



Photography
Is a Foreign Language

Philip-Lorca diCorcia

Philip-Lorca diCorcia began to discover his personal artistic voice in the early 1990s. For a year or two he took to the streets of New York City, capturing his family and during the Christmas holidays in 1993 he began to photograph strangers. He was the first to use the camera to document the lives of ordinary people in the city. His work is a blend of the personal and the public, and it is this blend that has made his photography so compelling. He has been called a "street photographer" and a "documentarian," and he has been featured in numerous exhibitions and publications. His work is a testament to the power of the camera to capture the world as it is, and to the power of the artist to see the world in a new way.

Essay by Peter Galassi

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The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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Photography Is a Foreign Language

Peter Galassi

Philip-Lorca diCorcia began to discover his personal artistic voice and his distinctive photographic method—the two are closely linked—in the late 1970s. For a year or two he had been photographing his family, and during the Christmas holidays in 1978 he made a picture of his brother Mario in the kitchen, gazing into the open refrigerator (page 17). The subject was utterly ordinary but the photograph was carefully planned. The camera was on a tripod and the lighting was supplemented by an electronic flash hidden in the refrigerator and triggered at the moment of exposure. DiCorcia leveled the camera, adjusted and readjusted the lighting, made several Polaroid test shots and more than a few exposures, each aiming at the envisioned result. Eventually his method would become more elaborate still, but even this early picture involved a fair bit of preparation, requiring patience from Mario as he played his hungry self.

The experiment worked, transforming the prosaic incident into an enigma. The lower doors are like the curtained wings of a stage; within, everything welcomes our scrutiny. Adopting Mario's probing gaze, we study the plentiful packaged foods and trace the chartreuse tint of the kitchen wall as it loses itself in the wrinkles of Mario's shirt, then reappears in the narrow gap between the refrigerator and its open door. Another open door, in the cabinet above the counter, beckons us but we cannot see inside it any more than we can see what Mario sees. The inexorable description of the static tableau is a psychological vise that tightens our attention on the unexplained drama. Looking at a man searching for a snack, we see a man confronting his failures and longings.

DiCorcia continued to work in this way for the next decade, directing friends and family members in imagined scenarios of everyday life. By conventional photographic standards

the accumulation of successful pictures is not large: fewer than a dozen a year. DiCorcia avoided the serendipity that most photographers court, and he was indifferent to the notion of accumulating "a body of work." He approached each new photograph determined to be in absolute control of its every detail and nuance, from the scripting of the scene to the precise inflection of every murky shadow or shimmering reflection. It was an attitude less common to still photography than to the making of a Hollywood movie, in which dozens of stylists and technicians and assistants might spend a whole day on location for the sake of a single shot.

Without the movies diCorcia would not have made these pictures. One day another writer might chart diCorcia's style and motifs against a map of cinema history, noting, for example, that the flash in Mario's refrigerator recalls the tiny light hidden by Alfred Hitchcock in the possibly poisoned glass of milk that Cary Grant carries upstairs to Joan Fontaine in *Suspicion*. But we do not need such a chart to see that diCorcia's photographs are suspended moments in unfolding narratives—only the conclusion to the story will explain the fragment that we see. Since diCorcia provides only the fragment, we must complete the stories ourselves, investing his pictures with our own dramas and dreams. "The more specific the interpretation suggested by a picture," says diCorcia, "the less happy I am with it."¹

This Rorschach insistence on unlocking the viewer's imagination occasionally has led diCorcia to picture scenes so primal that they read like fables (pages 38, 39, and 41). More often, however, the photographs belong to the here and now. Some of diCorcia's characters are ordinary American types but others are more exotic, especially the suave or aesthetically rumpled Europeans, who seem like figures from art-house movies that the Americans might go to see. Familiar or not, all of them have something at stake. Unaware of the viewer, the solitary figure is absorbed in reflection, poised for a course of action that only he or she can know.

In 1987 photographer Tod Papageorge summarized diCorcia's subject as "the melancholy occupations of those young for whom stepping over a threshold is as significant an act as anything that might occur once they've entered the room in question and started to talk."² On the one hand, the existential reverie of these people might fail to engage us were it not inflected with hints of adventure, romance, and wit. (Gianni's Roman apartment may need repainting but it has a spectacular view of S. Trinità dei Monti [page 29].) On the other hand, the inwardness of diCorcia's characters is often not mere reverie but something graver, which opens to us the inward depths of our own lives.

Still, it is not so much the mood of diCorcia's protagonists as the way they are photographed that makes the pictures dramatic. The play of light, often both natural and artificial, is always an animating presence. The colors and surfaces of things are lavish in the light, full of plea-

sure for the eye. And there are surprises and delights in the details: the cyclops-eye of a camera flash aimed directly at us (page 23); a sleek black dog with mournful eyes, more intriguing than his chic mistress (page 22); the taut wishbone shape a woman's arm makes with its reflection (page 26); a leaning door reduced precisely to its thickness (page 35). Frames within frames—windows and doors and mirrors—are more than elegant markers of a reasoned pictorial space. They enclose the figure in a field of psychological force, lending diCorcia's photographic frame a voyeuristic urgency, as if the unseen viewer, possessing secret knowledge, is in the process of unraveling a mystery.

As a graduate student, just about the time of the Mario picture, diCorcia wrote a thesis in which he opposed two styles of filmmaking. In the first, which he identified with Jean Renoir and François Truffaut, the film acknowledges the breadth of the unseen world beyond the frame. In the second, identified with Fritz Lang and Hitchcock, the film presents a closed world, in which the camera's viewpoint is omniscient, even oppressive. DiCorcia identified his work in still photography with the second.

