warhol's "It's not what it is, it is how you look at it"

THE SIMULTANEOUS 6 × 17

Under the working title "6 x 17," Vogt has captured some very intriguing and cinematic scenes in the recent years, such as *Theaterstrasse* (1988), (fig. 9) and *Roosevelt Way* (1989), (fig. 10). Their concern is the simultaneous, that which is contemporary, existing or occurring at the same time, exactly coincident.

The works of "6 x 17" usually represent several events occurring in reality at the same time and side by side. Works in this series are neither pre-arranged nor are they collages. The 6 x 17s are in some ways further developments of the Photographic Notes; conceptually they are complementary. The 6 x 17s go beyond the idea of gathering together in a single work a series of disparate images. While in the Photographic Notes the order is usually decided on by the artist, in "6 x 17" the order is preordained by chance or circumstance, and the artist has happened to come on the situation. Despite the variety of events in one work, "6 x 17" does not appear crowded. Each scene is unrelated to and independent of the following scene, following its own path.

Vogt's work leaves much to personal interpretation. Paradoxically, the ex-

perience of observing his photographs is similar to viewing abstract works—everything seems open. But the most intriguing thing of all is that the viewer can still receive so much from his work.

Ziba de Weck

Fig.2. *Das Kinderzimmer*
(The Children's room), 1983
3³/₈ × 4⁷/₈ inches



Das Kinderzimmer

Fig.3. *Katzenschattenhase*
(Catshadowhare), 1983
3³/₈ × 4⁷/₈ inches



Katenschattenhase

Fig.4. *Untitled*, 1983
3³/₈ x 4⁷/₈ inches

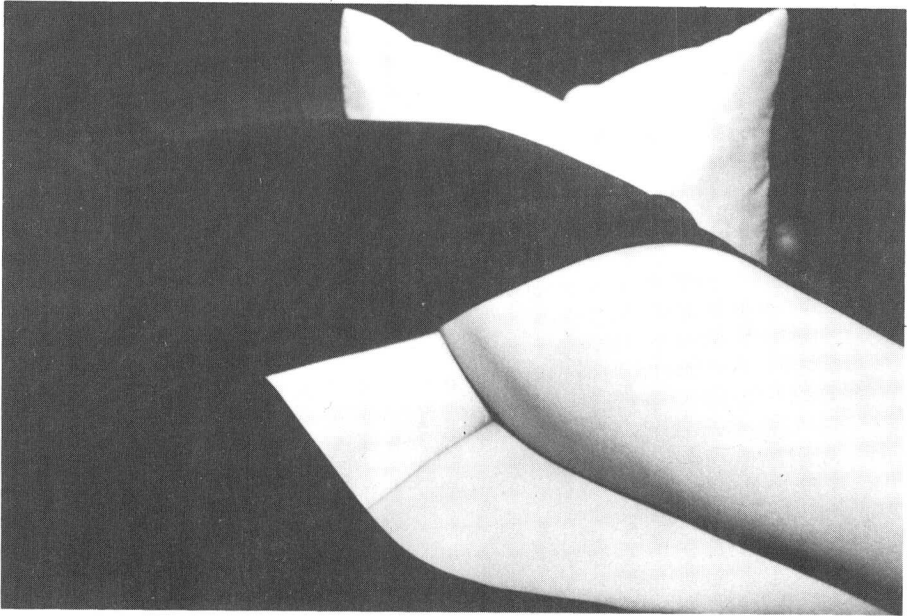
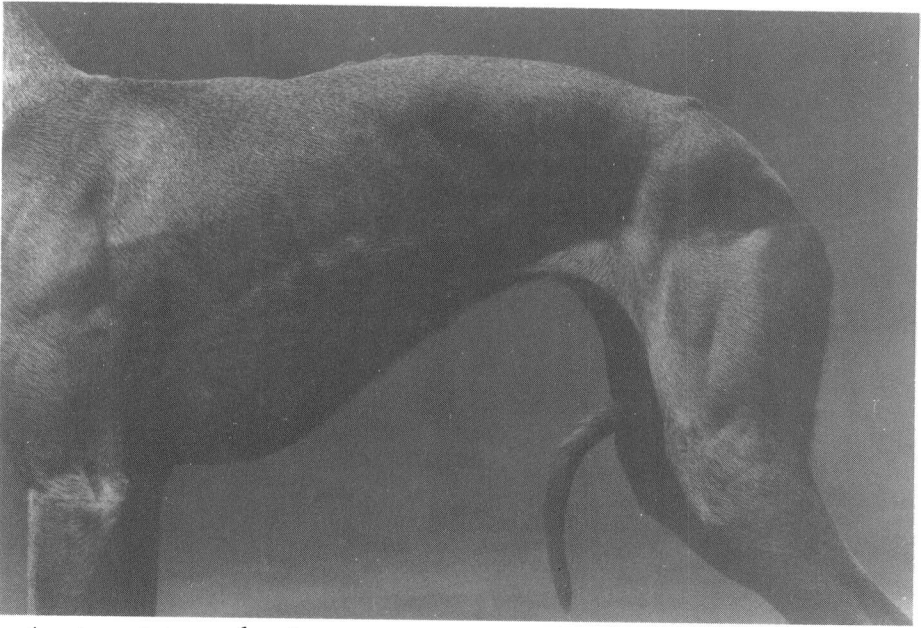


