BASHIR BARAKI

A PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY 1980-1987

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Curated By
Linda Hicks
For
The Australian Centre For Contemporary Art

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Foreword

This exhibition at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, to be followed by one at Pinacotheca, plus his monograph, must be particularly satisfying to Bashir Baraki, as some photographers have regarded him as an interloper from the painting world, rather than a 'real' photographer.

However, I think that it is no accident that some of the most interesting photography in recent years has been done by people like Bashir, Boyd Webb, Julie Brown-Rrap and Warren Breninger, all of whom represent a merging of photography and art practice.

Of course, there has been resistance on both sides to this tendency. It is still possible to get a degree in Art History from many Australian universities with barely a mention of photography. On the other hand, there are many photographers who continue to see photography as somehow pure and unconnected to the rest of visual culture.

The Victorian Centre for Photography is confident that all these matters and, indeed much more, will be addressed in their Bicentennial Survey Exhibition of Victorian Photography, which is being curated by Joyce Agee and is due to open at ACCA early next year.

Bernie O'Regan
Co-ordinator
Victorian Centre for Photography

It is interesting to note that the only previous survey of a contemporary artist which the ACCA has mounted was of US photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe. It is apt that the next should be of an Australian photographer. The ACCA believes that an important area of its brief is to act as a venue for surveys of contemporary Australian artists. In 1987, the Centre will also be surveying the work of Peter Tyndall, as well as Bashir Baraki.

Concurrently with each exhibition an independent monograph is being produced, which will act as a reference point for each artist's work long after their shows are completed.

Bashir is indeed fortunate that Linda Hicks, who has curated the exhibition, and Paul Foss, the current editor of **Art & Text,** have written about his work.

It is important, not only for the actual work to be seen, but also that through the written word the artist's work is placed in an informed, critical context.

Richard Perram
Director
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

Acknowledgements

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Also, to the director and staff of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.
And particularly, to Linda Hicks — curator of this exhibition.

BASHIR BARAKI
Melbourne, May 1987

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of all those mentioned above, and to convey particular thanks to Bruce Pollard and Richard Perram for their assistance with the works and the use of their galleries.

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LINDA HICKS
May 1987

PANIC HOUR: Baraki's Photography 1980-1987

By Linda Hicks

The term 'panic hour' is apparently a sub-cultural colloquialism for an unspecified moment in gay nightclubs, when sometime after about 3 am., the pace of social interaction changes abruptly. Walking, dancing, talking, shifts into a rapid and highly anxious form as those who find themselves alone struggle to find a way out before the place closes.

Baraki describes the alienation of the 'panic hour' as an imaginative source for his photography and it seems to me that the term could also be applied to other themes that recur in his work. That is, in the task that challenges some artists when confronted with the problems of post-modernism, of tracing a way through the maze of quotations and pirated imagery in order to find an iconography with which to articulate an imagination largely unshaped by theory. Another, much older theme, 'the hour of our death', is also linked to 'panic hour' in the eschatological imagery that frequently recurs in Baraki's work.

Much of this imagery is lugubrious, the shock value of such instances as the meat studies having been aestheticised long ago with the legacy of romanticism from Goya to Bacon, yet the sombre quality of such subjects coolly mediated by photography offer interesting reassessments of the theme.

This exhibition represents a survey of Baraki's photography from 1980-1987, and is drawn from several major bodies of work. Catalogue numbers 1 to 6 are taken from a show of large scale colour portraits of people in Melbourne art circles which was held at the Pinacotheca Gallery in 1985. And despite the fact that many of the other works in the current exhibition are more explicitly iconographic, these portraits are at least as iconic. The referents are 'recorded' by the lens as indexical images, yet they are also 'captured' as narratives, the psychological qualities of the subjects described by the emphases on head and hands which characterise the conventions of portraiture. The splitting and distancing of head and hands in these works would seem to indicate that Baraki was likely to explore the fracturing of such conventions, but the portraits which were included in the following show **Images** were of a considerably less inventive type. Those portraits are not included in this exhibition, but Cat. numbers 7-10 and 12-15, represent the nude studies shown in **Images.** The **Images** exhibition indicated (as I have argued elsewhere), that Baraki was in a difficult transitional phase, considering the formal possibilities of the nude detached from a Christian iconographic context.

The nudes from this period, like the several works which are drawn from this first Pinacotheca show in 1983 **Iconographic Images and the Raising of Lazarus,** bear salient points of comparison with the more recent material.

In the 1983 exhibition the myth of Lazarus emerged through a sequence of polaroid images. A vulnerable nude fought with funereal bindings in a way which suggested an agonising struggle (agon, from the Greek, to contest) between homo-erotic celebrations of form and an iconography of the Judeo-Christian traditions which have relegated such forms to the realm of the repressed. The transformative properties of repression were evident in the concealing veils and restrictive cords, seen here for example in Cat. No. 20. Yet such images are of a tradition which, as Steinberg argues in his study of the sexuality of Christ in Renaissance art, made much of the play on the idea of revelation. "Velum is a veil, while revelare means to

Catalogue No. 10 **Loretta** 1985
B/w Photograph 40.7 x 60.9 cm
Collection: Augustine Dall'Ava

unveil, just as epiphany means to show and make manifest. This god, in other words, is unveiled, *revealed,* in (these) scenes as truly and fully a man''[2]. In the 1983 series, the imaginary combat with death was imbued with an panic stricken sense of anxiety, yet the entombed Lazarus, like St. Sebastian (Cat. No. 43) or particulary Judas, the betrayer, one who reveals treacherously (Cat. 21 and 52) participate in libidinal confrontations which seem to force this anxiety to the point of transgression.

Baraki also included a fine gauze sheet in the nude studies of the 1985 **Images** exhibition, and used it almost like a filter, softening the light and enhancing the formal emphasis on chiaroscuro, or delicately draped around the body in an almost histrionic manner.