DiCorcia was not alone in focusing on his immediate world. Many talented young American photographers of the 1970s and 1980s withdrew from photography's far-flung engagements, choosing instead to examine life close to home. For diCorcia, as for others, the choice was a positive expression of the importance of intimate experience; he saw social meaning in the weight of individual lives, viewed as if from within. In fact, despite millions of family snapshots, the outlook was new to advanced photography.³ In diCorcia's case the narrowness of the theme hardly seemed like a limitation because his pictures were so exciting to look at. Their admixture of sensual fact and psychological fiction, of slick convention and fresh perception, was a fascinating artistic invention in and of itself. After a decade of exploring and refining his invention, however, diCorcia quit the world of its making for a larger and more demanding one.

...

Born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1953, diCorcia was first drawn to photography as an undergraduate at the University of Hartford in the early 1970s. After a year or two he transferred to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from which he graduated in 1975. By the time he earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in photography from Yale University in 1979, he had encountered the range of current American photography in a period that boasted a lively diversity of outlook and experiment.

DiCorcia first saw advanced photography through the eyes of an art student. That view involved the painter's habitual indifference to photography's modernist traditions, but by 1970 it also involved an open curiosity about virtually every other branch or function of photography. Around

1960 Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol had seized upon the overabundant accumulation of magazine and newspaper pictures as an inexhaustible repository of American experience. Soon, performance artists turned to photography as a vehicle for extremes of self-revelation. Swinging the avant-garde pendulum in the opposite direction, Conceptual and Minimal artists embraced photography as an aesthetically anodyne tool for their austere investigations. Painting was dead, and from the new ground-zero it seemed that any path might be taken. From the standpoint of today it seems that most of them have been taken, and that many of them have crossed photography.

Once upon a time the art student's aim had been to absorb and then extend an established tradition; by the 1970s the overturning of tradition had become the established aim. The avant-garde had succeeded so well in demolishing the authority of the past that the challenge was no longer to outgrow the master but to find one—to seek out sympathetic precedents that would help define and enrich one's own artistic future. In the fragmented landscape of contemporary art, each artist is obliged to fashion his or her own tradition out of a bewildering diversity of achievement and sensibility.

For some young artists this process is relatively direct—a brief period of exploration followed by a decisive choice—but for others it is highly complex, as it was for diCorcia. His early enthusiasms, for example, included both the Minimalist rigor of Jan Groover (his first art teacher at Hartford) and the confessional extremes of Vito Acconci (whom he did not know). The art that mattered most to him did not always find an immediate echo in his own work, nor was that art limited to the realm of photography, which diCorcia himself embraced only gradually and reluctantly. To chart the tangled roots of the work of any contemporary artist is a chancy business at best. It is all but hopeless in the case of diCorcia, whose breadth of curiosity fed the depth of his mature work.

It is useful, however, to report that for a period in the mid-1970s diCorcia explored a vein of Conceptual photography that had been recently opened by Ed Ruscha, William Wegman, and Robert Cumming. Tinkering with the artless sincerity of the most banal photographs—passport portraits, real estate ads, textbook illustrations—these artists made a world of engaging mischief. The appealing wit of their pseudo-documents and photographic conundrums undermined the presumed reliability of photographic fact, showing that what we see always depends in part on what we expect to see.

DiCorcia soon concluded that his own work in this vein was, in his words, “more clever than complex,” but it is telling that, from his first class with Groover, he had approached the photograph not as a record of experience caught in an instant, but as the product of careful advance planning. With this approach came the Conceptual artist's heightened sensitivity to the implications of every dimension of art making—to decisions and assumptions that might not be directly

evident in the finished work but which helped shape its meaning. The corollary was an equal sensitivity to the crucial role of the viewer, whose expectations complete the meaning of the work, even—or especially—when that meaning involves deflecting those expectations.

This last element of the Conceptual aesthetic was mirthfully exploited in Mike Mandel's and Larry Sultan's *Evidence* (1977), a book of black-and-white glossies collected from the files of schools, laboratories, police departments, and government agencies—just the sort of ordinary documents that Wegman and Cumming had used as models. Stripped of their captions, these unpretentious photographs become mysterious. Nonetheless, they convey the unique flavor of their time and place; indeed, that flavor is all the more salient *because* the pictures are incomprehensible in the ordinary sense. The specific occasion of a photograph is incidental to the cultural messages that almost all photographs carry—messages that the viewer, long in the habit, absorbs without thinking. DiCorcia points out, for example, that the ethos of the Eisenhower era is recorded as fully in the files of advertising and stock-photo agencies as in news photographs of important events.

By drawing attention to photography as a conduit of cultural values, so broadly shared that they are invisible, the Conceptual tradition folded back upon the concerns of Pop art. At least that is one way to describe the artistic ancestry of the Untitled Film Stills that Cindy Sherman began making in 1977.⁴ Casting herself in dozens of B-movie roles, Sherman made fictional recreations of images that were frankly fictional in the first place, neatly encapsulating an artificial culture of femininity. Her playful familiarity with a throwaway genre of photography recalls Ruscha and Wegman, but her sense of the power of pop-icons evokes Warhol. For Sherman, as for diCorcia, photography was a contrivance from the get-go, and all the more deeply rooted in contemporary reality for that very reason.

