

Phel Steinmetz's photographic skills were mostly self taught, except for a two year period of casual study with Ansel Adams and Wynn Bullock in the late 1960s. In 1971, he joined the art department faculty at the University of California, San Diego where he shared a studio with Fred Lonidier. His artworks question why we create a schism between the natural and the constructed, and often suggest we become more holistically responsible for the changes we produce in the environment. For the last 40 years of his life he constructed 20 one-of-a-kind photo books including the six volume family portrait *Somebody's Making a Mistake*. In 2013 he completed his final book/performance *Narcissus' Brother* using shadow self-portraiture in the the landscape to reflect on space and time. Steinmetz was also the photographic collaborator and photographer for other artists including Eleanor Antin's *100 Boots* and *Angel of Mercy* Allan Kaprow's *Standards* amongst others.

"Late in 1969 ... I knew I wanted to be an art photographer; I just wasn't sure how. About six months into this re-assessment state I was asked to consult on a new darkroom facility being built at the new University of California campus in San Diego. I was approached by the Chair of the Art Department David Antin for this because Fred Lonidier, a MFA student at the time, had told David that I was an excellent photographer and highly skilled technician. Fred had worked for our commercial studio the previous summer as a lab assistant and printer. That's where we first met. Since I wasn't engaged in anything at that time I agreed to assist them in designing the new facility. During the consulting and building David was taken with my knowledge and communication skills and offered me a half time lecture position teaching photography in the Art Department. I was surprised but interested. So began my career at UCSD.

I never went to college or got a degree beyond a high school diploma. During my first year teaching at UCSD, Fred (still a grad student) taught some of the photo class as a TA under David's and my supervision. Martha Rosler was also a MFA Student at the time. I met Allan Sekula when he took one of my classes. He was an undergraduate Biology major in his Senior year and was considering changing his career direction to Visual Arts. Over the next four years Fred got his degree and we were both hired as Assistant Professors formulating and teaching the photo program. Martha graduated and stayed in the area to work on her art. Allan also got his MFA and did the same. All of us were active and sowing in the '70s Conceptual Art scene.

I had no higher education academic history at the time. However, I had participated in the anti-war and environmental movements of the time and I was informally studying a varied assortment of intellectual areas such as spiritual belief systems, Marxism, psychology, art history etc. I had assigned myself a 'higher ' education. Gradually Martha, Allan, Fred and I became the core of a larger group of students and faculty interested in politics and Conceptual Art. Some, specifically

Martha, Allan and Fred embraced Marxist/Leninist principles. I was interested but not as committed as they were. Since we all used photography and language in our art, and I was the most knowledgeable about different aspects of photography that gave me a valued place in the group. Martha, Allan and Fred were always the most vocal while I was more cautious. I think we all felt connected by our mutual alienation from popular culture and the desire to do something about its controlling mythologies.

I think that my work in general and *Somebodys making a Mistake (S.S.M)* in particular, is political. However, the politics are revealed inside the broader play of human relationships and how a capitalist society may both effect and affect those relationships. Our working group, my fellow faculty, and other future workers highly admired and respected this work...."(Phel Steinmetz)

N.A.F.T.A... 1997

“Since the early 1970s, Fred Lonidier has challenged the conventions of the photographic image, merging conceptual photography and leftist political activism. His choice to show his work in such nontraditional venues as union halls and shopping malls exemplifies his efforts to address an audience beyond the gallery and museum visitors. The work *N.A.F.T.A. . . (Not a Fair Trade for All)* (. . .) chronicles the artist’s longstanding project exploring border issues and labor rights in maquiladoras, assembly plants that operate in the free trade zone of Tijuana, Mexico.”ⁱ

The photo-text panels “juxtapose Lonidier’s photographs of maquiladora workers with documentation of how these images have been received. When the artworks were initially shown, at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in 1999, Lonidier leafleted the maquiladoras, urging the workers to attend the exhibition. Fearing that the workers would be galvanized to organize, factory owners successfully pressured the University to take down the show. Lonidier countered in 2003 by setting up a mobile gallery in a tractor trailer that he sited in politically strategic locations throughout Tijuana, including the maquiladoras themselves; he documented his actions and has added those images as an integral element of the work itself.”

This presentation of the near complete *N.A.F.T.A. . .* work in the DGB Union House in Berlin brings the content once again to the public that Lonidier has addressed himself since the 1970s, at a time when the effect and consequences of new and existing free trade agreements are still being intensively debated.

In the last years Fred Londier's work has enjoyed growing attention. Parts of *N.A.F.T.A. . .* where for

example, included in last year's Whitney Biennale in New York and Lonidier's work is currently on show in the Museum Reina Sofia in Madrid and the Albright Know Museum, Buffalo.

Parrallel to the exhibition in the DGB Union House is the two person exhibition with the works of Lonidier and his colleague of many years Phel Steinmeitz in the the rooms of Silberkuppe, Berlin.

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