Fig.5. *Untitled*, 1983
3³/₈ × 4⁷/₈ inches



Dear Elizabeth's mother, Elizabeth

Fig.6. *Dark dog afraid*, 1983
3³/₈ × 4⁷/₈ inches



dark dog afraid

Fig. 7. *Doch machts ihn stets schrecklich traurig,
dass niemand etwas merken will*
(Yet it makes him terribly sad
that no one wants to notice), 1983
3³/₈ × 4⁷/₈ inches



doch macht's ihn stets schrecklich traurig,
dass niemand etwas merken will

Fig. 8. *Paris 1979 / St. Moritz 1983*
3³/₈ x 4⁷/₈ inches



Paris 1979



St. Moritz 1983

Fig.9. *Theaterstrasse*, 1988
50 × 80 inches

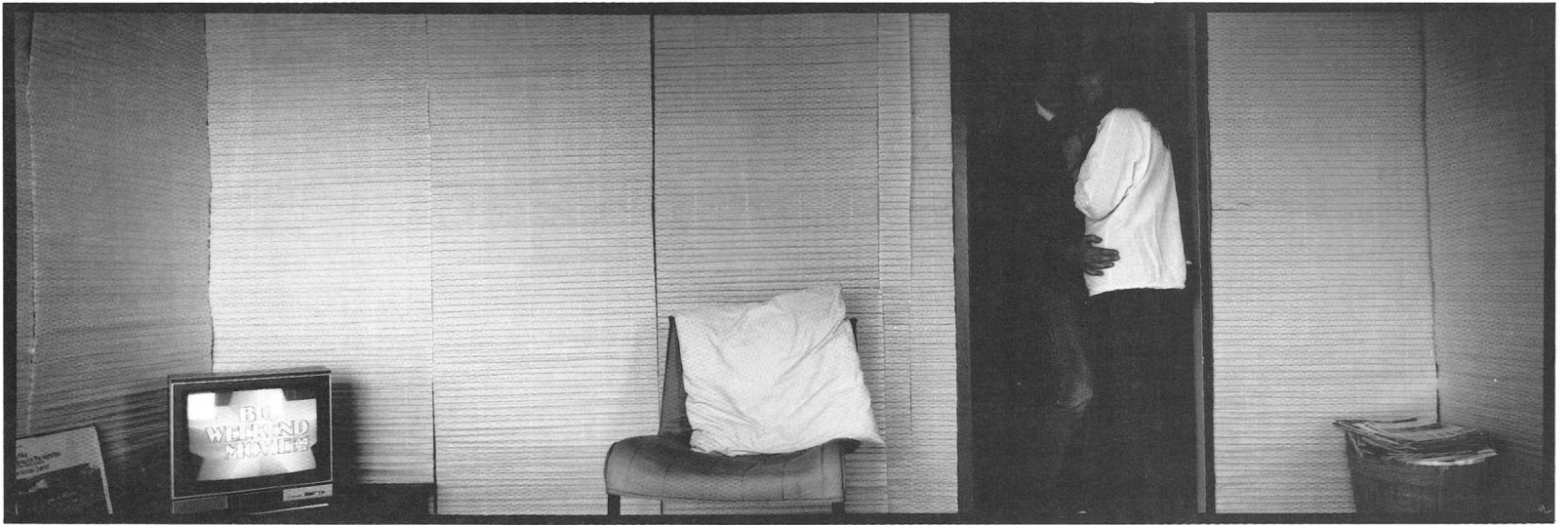
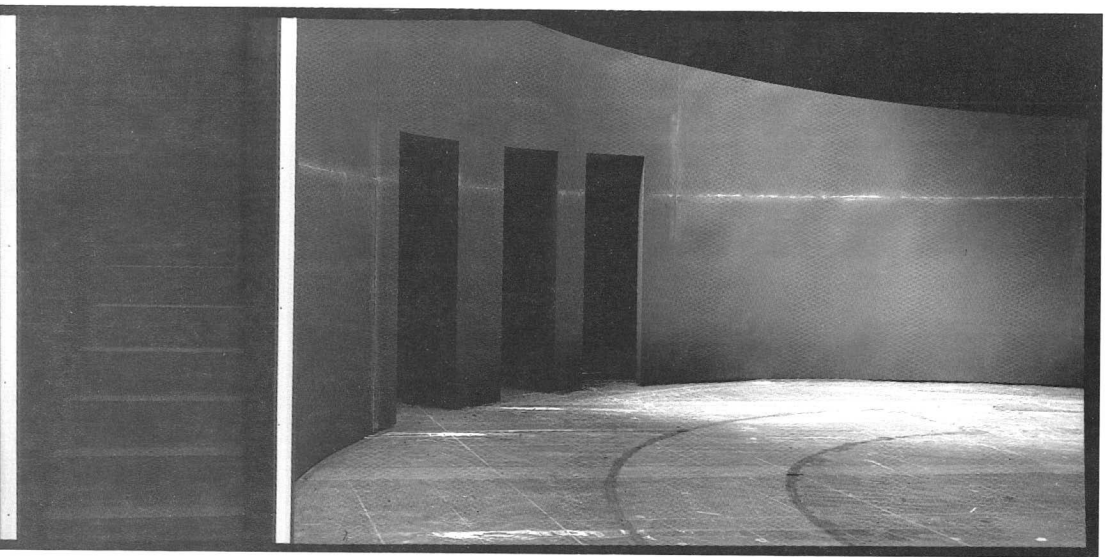