DiCorcia, like nearly everyone else outside of Sherman's circle of friends, was unaware of her work until 1980 or 1981. By the time she had embarked on her Stills series, he was enrolled in the two-year graduate photography program at Yale. There he encountered a fertile tradition that he had not yet explored in any depth.

In the 1970s art students learned to understand photography as an artifact of popular culture, as a system of representation, and as a ready means of self-revelation. None of these understandings required, in principle, that the artist leave the studio. Walker Evans, who rarely *entered* the studio, had taught at Yale until his death in 1975, and in 1978 Tod Papageorge arrived to take charge of the program. A talented photographer in his own right, Papageorge was a fervent disciple of Garry Winogrand, whose work was in full flower when diCorcia arrived at Yale.⁵ Thanks in part to Winogrand's refusal to explain the content of his work, many critics have labeled him a formalist, that is, an artist preoccupied with the operations of his or her medium. The label must rank among

the most willful misreadings of any major twentieth-century artist; whatever else might be said about Winogrand's work, it is unsurpassed for its voracious curiosity about life at large. Winogrand turned that voracity into a highly self-conscious artistic style but, like Evans before him, he regarded photography primarily as a tool for engaging the inexhaustible reality of experience.

Evans never tired of pointing out that in respect to photography the term "documentary" properly refers not to a claim on moral truth but to an artistic style, based upon the illusion that the photograph is a transparent window on reality: the viewer stands where the photographer once stood. Nevertheless, many prefer to take the illusion for reality, looking right through the picture and seeing only its subject matter: standing there, anyone would have made the same photograph. This die-hard habit, born of endless everyday encounters with photography, renders invisible the artifice of the documentary style. As diCorcia puts it, "photography is a foreign language everyone thinks he speaks."

Photographers do speak it, however, and by the late 1970s the American documentary tradition had accrued a high degree of sophistication. Winogrand and the best of his contemporaries each spoke of the world in a fully personal voice, retaining the outward-looking spirit of reportage but discarding the homogenized vocabulary of photojournalism. This particularity of poetic voice gave force to the photographer's perceptions; it also compelled recognition that, although the subject had been discovered, the sense given to it was an artistic invention. For diCorcia, in other words, the worldly lessons of the documentary tradition came hand in hand with a mature self-knowledge—a deep appreciation of the creative malleability of photography.

By his own account, diCorcia resisted the urgent teachings of Papageorge, at least at first. "It wasn't until later," he recalls, "that I learned how difficult it was to make a Winogrand." In any case, it would be a matter of mechanical and circular reasoning to ascribe the evolution of diCorcia's outlook to his experience at Yale, since it would beg the question of why he had chosen to study there. What is distinctive, and essential to grasping the originality of diCorcia's work, is the degree to which he showed sympathetic curiosity for two divergent understandings of photography. The one, taking the impersonal power of popular and commercial culture as a given, approached photography as a realm of fiction and duplicity. The other, devoted to the authenticity of individual perceptions, approached photography as a way of interpreting experience. In the 1980s, as that divergence evolved into open opposition, diCorcia was making art in the gap between the two.

• • •

After leaving Yale diCorcia continued to make photographs but he was uncertain about making a career of photography. In 1981 he left for Los Angeles, thinking that he might find a job, however

marginal, in the film industry. Soon deciding that his chances were slim, he returned to New York and began working as an assistant to professional photographers. Most of the work was illustration for corporate annual reports, a lucrative branch of commercial photography that demands a high level of technical sophistication and resourcefulness.

Since 1984 diCorcia has earned his living as a freelance magazine photographer, at first for *Esquire* and *Fortune* and more recently for *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Details*, among others. Most of his assignments involve portraits, exotic travel pieces, or illustrations to soft features, so called because they have no news content. An example from the last category is the picture on page 33, one of several made to accompany an article in *Vue* magazine about comfortable, pajama-like clothing, which diCorcia consequently photographed in nighttime settings. It is a rare instance of a professional picture that he is happy to include among his personal work.

This branch of magazine photography is generally less overtly artificial than advertising work, but the job of the photographer is nonetheless to embellish reality with the *frisson* of fantasy—of power and genius, of romance and escape, of vitality and chic. If diCorcia's art alludes to the narrative conceits of the movies, it clearly evokes as well the glossy enticements of the magazines. Consumers and photographers have long shared a conspiratorial knowledge that the artificiality of the magazine world is part of its allure—that the seduction can be all the more delicious if both parties are hip to it, even if the consumer remains blissfully unaware of how the trick was done. DiCorcia's work gives that complicity a new twist by presenting an art of deep feeling wrapped in the shimmering package of consumer culture.

DiCorcia points out that any artist who chooses the medium of photography has been familiar with its wiles and blandishments—from the blare of the billboard to the furtive secrets of pornography—long before he or she ever picked up a camera. DiCorcia adopted the hyped-up vocabulary of commercial photography not in order to judge it but because he recognized it as an essential part of his experience. The same might usefully be said of Cindy Sherman, and of other photographer-artists of the 1980s whose appropriations of popular imagery have been cast so often in narrow moral terms, as an unmasking of villainy.