The sense of carnality, and the eschatological theme revealed in the Lazarus works, was made latent here by formalist concerns with the painterly qualities of light and texture, recalling such influences as the work of George Platt-Lynes. Of these works, Baraki refers to the female nudes, such as Cat. No. 10, with its mask-like head juxtaposed rather oddly with the sensuous rhythms of the body, as the source of the first meat studies. One is reminded here of the popular metaphors of consumption such as 'cheesecake', or 'beefcake' associated with the banalisation of the body in advertising.

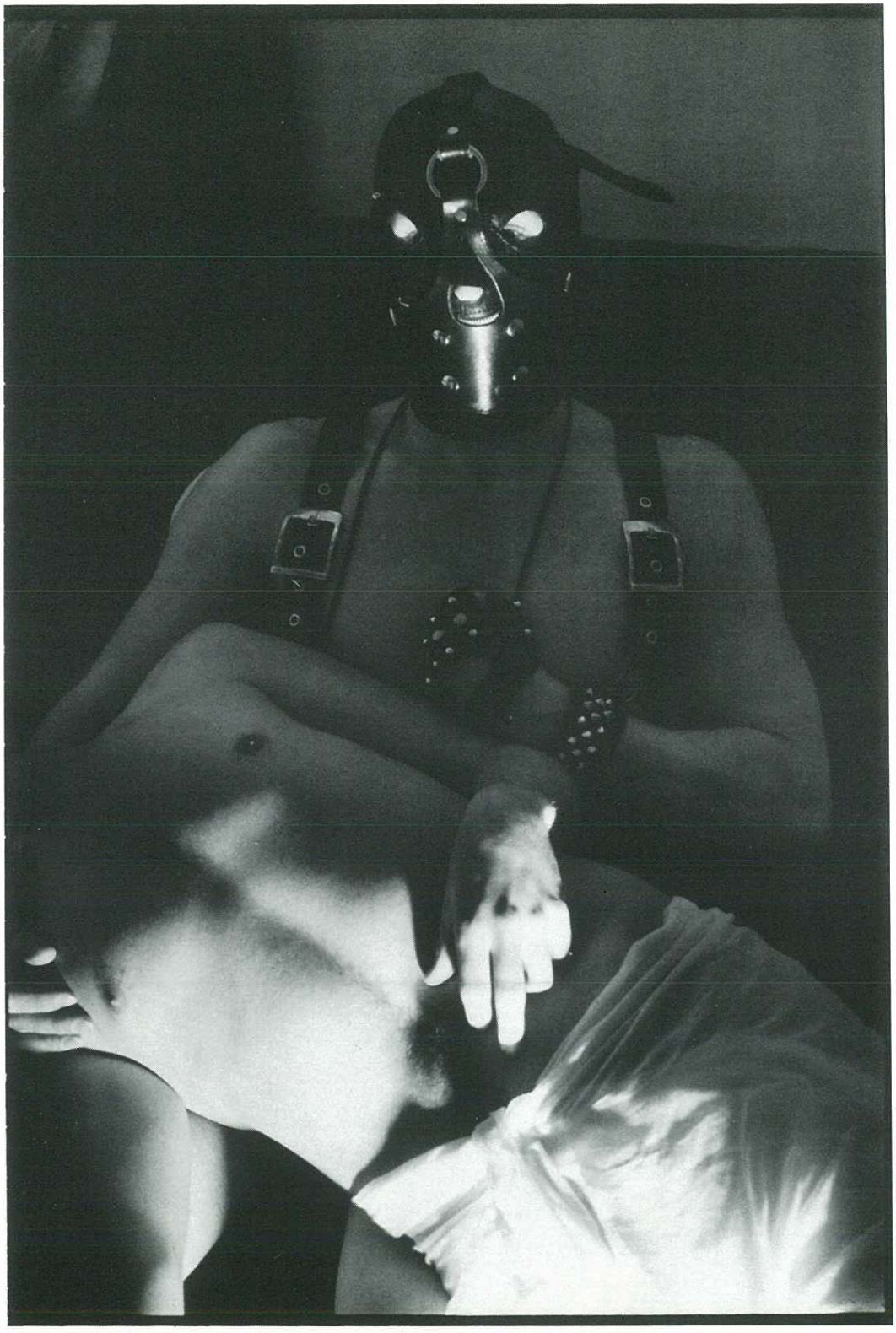
The theatrical device of the mask-like face in this work may be a precursor of the grotesque leather mask on the figure in the b/w pieta and meat images which comprise Baraki's more recent work. Of all the works in this exhibition, it is perhaps these, evoking a strangely hieratic theatre of cruelty, which will receive the least approval. As Paul Foss has observed[3] with reference to Juan Davila's painting, public prurience regarding explicit homo-eroticism is most furious when it enters the quasi-sacred domain of art.

The Baroque tenebrismo, and tendency toward overwrought artificiality in these photographs may well be exacerbated by such prurience, but it would be insoucient to overlook the implications of this, or the constantly reiterated visual connections between desire and flesh as commodity.

There are iconographic traditions of father and dead son in the Western tradition such as the throne of grace, or perhaps the trinity, but here, in such instances as Cat. No. 22, Baraki draws on the pieta. He displaces the beatific image of mother and son with the grim father or master who holds the body which in this instance appears slave-like in its passivity, and in later works becomes a starkly inert carcass.

The father/son and master/slave relations conveyed by the conventional pyramidal structure of the pieta, are condensed into the more economical imagery of the meat as a metonymy of the body of the slave.

Joel Kovel has remarked that ''The Oedipal relationship is essentially a triangulation: the father enters the mother infant dyad as a third party, an Other to the Other primarily given by the mother'' and suggests that Oedipal social relations characterise early capitalism. In contemporary late capitalism however he cites Narcissus as a more apposite model, where relations are eventually transformed ''into the petrified form of the commodity''[4].



