

BILL ARNOLD: ITEK PRINTS

September 5 – October 10, 2009

Opening reception, September 5, 5 – 8 pm

Joseph Bellows Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of photographs by Bill Arnold. The exhibition will be on view from September 5th through October 10th, 2009. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, September 5th (5-8 pm).

Since the 1960s Bill Arnold has pursued photography as a means of personal expression by documenting the world around him. With his camera, Arnold finds poetry in common everyday occurrences and seemingly prosaic observations. A carton of sour cream on a table, a lone Easy Chair in a field, a radiator framed in a window are all subjects Arnold has found worthy of documenting. Arnold says, " I think the job of the artist is to cheer for life in all its parts. Nothing left out. Nothing exalted. No attempt to improve. Only to show something be it tragedy, ecstasy or buffoonery. We are part of a million, million year process and the artist's job is to celebrate being part of it." His photographs are imbued with a spirit of observation and discovery and show us beauty in the everyday and mystery in the mundane.

Bill Arnold's photographs also represent a unique and creative technological innovation in the photographic printing process. In 1970 Arnold became fascinated with a microfilm reading machine manufactured by the Itek Corporation. The Itek machine was designed to view microfilm on a large desktop monitor and could also produce instant prints up to twenty-four inches wide, from microfilm, using a photographic stabilization process. As a photography teacher at the San Francisco Art Institute, Arnold saw the machine as potential teaching tool, where students could take pictures and produce prints all within one class period. In order to make prints from 35mm negatives, Arnold had to make some modifications to the Itek machine, as it was designed to print from microfilm. He eventually designed, and patented, a vacuum easel for the machine which allowed the full gray scale to be printed, producing prints similar in quality to ones that could be achieved in a traditional darkroom.

Outside of the classroom, Arnold began using the Itek machine in his personal work. Combined with a Bell & Howell 35mm half-frame camera, which produced seventy-two pictures on a thirty-six exposure roll, the Itek printer allowed Arnold a more immediate connection between the creation, evaluation, and critique of his own photographs. Equally as innovative in his use of the Itek machine was Arnold's idea about the public display of his work. In 1973, he organized *The Boston Bus Show*, in which he display one-thousand of his Itek prints on the interior advertising space of forty-four Boston city buses. He later organized a similar show in New York City that included his and other photographers' work.

In a 2002 interview, when asked if there are any contemporary photographers she liked, renowned photographer Helen Levitt said, "I like Bill Arnold's work very much. Bill has a great eye. He sees things I don't see, that I wouldn't see. He sees things everywhere he goes; he doesn't have to go out on the street - wherever he is, he looks carefully, and he gets the most extraordinary pictures."

Bill Arnold received his B.A. from San Francisco State College in 1963 and his M.F.A. in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1970. His photographs are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art among others.

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