In the early 1990s diCorcia began to feel a divergence between the routines of his professional career and the independence of his personal aesthetic, but for a decade the relationship between the two had been fruitful if unstable. The professional work had enlarged and honed his craft skills, his income had freed him from seeking to please the bull market of the New York art galleries in the 1980s, and his assignments had drawn him out of the closed personal environment in which his art had first developed. DiCorcia's elaborate method is more suited to the studio than to the street, and the practical challenge of deploying it at large is partly what he had in mind

when he said that his on-location jobs encouraged him "to deal with the world as a photographer." But he also meant that the assignments encouraged him to engage a new range of experience in his art, which is just what he did with the series of pictures that he made in Hollywood between 1990 and 1992. In a paradox worthy of his double-edged aesthetic, diCorcia's career as a merchant of fantasy drew him closer to the sober mission of photography's documentary tradition, for which exploring the world is a first principle.

Just as the romance of commercial photography involves the complicity of its audience, the persuasiveness of documentary realism depends upon the viewer's assumption that the subject is shown as it existed before the photographer came along. If the photographer is perceived to have broken this implied contract by tampering with the subject, the viewer rejects the picture as false. By tampering in just the right way, however, diCorcia found that he could invest his pictures with the enchantment of fantasy without relinquishing the power of fact. If he tipped the delicate balance the picture could easily become absurd or banal, but if he maintained it his pictures could possess both the allure of commercial gloss and the force of the real. The Hollywood series upped the ante on both sides of the scale.

Over a period of two years beginning in 1990 diCorcia traveled repeatedly to Los Angeles to make photographs on a strip of Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood frequented by male prostitutes, drug addicts, and drifters. (The specific circumstances are described on page 50; the pictures appear on pages 51–73.) From one point of view, the project conformed to an established documentary genre, in which the photographer packs his bags, seeks out a foreign way of life (often somewhat disturbing or dangerous as well as exotic), and returns to the conventional world to tell the tale in pictures.

Thanks in part to the paternalistic morality of large-circulation magazines, photographs in this genre too often had been presented not as perceptions of an individual but as expressions of universal truth. And too often they had been presented as not only true but good, as agents of social reform. As a result, the open motive of exploring social life with a camera had become encumbered with the burdensome expectation that photography could make the world better. In reaction, a wariness of moral pretension became a hallmark of advanced American photography in the 1960s. DiCorcia had inherited that wariness, which is partly why he had confined his earlier work to his personal world. Photographing on Santa Monica Boulevard meant engaging a social reality foreign to his own experience. Moreover, it was a highly charged reality, since by 1990 male prostitutes and drug addicts had been recognized as those most susceptible to AIDS, and most likely to transmit the virus.

Of course, traveling to Hollywood also meant setting out for the dream factory —

the magnetic center of American longing for mobility and success, where people come young to make it in the business of fantasy. It was diCorcia's premise that those who don't make it are as much products of that longing as those who do, and therefore just as well suited to sit for America's portrait. In itself this was not new; documentary photography is full of down-and-out types. What was new was the parallel between the creative subterfuge of diCorcia's style and the modus operandi of his subjects. Having failed to achieve their dreams, the hustlers of Santa Monica Boulevard found themselves selling themselves as dreams to others. If he was exchanging the hothouse dramas of domestic life for a dose of hard-nosed reality, it was a reality saturated with fantasy.

As before, diCorcia deliberately staged his photographs but limited his interventions to rearranging the material at hand. The hustlers are described as creatures of their environment — the anonymous kitsch of motel rooms and the no-man's land of the strip, with its parking lots and fast-food joints. DiCorcia did show a new readiness, however, to push his inventions beyond the pale of plausibility. In one picture a well-muscled torso, seen through a scrim of red gauze, is an ethereal apparition (page 66). In another, a manic guffaw is projected on the bedroom wall as a ghoulish profile, while on the bedside table a lampshade sits apart from its lamp, improbably illuminated from within (page 64). In a third picture a blond surfer seated on stone steps that lead nowhere inexplicably displays a *Playboy* centerfold — to whom? (page 62). Yet these hyperbolic scenarios are of a piece with the desperate fantasies of diCorcia's Hollywood world.

The elaborate artifice of diCorcia's photographs keeps us from reading the series as an earnest document of a Hollywood street culture. All the same, the series does give us a picture of a world, as complete and persuasive as any one we know from a traditional documentary project, and as moving. Renouncing the pretext of realism, diCorcia nevertheless preserves the poetic claims of fact. Or, perhaps, the poetry of his Hollywood pictures derives from their theatricality, since the appeal to our feelings comes not as a moral lesson but as an invitation to imagine ourselves into the lives of others. It is not a surprise that we should accept the invitation. The surprise is that this touchstone of the old documentary tradition should be rediscovered so powerfully in the high artifice of photography's new hybrid fictions. Distant as they are from the figures of diCorcia's domestic world, his Hollywood protagonists express a grave sadness that recalls the emotional core of his earlier work.

The Hollywood series exploded the domestic confines of diCorcia's art but it left intact the stylistic envelope of his pictures and the constricting demands of the method that produced them. DiCorcia had been conscious for some time that his method limited the range of how his pictures could look and of the subjects they could accommodate. In 1993 he set out to expand that range by working in the city street and forgoing the *auteur's* control over his characters. After

finding what seemed like a propitious spot, he would plant his tripod and deploy his hidden flashes, setting a pictorial trap for unsuspecting passersby (frontispiece and pages 43–48). The flash remained a key element—like the crescendo of violins that announces the crux of a movie’s drama—but the action, for the first time, was unpredictable.