Catalogue No. 22 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
B/w Photograph 36.2 x 23.3 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery

Catalogue No. 42 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
Sepia Photograph 33.7 x 27.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery

This is aligned with Marcuse's notion of a society of surplus repression, a kind of well organised panic hour, where Orpheus and Narcissus, the antagonists of repression and order, are seen as the means of reconciling Eros and Thanatos.[5] Perhaps Marcuse's model offers a useful hermeneutics for photography, where the (Orphic) artist is a largely visual culture is able to release "petrified form" through the indexical (reflective/Narcissus) qualities of the medium. Like Kovel, Marcuse speaks explicitly of the "petrified forms" produced by commodity fetishism and Baraki's recent meat studies are an apt referent in that respect. I am not suggesting then, that the deep anxiety of the 'panic hour' is something relegated to a gay culture which is alienated from institutions like the family. Baraki's emphasis on the flesh as a synecdoche for the soul is something deeply informed by the Catholic imagination, and wider, more catholic interpretations may be more appropriate than those pertaining to biography, or even intention.

Baraki's meat studies are unequivocal images of death as material fact, yet for most of us this fact is understood either through photography and the media or other cultural forms. This is a fairly recent phenomenon, as Phillipe Aires reminds us,[6] death even in the late 19th Century was (unlike sexuality) a highly socialised, indeed public event. From the early 20th Century there was an increasing privatisation of death, whereas sexuality has become manifestly more public, at once promoting commodities and becoming glamorised by association with inert object of desire. As Kovel remarks: "For the purposes of advanced Capital. . .it is increasingly imperative that the commodity lead not to satiety but to restless reconsumption...Desire is mobilised. . .at the price of its perpetuating alienation"[7].

This then is the central alienation of the 'panic hour'. Another, and not entirely unrelated sense of alienation is the more specific fear of AIDS which has stimulated some degree of panic in the popular imagination. Popular metaphors of illness are often a punitive form of displacement which have, in the past, occured during periods of millenarian anxiety.[8] In the current **fin de siècle,** AIDS seems to incite medieval, apocalyptic metaphors such as plagues, punishment and even the grim reaper himself, who recently turned up at a bowling alley during the television education campaign of AIDS. Susan Sontag has compared the prevalence of the metaphors associated with TB in the 19th. Century with the developments of romanticism in culture and early capitalism. The 20th. Century, she suggests, is more preoccupied with the metaphors linked to cancer, when "Advanced capitalism requires expansion, speculation, the creation of new needs. . .buying on credit; mobility — an economy that depends on the irrational indulgence of desire. Cancer is described in images that sum put the negative behaviour of 20th. Century homo economicus : abnormal growth, repression of energy, that is, refusal to consume or spend"[9] Sontag concludes her essay with the reflection that "As the language of treatment evolves from military metaphors featuring the body's 'natural defenses'...cancer will be partly de-mythicised" and eventually made obsolete "long before the problems it has reflected so pervasively will be resolved". Apart from the bizarre anachronism of hords of grim reapers in bowling alleys, the feudal metaphor proves interesting if one extends Sontag's analogy to suggest that the characterisitics of AIDS, a disease which subverts the entire immuno-defensive system of the body, extends the military metaphor, suggesting the idea of **implosion:** the disease terrorises the system from within, striking in highly variable ways, rather than confronting specific sites in a more predictable manner.

With the meat studies, the referent, like time, was 'frozen' and this conveyed an inchoate comment on the processes of photography.

In his collages (Cat. Numbers 48-55) Baraki draws attention to the formal and technical means of photographic production. The precious 'aura' of authenticity and originality necessary to the commodification of art, was as Walter Benjamin perceived,[10] made vulnerable by photographic reproduction. Baraki articulates this vulnerability by including the commercial brand and frame numbers on the side of the film within the frame describing compositional 'closure'.

In the pieta collages, conventional compositional devices are defined by transposed dots and lines, (which may be compared with screen line dots in photographic printing) so that the orthagonals comprising the traditional triangular structure of this iconography are revealed. Here Baraki 'traces' a trajectory through the maze of quotations in post-modernist eclecticism, intuiting an imagery which will form a visual correlative of the panic hour.

Douglas Crimp has argued that post-modernist photography colludes with high-formalism, not in order to reclaim photography-as-art but "to displace it, to show that it too is now only an aspect of the copy, not the original".[11] And it would seem that Baraki's devices for describing the formal and technical means of production, such as the printing of these photographs on to canvas, work to displace formalism.

The Lazarus series was completed with a powerful collage (Cat. No. 56), and the b/w pieta and meat series concludes with the same medium.

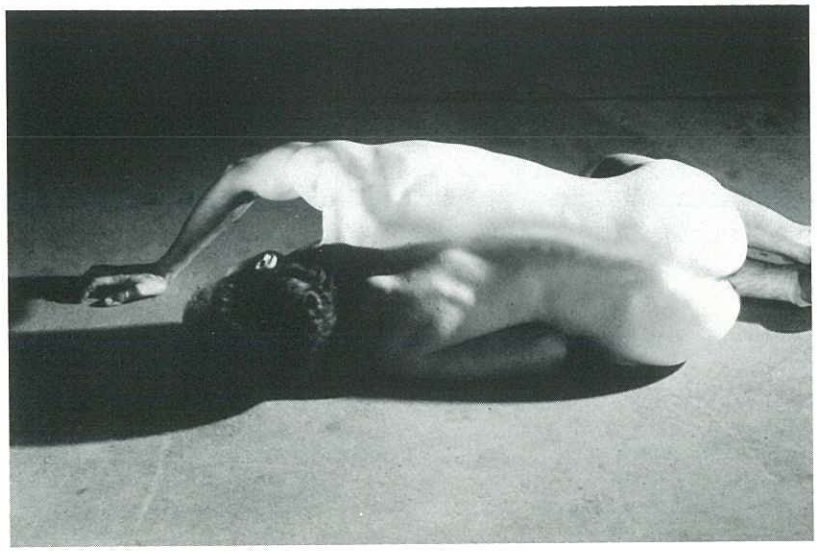
Baraki's current direction is represented in this exhibition by the grid-like compositions of colour polaroids (Cat. Numbers 58 and 59) in which earlier images are recapitulated through coloured filters. The diminutive 'stamp' collages (Cat. Numbers 48-55), the **Lebanon** Series (Cat. No. 62) which will be seen in its entirety at a forthcoming show at Pinacotheca (July), and the **Foetal Sequence** (Cat. No. 63). Of these it is the latter which, it seems to me, will develop many of the themes which are central to the recent material.