Fig. 10. *Roosevelt Way*, 1989
50 × 80 inches



CHRISTIAN VOGT

SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Christian Vogt was born in 1946, in Switzerland, and has been an independent photographer since 1969.

He is the recipient of Swiss National Scholarships; the first Grand Prix Triennale of Fribourg; Canada Council Grant; Art Directors' Awards from Switzerland, Germany, New York, Los Angeles; Clio Award, New York; and has held lectures and workshops in the ICP, Swiss Institute, New York; Rencontres International, Arles; Venice '79; University of Coimbra, 1987; Porto, 1988; Yale University, 1988, Brissago, 1988-1989; Ryerson, Toronto; St. Lukas Institute, Brussels; Lecture Tour Australia, Denmark and Norway.

He has participated in major group exhibitions at Photokina, Cologne; Fotoforum, Kassel; Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm; Polaroid Exhibition, Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Photographer's Gallery, London; Hoffmann Foundation, Gegenwarts Museum, Basle; International Art Fairs, Bologna and Basle; "Photography in Switzerland", Swiss Foundation of Photography; "L'Arc Lemanique"; "La Gloire et Misere du Corps", Fribourg, Paris; Casa de Serralves, Porto; "Arrangements" Mai 36 Gallery, Lucerne.

He also had numerous one-person exhibitions in "The Photographer's Gallery, London; ICP, Neikrug, Swiss Institute, New York; Kunsthau, Zurich; Yajima Gallery, Montreal; Felix Handshin Gallery, Basle; Focus Gallery, San Francisco; Ray Hawkins Gallery, Los Angeles; The Tel Aviv Museum, Israel; Rencontres International, Arles; Gallery Watari, Tokyo; Preuss Museum, Norway, The Edwynn Houk Gallery, Chicago; CCD Gallery, Duesseldorf; Kunstmuseum, Hannover; "Nostra Descrittiva", Rimini; Museum fuer Gestaltung, Basle; Musee de l'Elysee, Lausanne; Galeria del'Arte Moderna, Bologna.

Portfolios of his work have been published in "Camera", Switzerland; "du" Art Magazine, Switzerland; Picture Magazine and PhotoShow, USA; "Time-Life" International; "Light Vision", Australia; And in diverse international photojournals and annuals.

He has produced five monographs: "Christian Vogt/Photographs", Rotovision, Geneva, 1980; "In Camera: 82 Images by 52 Women", Rotovision, Geneva, 1982; "Photedition 5/Christian Vogt", Verlag Photographie, Schaffhausen/Munich, 1982; "Fotografische Notizen und notierte Zufalle", Sphinx Verlag, Basle, 1984; "Christian Vogt/Catshadowhare", Wieses Publishing, Basle, 1989.

His work is represented in international public and private collections.

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