For half a century—from Henri Cartier-Bresson to Robert Frank to Garry Winogrand—the open theater of the street had been a favored hunting ground for photography. The photographer’s cloak of anonymity and freedom of action and the street’s smorgasbord of character and incident together made an arena of seemingly endless artistic opportunity. After Winogrand’s death in 1984, however, the arena was all but abandoned; diCorcia’s own retreat to the domestic world was symptomatic of a broad trend in which even those younger photographers who most admired Winogrand’s example declined to pursue it. It is too early to know what diCorcia will make of this untended legacy, but photography has none more potent.

Notes

1. This and other quotations are drawn from the author’s conversations with diCorcia in 1993 and 1994.
2. In a letter of recommendation to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
3. The phenomenon is surveyed in Peter Galassi, *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991).
4. See Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills*, with an essay by Arthur C. Danto (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).
5. See Garry Winogrand, *Public Relations*, introduction by Tod Papageorge (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977).



Mario. 1978



Mario. 1981



Auden and Emma. 1989



Max. 1983



Catherine. 1981



Mary and Babe. 1982



Sergio and Totti. 1985



Catherine. 1981



Francesco. 1985



Teresa. 1990



Davide. 1985



Madras. 1988



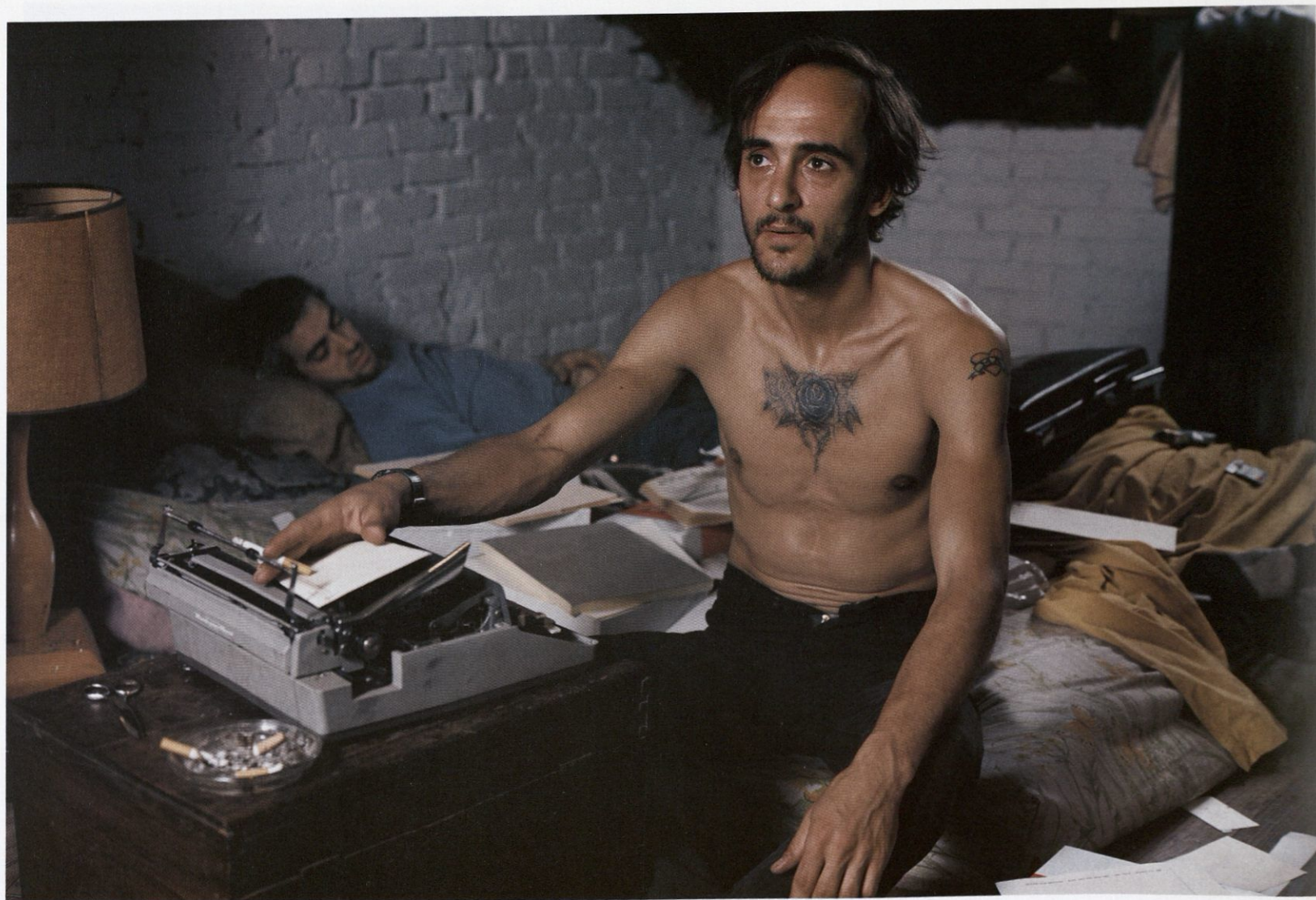
Gianni. 1984



Igor. 1987



Alice. 1988



Bruce and Ronnie. 1982



Kitty. 1985



Auden. 1988



David. 1990



Mink. 1990



Brian. 1988



Noemi. 1989



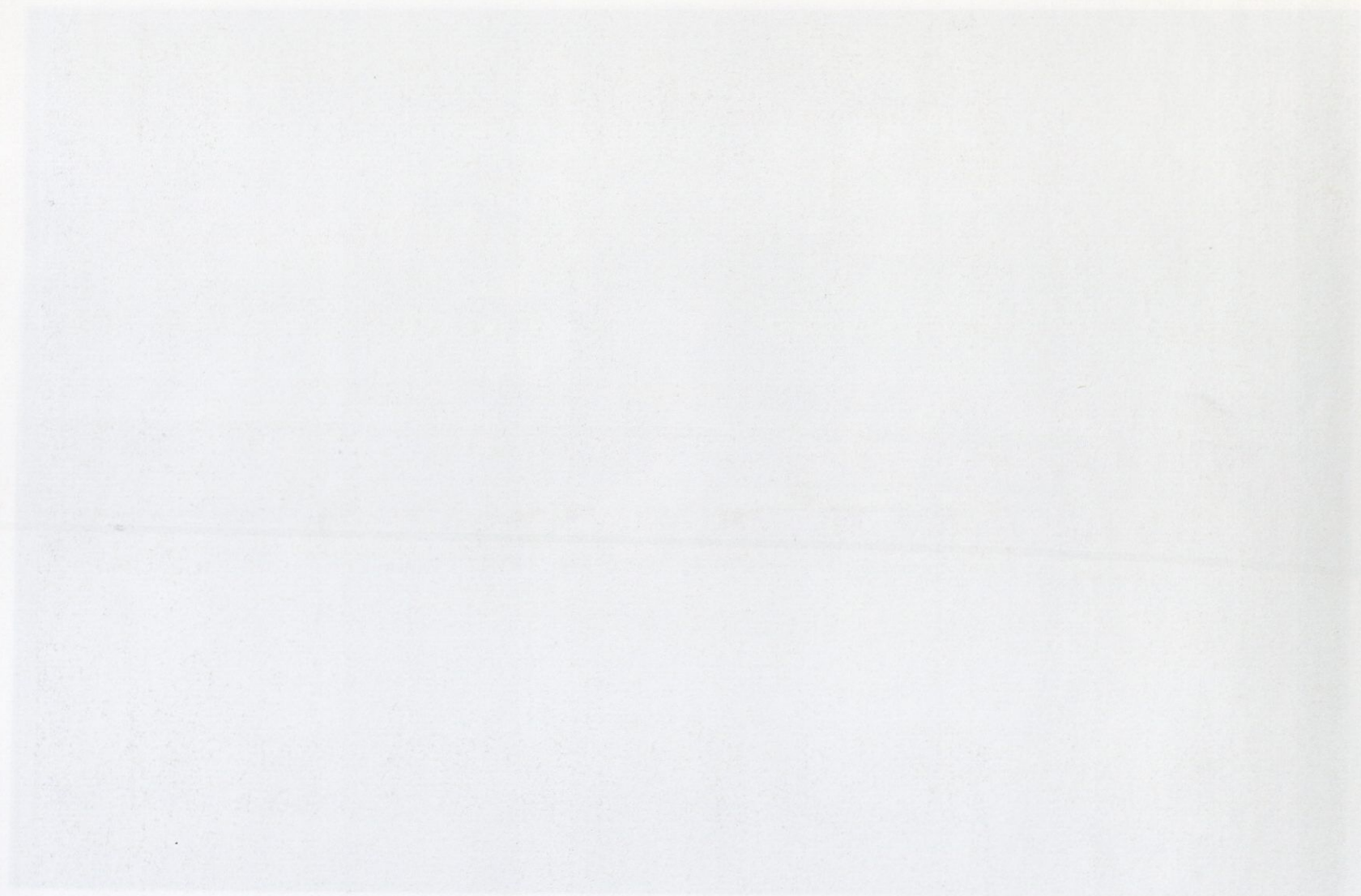
Tim. 1990



Vittorio. 1989



Bruno. 1993



New York. 1993



New York. 1993



Naples. 1995



Los Angeles. 1993



New York. 1993



Tokyo. 1994

Hollywood 1990–1992