In this study (no. 63) it is as if the image of the body is subject to a rather Surrealistic form of metamorphosis. The foetal pose of the figure is illuminated in a way which highlights the upper section of the torso, transforming it into the carcass on which the earlier work was based. Here Jakobson's definition of metonymy as a figure of continuity is articulated with visual elegance. One is reminded of Barthes' comments on Bataille's **Story of the Eye,** when he says :

> "The world becomes blurred; properties are no longer separate; spilling, sobbing, urinating, ejaculating form a wavy meaning, and the whole of the **Story of the Eye** signifies in the manner of a vibration that always gives the same sound (but what sound?). In this way the transgression of values that is the avowed principle of eroticism is matched by — if not based on — a technical transgression of the forms of language, for the metonymy is nothing but a forced syntagma, the violation of a limit to the signifying space. It makes possible at the very level of speech a counter-division of object, usages, meanings, spaces, and properties that is eroticism itself".[12]

Notes:

1.	Hicks, L	"Bashir Baraki : Images / Tight-Ropes" **Photofile,** Winter, Vol. 4 No. 2, 1986.
2.	Steinberg, L	**The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion.** Pantheon. N.Y. 1983.
3.	Davila and Foss	**The Mutilated Pieta.** Artspace, Sydney, 1985.
4.	Kovel, J	**The Age of Desire** Pantheon, N.Y. 1981, p. 124.
5.	Marcuse, H	**Eros and Civilisation** Beacon, N.Y. 1966
6.	Aries, P	**The Hour of our Death** Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981.
7.	Kovel, J	**Ibid.** p. 82
8.		See Kermode, F **The Sense Of An Ending : Studies In The Theory Of Fiction** O.U.P. 1967
9.	Sontag, S	**Illness As Metaphor** Allen Lane, London, 1978.
10.	Benjamin, W	"The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" in **Illuminations.**
11.	Crimp, D	"The photographic activity of post-modernism" **October,** Summer, 1981, pp 91-102.
12.	Barthes, R	"The Metaphor of the Eye" (1963) p. 125. in Georges Bataille's **The Story Of The Eye** (1928) Penguin, 1982 edition.



Catalogue No. 63 **Foetal Sequence 1** 1987
B/w Photograph 10.5 x 7.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery

Catalogue No. 18 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
Sepia Photograph 21.7 x 33.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery

The Man Without Qualities

By Paul Foss

"In *The Man Without Qualities,* Ulrich," writes Aldo Gargani on the novel by Robert Musil, "after having lost the significance of what we ordinarily call 'spirit' or 'intelligence', despairs of ever finding it; nevertheless, he continues to feel its attraction, just as one might continue throughout one's life to love a constantly unfaithful woman, never loving her any less for her betrayal. We should take his paradox seriously: he encounters things in a new way, since 'when one loves, everything is love, even when it is pain and horror'. To the man without qualities, things don't seem made of wood or stone, but rather of a grand, delicate immorality which transforms itself into a profound moral emotion the moment it comes in contact with him. What are we to make of this and similar paradoxes, problems, and contradictions?"[1]

For example, what are we to make of this in the case of photographic 'knowledge'? One such attempt occurs in the work of Bashir Baraki: an anonymous man dressed in leather hood, straps, studded wrist-bands and bikini parades through the meat racks of an abattoir (untitled, from 1986). As metonymic constructs of some unspecifiable slaughter, these photos justly invite a response — but from where, and to what possible purpose? Certainly, they are not particularly *formal* in their appeal (which is to say that the more accepted techniques of photography, like composition, lighting, cropping, print quality, etc. — those tags of the 'academic photographer' — are here subsumed by another, but no less valid concern: that of the *amateur,* and the wonder he experiences in 'man'). This does not have to mean that they are 'bad' photos, mere snapshots or occasional, private essays (a sententious thought, surely). On the contrary: it means that with the amateur-photographer one perceives a different order of emotional attachment to the world; the term amateur simply designates "a lover", someone who photographs for the love of it, perhaps even to the detriment of this love, but quite unmediated by the desire for a certain access to history (cultural or professional) by which his alter ego, the connoisseur-photographer, habitually frames the photographic signifier. For his part, the connoisseur is encumbered by a love of taste; here the narrative of the photography conveys a whole regime of codes — for viewing and framing — which traditionally establishes the man *with* qualities, historical Man, our guilty persona. But the 'amateur' *wonders* outside that history, and we can only accept it.

We know from Roland Barthes that photography often employs a "deictic language", the object of which is to prove that something actually exists or has existed — by pointing at it (from the Greek verb, "to show"). This produces an existential dilemma:

> In the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency, matte and somehow stupid, the *This*. . .it is wholly ballasted by the contingency of which it is the weightless, transparent envelope.[2]

Hence the impossiblity of distinguishing the medium from its referent, as in Magritte's *This Is Not A Pipe.*

> It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures. . . The Photograph belongs to that class of

> laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both: the windowpane and the landscape, and why not: Good and Evil, desire and its object: dualities we can conceive but not perceive. . .[3]

