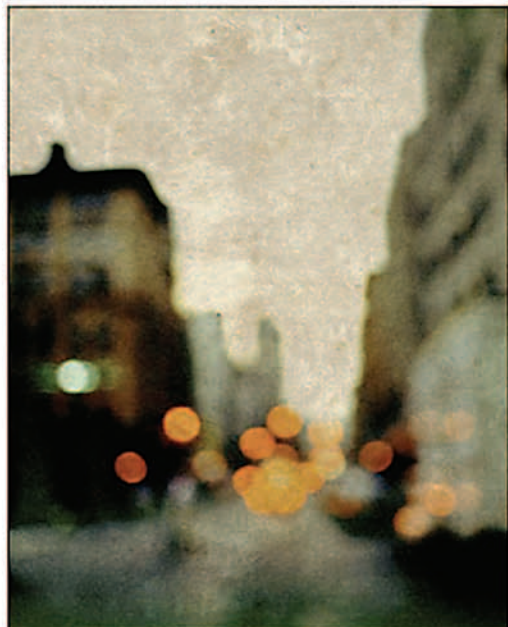


double exposure

New Path Taken—An Interview with Marc Yankus

By Robert A. Schaefer, Jr. | Dec 1, 2007

All Images © Marc Yankus



City, 1999

Several years ago I met Marc Yankus through our mutual friend Rikki Reich, whom I interviewed earlier in the year with her partner Dan Contrino. At the time Marc was working very successfully as a commercial photographer, using his images to design posters for Broadway plays as well as book jackets for popular novels. However, Marc felt that many of the images he had worked on over a twenty-year period were not of an illustrative quality and should be publicly experienced in the realm of fine art. We talked about potential galleries and ways to promote this direction. Today, the Clampart Gallery in the Chelsea District of New York City represents Marc, and he is working on many directions of imagery and diverse projects. Recently, I was in his home/studio in the West Village of Manhattan in New York City with him and his two cats, Monkey and Peanut, to discuss some of the images and projects.

Robert Schaefer: Tell us about your background. Have you always been interested in art?

Marc Yankus: I was born in Hempstead on Long Island in New York and grew up in a section of it called Hewlitt Harbor. At age 11, after my parents divorced, my family that was my mother, sister, brother and myself moved to Manhattan's Upper East Side. My mother was very interested in fine art and often took me to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which was actually close to where we lived. Since the Met is located in Central Park, I loved the combination of art and nature, and I remember constantly delving into this

during a schoolteachers' strike, which lasted two whole weeks. In the Early American Wing at the Met I often escaped into the 1700's. During such time travels I took sketchbooks and drew. I also liked to draw on the subway and around New York. Later I attended the high school of Art and Design on Second Avenue and 52nd Street where I had to submit a portfolio of my artwork and take a test to get accepted. Even with my love of drawing, it was at this high school that I became interested in photography. I remember being mesmerized while watching an image appear in the developer. Besides darkroom processes, I also learned about 35mm and 4" x 5" format cameras. I was particularly interested in surrealism and the manipulation of scale and remember going up on a roof of a building to distort the scale of some of the images I was shooting.

RS: Did you continue to study photography in college?

MY: I attended the School of Visual Art in Manhattan and majored in fine art meaning painting and drawing. I only took one semester of photography. In my second to third year at SVA, I was sick and bedridden. During this time I began to make collages, which were influenced by those of Joseph Cornell.

RS: What happened with these collages?

MY: I continued them after I became well and showed them at a gallery in Manhattan as well as in a group exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Also, *The New York Times* commissioned me to illustrate various articles, and I started to use photographs I had taken to make the collages. In looking at the large body of photographs I had taken to make my collages over a period of time, I realized that I had become a photographer. Currently, my work is divided into collaging images for commercial venues like book covers and theater posters and using the more straightforward images for my personal work. During the last ten years I have particularly concentrated on color, shape and texture.



Highway by Fenway Park, 2004

RS: You have done so well in commercial photography. Why did you want to pursue art photography?

MY: I wanted to create my own content and the freedom to explore a deeper layer of myself through imagery and find what was unique about me as a human being. I feel that the fine art of photography has allowed me to do that.

RS: Has the road into fine art been worth the effort?

MY: Yes, definitely. The more I work in fine art, the more I have to explore and uncover.



Caitlin at the Factory, 2005

RS: What has been your most positive experience in the realm of fine art?

MY: While working on my new series on the computer, I recently had to leave my studio to attend a concert. Outside while walking down a street, I realized that I was inside my own imagery as I noticed the shapes and lights of buildings in New York. I was terribly excited by this feeling. Outside was inside and vice versa.

RS: Some of your imagery falls into what I would call "new objectivity," which was very popular in the 1920's in Germany ("Neue Sachlichkeit" as seen in some of the work by Otto Dix, George Grosz, Max Beckmann and Christian Schad). It has a sense of industrialism with brick as a material often incorporated. In the United States this direction is seen in the photography of Charles Sheeler. How did this happen?

MY: Certainly I have been inspired by the German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher as well as drawings of industrial scenes. Putting Caitlin in front of the factory in New Jersey to create "Caitlin at Factory" was something, which interested me, possibly as a result of these influences, but now that I have done it, I want to explore it further.

RS: Besides Caitlin, a lot of your imagery has children and young teenagers. Has working with them been difficult? Was there any problem in getting

permission from their parents?

MY: I find it very comfortable working with kids. I respect them as young people, and I think they realize that and open up to me for the shoot. I haven't had problems getting permission from parents. I have approached the parent, given them my website and then asked them to get in touch with me.

RS: Where do you see your work going in the future?

MY: As I continue to work with portraiture, I plan to explore this direction of New Objectivity. Also, I have started a new body of cityscapes, which are more abstract and painterly than my earlier cityscapes. And I am working on a book and enjoying the process of editing and the juxtaposition of images in it.

RS: I look forward to seeing it.

To see more of Marc Yankus's images at the Clampart Gallery click on:

<http://www.clampart.com/artists/yankus/yankus.htm>

Marc Yankus's Website: <http://www.marcyankus.com>



James at 11, 1999