In 1989 diCorcia won a third artist's fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA recently had come under attack for supporting several artists and photographers, notably Robert Mapplethorpe, whose work was denounced as obscene by Senator Jesse Helms and other right-wing political leaders. Helms objected to the explicit homosexuality of some of Mapplethorpe's pictures, and for both those who attacked the photographer and those who defended him the argument was intensified by the AIDS epidemic, from which Mapplethorpe died in March 1989. Whatever their own opinions of Mapplethorpe's work, few artists at the time felt unconcerned by the ugly attacks upon him and the NEA.

For some time diCorcia had been considering how he might extend the range of his work beyond his intimate world. The NEA controversy helped to galvanize his determination to do so, in part because the conditions of the grant included the onerous obligation to sign a document stating that work made on the fellowship would not be obscene.

DiCorcia had never before conceived his pictures in the form of a coherent series, but in 1990 he embarked on an ambitious project framed precisely as such. He began a series of trips to Los Angeles to photograph on and near Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood, in an area frequented by male prostitutes, drifters, and drug addicts. Working with an assistant, he prepared the scene of each picture in advance, left the assistant in charge of the equipment, then sought men on the street whom he would offer to pay to appear in the photograph. Beyond the fact that every man who appears in the Hollywood series accepted money in return for posing for the picture, diCorcia could not be certain that each was, in fact, a prostitute. In any case, the pictures were deliberate fictions. Nevertheless, diCorcia welcomed the symbolic opportunity to distribute part of his grant money to people whose behavior was unlikely to please Senator Helms.