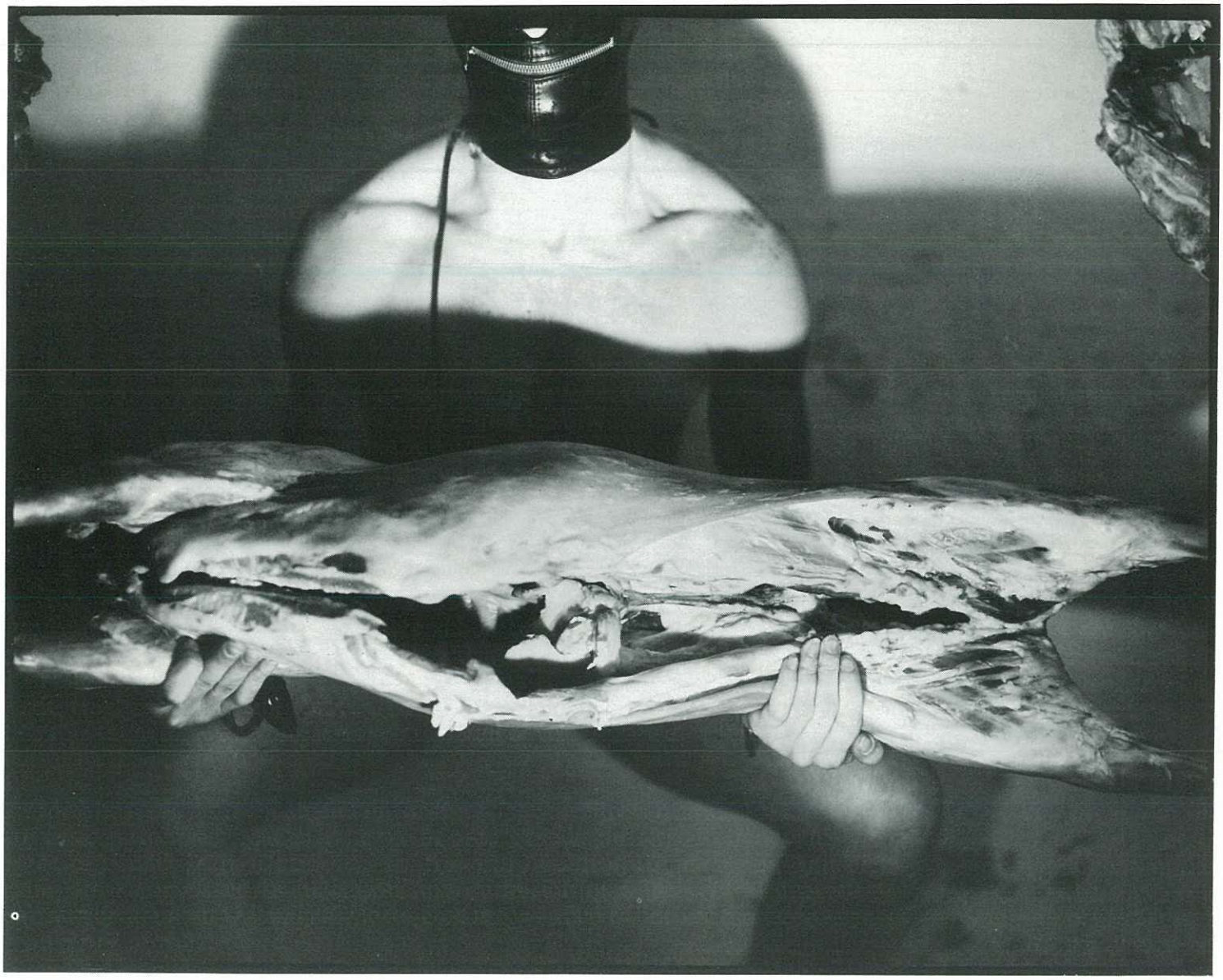
This fatality of the referent, its ability to "adhere" despite the vanishing of it through the photographic process ("a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see"[4]), is of course precisely what brings Barthes to avoid connoisseurship and the reintegration of "social protocols" (History, the Family, Culture. . .) in his evaluation of the "beloved body" of images he chooses ("Amateur Photographs"). He is more interested in photography's *elenctic* language, its power of indirection — the short focus as opposed to the long focus — in establishing the viewer's subjectivity, which is his or her own wonder. It is in this way that Barthes displaces photographic commentary from its time-honoured, 'scientistic' niche, in favour of the raw subjective encounter and its 'filmic' theorisation. "I wanted to be a primitive, without culture," he says.[5]

Such is probably the better optic for viewing Bashir Baraki's "meat" photos, too. They suggest a 'low scene', a type of subjectivity which in the photographic encounter mimics that whole equivocation brought to it by the emotions of the viewer, something which it is difficult to locate without at the same time *admitting* these emotions, which has nothing to do with knowledge (the man with qualities) and everything to do with the wonder invested in them (the man without qualities). Always it is necessary to pursue this wonder, insofar as it equivocates the gaze.

It should be obvious by now that I am referring to my own gaze and to my own wonder. But that said, one is also never alone; Bashir shows me a scene I 'know', and I direct it back at him, elenctically, if only to prove a point: we both know and don't know it — the love of men. Here the standard is mawkish. For instance, a man in a 'wild setting' photographs various 'types' in order to naturalise his desire for syncretism, to unite opposites, rock and limb, as he would himself. The voyeur in each of us responds: the photographer seduces by allowing himself to be seduced, in the so-called 'eye of the camera' (one model of this would be someone who points up at the sky at nothing, and everyone dutifully observes). Robert Mapplethorpe, who in the main asks us to look at himself looking, would be one such example of technical seduction (the camera as a totalising metaphor of 'capture').[6] But what happens when the camera is used metonymically, that is to say, replaces the thing photographed by its attributes, even to the degree of including itself among them?

At the very least, amorous bodies in collision do so without necessarily having a knowledge of it. Who could say that they have not loved? The young Marguerite Duras, in *The Lover,* already faces this inability to know, not so much her own desire, but that of the other, the older Chinese man:

> He's trembling. At first he looks at her as though he expects her to speak, but she doesn't. So he doesn't do anything either, doesn't undress her, says he loves her madly, says it very softly. Then is silent. She doesn't answer. She could say she doesn't love him. She says nothing. Suddenly, all at once, she knows, knows that he doesn't understand her, that he never will, that he lacks the power to understand such perverseness. . .She says: I'd rather you didn't love me. But if you do, I'd like you to do as you usually do with women. He looks at her in horror, asks, Is that what you want? She says it is.[7]



Catalogue No. 34 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
B/w Photograph 27.7 x 34.2 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery

Catalogue No. 63 **Foetal Sequence 1** 1987
B/w Photograph 14 x 11 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery

The girl is attracted to the man, but it is the most basic sort of attraction. She wants him, there, in his studio in Cholon, that's all. "He says he's lonely, horribly lonely because of this love he feels for her. She says she's lonely too. She doesn't say why." She doesn't want to talk, "what she wants is for him to do as he usually does with the women he brings to his flat. She begs him to do that."