DiCorcia asked each man for his name, age, and place of birth and titled each picture with the answer, followed by the amount of the payment. In a manner typical of the hybrid character of diCorcia's work, the titles evoke both the factual reporting of the newspaper caption and the uninflected notations of Conceptual art.



Todd M. Brooks; 22 years old; Denver, Colorado; \$40



Robert "Sparky" Anderson; 47 years old; Detroit, Michigan; \$25



Brent Booth; 21 years old; Des Moines, Iowa; \$30



Ralph Smith; 21 years old; Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; \$25



Gerald Hughes (a.k.a. Savage Fantasy); about 25 years old; Southern California; \$50



Christian Valentino; 23 years old; Ontario, California; \$25



William Charles Everlove; 26 years old; Stockholm, Sweden, via Arizona; \$40



Unknown



Mike Miller; 24 years old; Allentown, Pennsylvania; \$25



"Candy" Robert Randall; 25 years old; Lynwood, California; \$30



Michael Jenson; 19 years old; Dallas, Texas; \$20; and Jerry Imel; 18 years old; Wichita, Kansas; \$20



Edward Earle Windsor; 20 years old; Atlanta, Georgia; \$30



Roy; "in his twenties"; Los Angeles, California; \$50



Kevin Gordon; 37 years old; Oakland, California; \$40



Joe Whitman; 24 years old; Los Angeles, California; \$25



Joe Reeves; 37 years old; San Fernando, California; \$40



Chris; 28 years old; Los Angeles, California; \$30



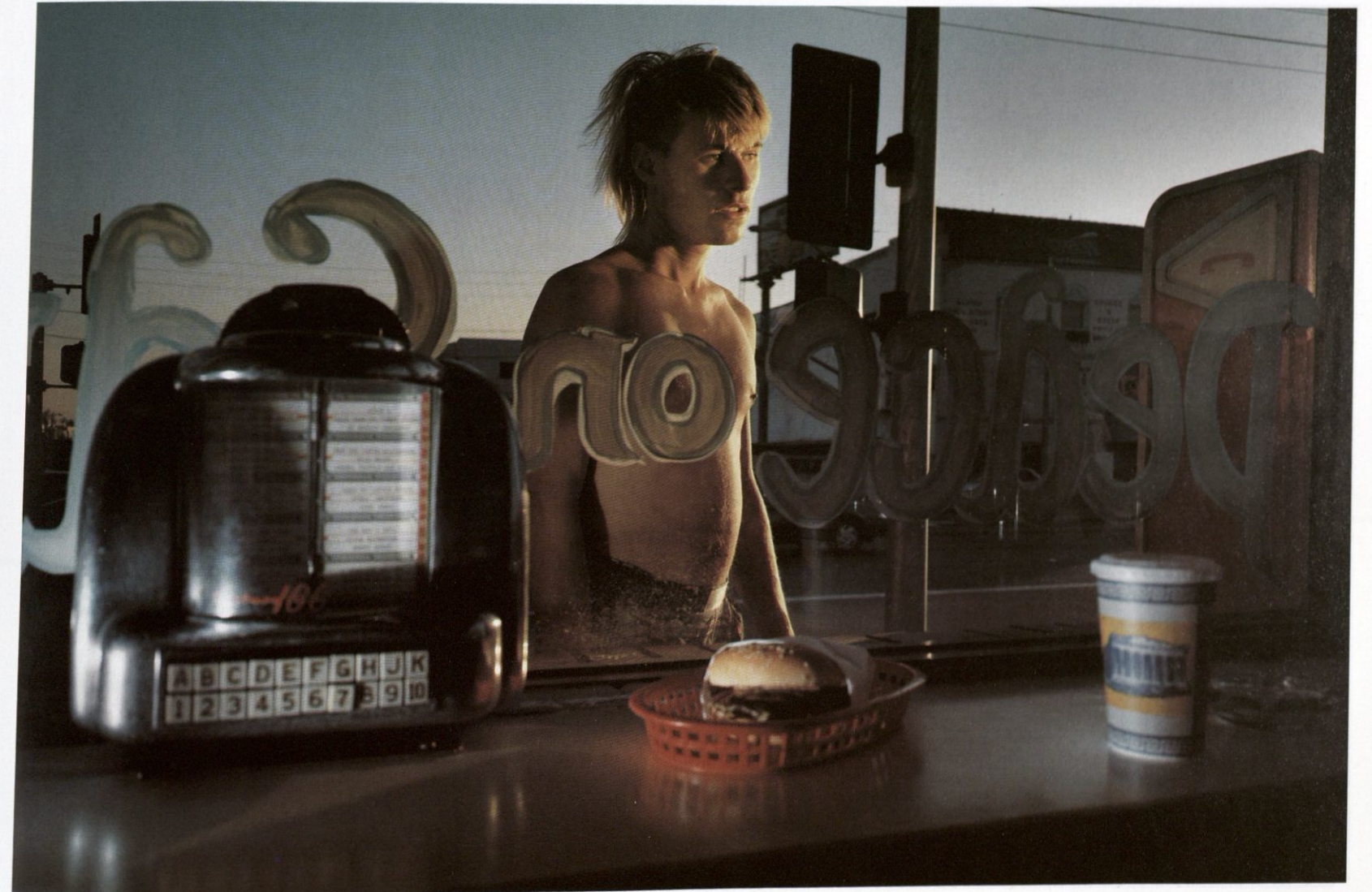
Ken Waters; 28 years old; Atlanta, Georgia; \$30