The question raised by Duras concerns the wonder that comes from the suspension of her lover's world. Just the flesh talking, both rooted in that moment when there is nothing for it but to get "it" going—as Gargani says, "a tough idea to swallow for a mind habituated by a long intellectual tradition to regard itself as an ethical subject destined to redeem the worked"[8], which is especially true in the realm of amorous relations. There things just happen. . .

One supposes that love will never make any sense to desire. Nor would the act of pointing the camera at one's love denied, a strange emotion if ever there was one. Yet the wonder of it can persevere, as the remaining trace of *I do not understand it!* which first fired the flesh in its unknowable depth. "Wonder is that state in which one recognises that one is not what one is or thought oneself to be," argues Gargani, adding that "it destroys our habitual faith in the *person* to which we ordinarily entrust ourselves, stirring up, as a by-product, a sense of guilt."[9]Duras, too, feels no guilt; her Chinese lover is the equivalent of her virginal body, as yet all on the outside, a secret she wishes to have broken into, but without any of the demand for interiority which is matched by her partner's torment for self-knowledge. Guilt here is, rather, internal to the Chinaman — he *has* to understand why he should be attracted to his own death (he weeps to take her in this manner, when she doesn't love him, nor can she given the real, social taboos which accompany their liason), she understands nothing except the breaking away from herself in her own body (her familial ties to the past: here one might say that the Law of the Father, crucial for the Chinaman, is overwhelmed by the child's mad identification with her mother, who she sees gradually dissolving before her eyes in the tropical ruin of the Mekong delta)— in a series of little 'deaths'. But where there is guilt she can only counter with wonder: "she doesn't feel anything in particular, no hate, no repugnance either, so probably it's already desire". This man momentarily upon her has no qualities, none but his tears, the orgasms which wrack and tear at him, the furniture in the room, the light filtering through the drawn shades, etc.: the body for her is all broken apart. "The sea, formless, simply beyond compare."

The constant temptation with images is to embrace the inner landscape. The same goes for these photos by Bashir Baraki: like the man in search of qualities ("dreadful love" notes Duras), the gay body may well be read as so much meat on hooks — that meat which gets in the way of personal communication, while reducing each participant to a faceless homonomy with loss and the invisibility determined by our civilisation's moral and sexual norms. Inside that landscape, all is luridly clear: *L'Homme au masque de fer,* the royal punishment in velvet and iron for being the "false" twin of those qualities best kept to the right side of the bed. But it is the same man, the same 'qualities' (hence the normality always at risk in alterity). The only difference from the traditional marriage couch is that herein the gay must play the role of both tormentor and victim; he has no historical 'eye' to ordain the figure and place of his desire, no emblem of sacrifice, no orgiastic recourse other than a somewhat futile revolt against his own — and collective — body through a series of automutilations, real or imaginary. Such is our destiny, to

see ourselves in the place of the other (*and against that other* — whereas for woman, she exists to make entire nonsense of any 'othering' at all). The result is a kind of intellectual impotence. Speaking of Troppmann in Bataille's *Blue of Noon,* Allan Stoekl writes that "he can. . .either storm an arsenal or storm a prison, and he prefers the prison even though the arsenal is a much more practical target".[10] It may be that the gay mentality has never really historically encountered the other, remaining imprisoned within itself.

On the other hand, Baraki's butchershop reverie seems to confound this interiorising landscape to which he — and I — undoubtedly belong. How he accomplishes this may ultimately have little to do with that category of the *"informe"* by which such images, following Rosalind Krauss, could be directly compared to, say, the surrealist photography of Jacques-Andrē Boiffard, Raoul Ubac or Man Ray (or, as in the case of his *Lazarus* pictures, and the polaroid *Shroud* 'reworkings', to Lacan's notion of the mirror stage).[11] Unlike Bataille's image of the minotaure, nowhere in Baraki can we truly see "this man/beast blindly wandering the labyrinth into which he has fallen, dizzy, disoriented, having lost his seat of reason — his head. . ."[12] Baraki's meat series is headless, not because the naturalistic gaze is 'wounded' by them (Barthes' "abrupt dive into literal Death"[13]), but effectively because *the gaze as such is not even there;* to be sure, you and I will look at these images, such and such as gaze can always be invoked, though only at the risk of exhausting that wonder which accounts for the resistance of the subject to the "grand immorality of things" around him and which presumably finds its paradigm in a simple, arbitrary click.

Here the absence of the camera is canny (no marks of the academic). No grand passion, no life and death struggle, no precise positioning of light and shade, or of composition either (in sharp contrast to some other work in this exhibition, like the portrait of Beatrice Faust). Nothing in fact looks at us, the shadows are all 'wrong', the focal length shifts ever closer and in direct proportion to the dwindling responsibility one feels to make a judgement about what is seen at any moment. So we in turn have to invent a grid for it; little, patch-worked, inert glimpses of a scenery for which we feel not a shred of guilt or intellectual emotion, coming to it like 'amateurs' in a brothel.

Baraki does not bother to mirror his work rigorously, since he is already quite open to it. This is his gift to us: a sense of wondering harmony with outer experience and the places where we live, which, though never a conclusive gesture, is expansive, fortuitous before the personal self and its traps. As we have seen, when one loves, all is love, even if it is pain and horror. This accounts for the resistances, the tragedy which attends the transfiguration of any subject of 'carnal knowledge'. Baraki knows that to confront or accept the grand immorality is tantamount to judging that things just happen. And to put that into question would be to bring down a crushing, coherent paradigm on our chances of individual freedom.

Without doubt there is a kind of melancholy invested in these images. We wonder at them, but we are perfectly prepared to leave them alone. Here the subject is immersed in circumstance, displaced in a network of accidents, casual possibilities, and chance, however much Mind wills upon it that closure of the traditional, centered being which is hence forth imputed to reality itself. But Baraki is quite

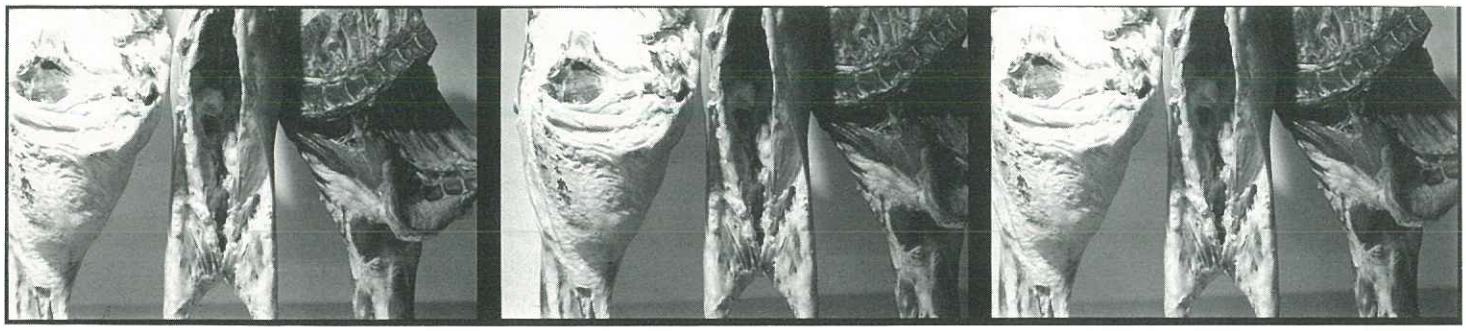
Catalogue No. 20 **The Raising of Lazerus**
Colour Polaroid 27.0 x 27.0 cm
Collection: Mr and Mrs G. Ewin

opposed to this romantic folly: his are not exemplary sketches of that truth which ordinary mortals cannot bear. In the end he realises that life is something that is made, not 'represented'; irrepressible in terms of either sense or nonsense, guilt or salvation. His wonder is to *oscillate,* for "out of inertia, melancholy, and exhaustion grows a resistance to recognising that happening right before our eyes are those very things which we exorcised from real life, relegating them to the realm of impersonal, symbolic representations, refusing to take responsibility for them."[14]

Here again, the 'man without qualities' that is the province of the amateur is alone able to satisfy that sense of wonder we all have, whether in the bedroom or in the gallery, that in this life 'things just happen' — and thus happening — to be.

Notes:

1.	Aldo Gargani,	"The Subject and Wonder", *Differentia: Review of Italian Thought, 1* (Autumn 1986), p. 26. I am endebted to this paper for many of the ideas expressed here.
2.	Roland Barthes,	*Camera Lucida,* trans. R. Howard, New York, Hill and Wang, 1981, pp. 4-5.
3.		*ibid.,* pp. 5-6.
4.		*ibid.,* p.6.
5.		*ibid.,* p. 7. Though Barthes will later fall back on the very sign of Culture he wishes to contest: the Mother-Hole-Death.
6.		See my "Mapplethorpe Aglance", *Photofile* (Spring 1985).
7.		Marguerite Duras, *The Love,* trans. Barbara Bray, Flamingo, 1986, pp. 40-1.
8.	Gargani,	*op. cit.,* p. 29.
9.		*ibid.,* p. 28.
10.	Allan Stoekl,	*Politics, Writing, Mutilation: The Cases of Bataille, Blanchot, Roussel, Leiris, and Ponge,* Minnesota, 1985, p. 5.
11.	See Rosalind Krauss,	"Corpus Delicti", *October, 33* (Summer 1985), pp. 31-72.
12.		*ibid.,* pp. 37-8.
13.		Quoted in Krauss, p. 72; Barthes, *op. cit.,* p. 92.
14.		Gargani, p. 30.



Catalogue No. 26 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
B/w Photograph 8.8 x 40.3 cm

Catalogue

1 **Portrait Of Magda Matwiejew** 1983
Colour photographs
(A) 52.5 x 50.0 cm (B) 51.3 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

2 **Portrait Of Robert Rooney** 1984
Colour photographs
(A) 52.5 x 50.0 cm (B) 51.3 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

3 **Portrait Of Peter Booth** 1983
Colour photographs
(A) 52.5 x 50.0 cm (B) 37.9 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

4 **Portrait Of Bruce Pollard** 1983
Colour photographs
(A) 52.5 x 50.0 cm (B) 51.3 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

5 **Portrait Of Michael Corder** 1984
Colour photographs
(A) 52.5 x 50.0 cm (B) 51.3 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

6 **Portrait Of Beatrice Faust** 1984
Colour photographs
(A) 52.5 x 50.0 cm (B) 51.3 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

7 **Loretta** 1985
Black and white photograph
32.3 x 50.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

8 **Loretta No. 2** 1985
Black and white photograph
49.6 x 39.6 cm
Collection: Max Honigsberg

9 **Loretta No. 1** 1985
Black and white photograph
49.6 x 39.6 cm
Collection: Bruce Pollard

10 **Loretta** 1985
Black and white photograph
40.7 x 60.9 cm
Collection: Augustine Dall'Ava

11 **The Raising of Lazarus** 1982
Colour polaroid
39.9 x 39.4 cm
Collection: Francoise & Lester Levinson

12 **Glenn / Nude Study** 1985
Black and white photograph
50.0 x 32.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

13 **Glenn / Nude Study** 1985
Black and white photograph
49.6 x 39.6 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

14 **Glenn / Nude Study** 1985
Black and white photograph
49.6 x 39.6 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

15 **Glenn / Nude Study** 1985
Black and white photograph
40.7 x 60.9 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

16 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
37.5 x 24.7 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

17 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
35.0 x 22.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

18 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
21.7 x 33.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

19 **Untitled** 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
8.7 x 39.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