Ike Cole; 38 years old; Los Angeles, California; \$25



Marilyn; 28 years old; Las Vegas, Nevada; \$30



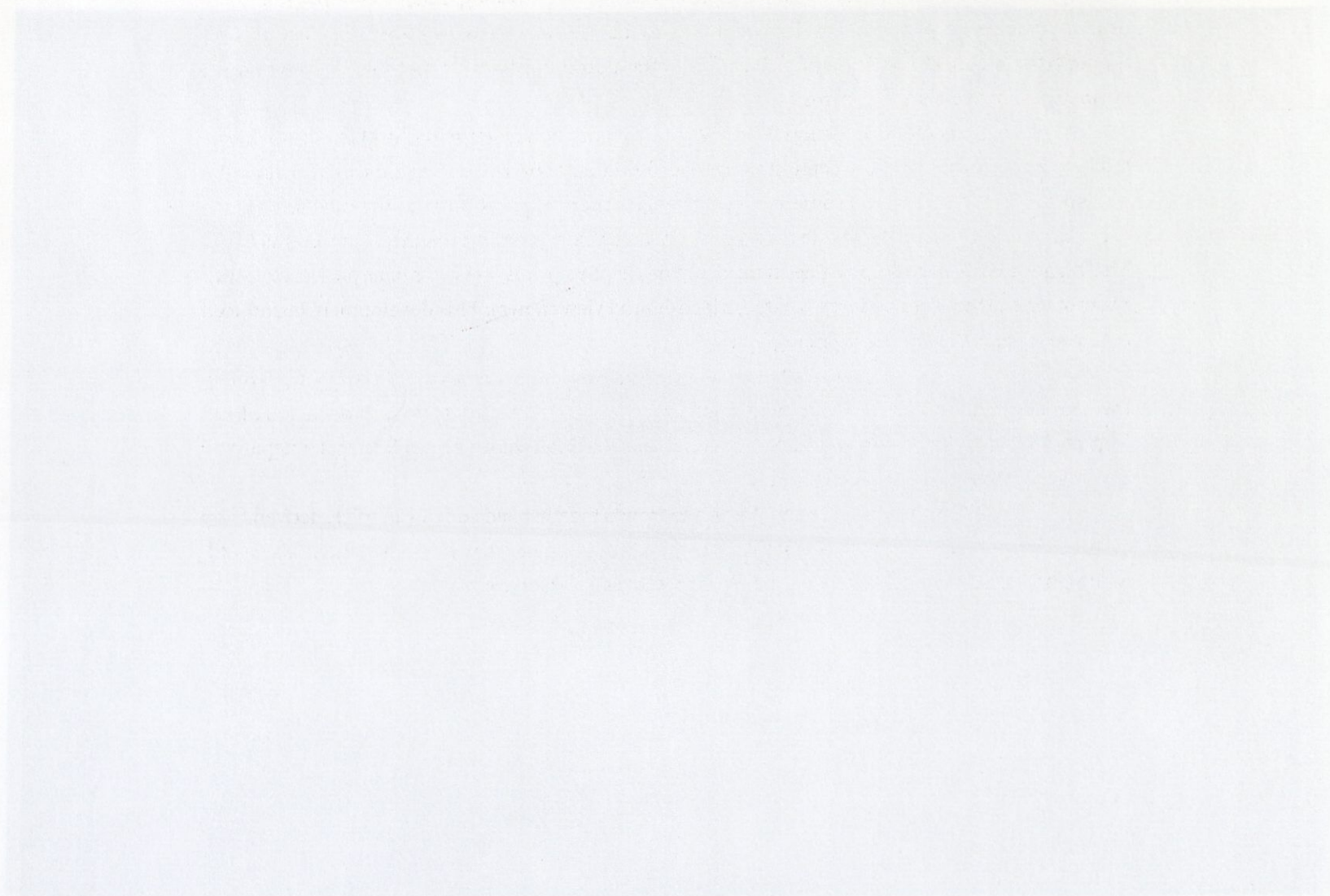
Eddie Anderson; 21 years old; Houston, Texas; \$20



Major Tom; Kansas City, Kansas; \$20



André Smith; 28 years old; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; \$30



A Note on the Prints

The reproductions in this book have been made directly from the photographer's chromogenic color prints, generally made on Kodak Ektacolor paper. Each image measures approximately 15 x 23 inches (38 x 58 cm). DiCorcia made all but a few of them from medium-format color negatives measuring 2 1/4 x 3 1/2 inches (6 x 9 cm).

For decades following World War II, advanced photographers had favored the hand-held, 35-mm camera, gladly accepting a degree of blur and grain in exchange for maneuverability and speed. In the mid-1970s some younger photographers began to turn to the medium-format camera, which still could be held in the hand but which yielded a negative nearly four times as large. The bigger negative made possible more richly descriptive prints, closer in sharpness and continuity of tone to those derived from a large, tripod-bound view camera. This development introduced a new sensuality to hand-held photography.

Initially the new aesthetic was confined to black and white. Artist-photographers traditionally had disdained color as vulgar and commercial. In the mid-1970s, however, thanks to improvements in the quality and ease of materials for making positive prints from color negatives, a new generation of photographers began to see the world in color.

DiCorcia's craft brought these two trends together and added the spice, derived from commercial photography, of strategically placed electronic flashes. Earlier he had made black-and-white photographs but as a mature artist he has worked solely in color.