20 **The Raising Of Lazarus** 1982
Colour polaroid
27.0 x 27.0 cm
Collection: Mr & Mrs G. Ewin

21 **The Death Of Judas** 1983
Altered colour polaroid
60.3 x 8.9 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

22 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
36.2 x 23.3 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

23 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
34.7 x 27.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

24 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
36.2 x 23.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

25 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
40.6 x 8.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

26 Untitiled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
8.8 x 40.3 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

27 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
33.8 x 27.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

28 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
33.6 x 27.3 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

29 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
34.4 x 27.3 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

30 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photographs
(A) 34.0 x 27.6 cm (B) 11.7 x 11.7 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

31 Untitiled 1/3 1986
Sepia photographs
(A) 34.0 x 27.4 cm (B) 14.1 x 17.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

32 The Shroud 1981-82
Colour polaroid
60.3 x 8.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

33 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
36.2 x 28.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

34 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
27.7 x 34.2 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

35 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
33.6 x 22.2 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

36 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
34.5 x 27.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

37 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
27.1 x 34.1 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

38 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
34.8 x 27.2 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

39 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
33.9 x 27.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

40 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
34.0 x 27.2 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

41 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
34.0 x 27.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

42 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
33.7 x 27.4 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

43 St Sebastian 1983
Altered colour polaroid
8.8 x 80.5 cm
Collection: Kevin McIntyre

44 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
27.2 x 33.7 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

45 Untitled 1/3 1986
Black and white photograph
34.6 x 22.9 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

46 Untitled 1/3 1986
Sepia photograph
27.4 x 34.2 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

47 The Raising Of Lazarus 1986
Colour polaroid
8.8 x 80.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

48 Untitled 1987
Photographic collage
27.5 x 22.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

49 Untitled 1986
Photographic collage
27.5 x 22.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

50 Untitled 1986
Photographic collage
24.0 x 12.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

51 Untitled 1987
Photographic collage
24.0 x 17.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

52 Judas, The Betrayal 1983
Colour polaroid
8.9 x 60.3 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

53 Untitled 1987
Photographic collage
17.5 x 24.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

54 Untitled 1986
Photographic collage
19.0 x 25.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

55 Untitled 1987
Photographic collage
24.0 x 17.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

56 The Raising Of Lazarus 1983
Collage
25.0 x 37.5 cm
Collection: Mr & Mrs John Scully

57 Self Images 1983
Altered colour polaroid
8.8 x 29.3 cm
Collection: Joanne Lee Dow

58 Untitled 1986
Colour polaroid
58.0 x 47.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

59 Untitled 1986
Colour polaroid
8.8 x 59.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

60 The Passion No. 1 1987
Photographic collage
25.0 x 16.8 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

61 The Passion No. 3 1987
Photographic collage
27.8 x 15.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

62 Lebanon 1986
Colour polaroids
35.0 x 26.0 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

63 Foetal Sequence 1 1987
Black and white photographs
14 x 11 cm & 10.5 x 7.5 cm
Courtesy of Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne

Biography

1943	B. Greenville, North Carolina, U.S.A, of Lebanese descent.
1948-52	Educated in Lebanon.
1952	Returned to U.S.A.
1960-62	Studied Petersburg School of Fine Arts, Petersburg, Virginia.
1962-63	Studied Fine Arts (Painting), The Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.
1966	Settled in Christchurch, New Zealand.
1968-70	Head of Art Department, Xavier College, Christchurch, New Zealand.
1972	Lecturer, Visual Arts, Workers Adult Education, Christchurch, New Zealand.
1975-77	Lecturer, Visual Arts, Department of Extension Studies, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
1977-79	Head of Art Department, Sion College, Box Hill, Victoria.
1983	Part-time tutor in creativity for the disabled, Council of Adult Education and full-time artist.
1985	Conceived idea for *The Naked Image,* which opened at the Adelaide Festival, 1986, touring the main centres.
1985	Relieving Head of Creative Arts Department, St John's College, Braybrook, Victoria.

Exhibitions

1966	John Leech Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.
1977-78	The Blake Prize, Sydney.
1979	Australian Galleries, Melbourne (one man).
1980	The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (one man).
1982	The University Gallery, Melbourne University (one man).
1983	Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne (one man).
1985	Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne (one man).
1985	City of Hamilton Art Gallery (one man).
1986	Geelong Art Gallery (one man).
1986	Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne (one man).
1986	Hogarth Gallery, Sydney (one man).
1987	The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, *Bashir Baraki Photographic Survey 1980-87,* curated by Linda Hicks, Melbourne (one man).
1987	Pinacotheca Gallery, *Lebanon Series,* Melbourne (one man).

Public Collections

The Robert MacDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Christchurch Public Library, New Zealand.

The Alfred and Isabel Reed Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts and Antiquated Bibles, Dunedin Public Library, New Zealand.

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston.

Commissions

1974	Main altarpiece for the Sacred Heart Church, Addington, Christchurch, New Zealand.
1975	Main altarpiece and windows for the prison chapel, Paparua Prison, Christchurch, New Zealand.
1977	Painting for the Interdenominational Chapel, for the altar, Arthur's Pass, South Island, New Zealand.

Selected Bibliography

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Cape, P	*New Zealand Painting since 1960 — A Study in themes and developments* Collins, 1979, pp 48 and 86
Crawford, A	*Bashir Baraki Portraits* Tension 7, pp 30-31 1985
Germaine, M	*Artists and Galleries of Australia and New Zealand* Lansdowne, 1979, p 40
Hemensley, K	*Critiques — Photographs by Bashir Baraki* Photofile Vol. 3 No. 2 p. 24 Winter 1985
Hicks, L	*Bashir Baraki: Images/Tight-Ropes* Photofile Vol. 4 No. 2 pp 15-16 Winter 1986
Mau, R	*Biblical Themes in Contemporary Australian Painting* thesis, Melbourne State College, 1978
McCulloch, A	*Encyclopedia of Australian Art* Hutchinson, 2nd Ed., 1984