

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

ON PHOTOGRAPHY | By William Meyers

## Camera Worship: Religion, Music and News



Above, Henry Horenstein's 'Wanda Behind the Bar' (1974); below, Noel Jabbour's 'Epiphany, Jordan River' (2000) at Andrea Meislin.

### A Prayer Is a Prayer

◆ **Andrea Meislin Gallery**  
534 W. 24th St., (212) 627-2552  
Through Oct. 13

The essays in "The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics," edited by Peter L. Berger, lay out the growing role religion plays in contemporary affairs. The pictures in the inaugural exhibition in Meislin's new gallery space would serve to illustrate Mr. Berger's 1999 book. The 22 images by 19 photographers show people at prayer in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples in countries around the globe.

And not only in regular places of worship. Angela Strassheim's "Untitled (McDonalds)" (2004) looks in through the window of the restaurant to a family of six saying grace. They all hold hands and

bow their heads, except for the older girl who looks away with a somewhat lost expression. In Pentti Sammallahti's moody "Untitled (Man by Cross)" (1978), a young man crouches to stare at a wooden cross stuck in a rock cairn while in the field behind him a couple with walking sticks trudges along. Sebastiao Salgado has thousands bowed down in prayer in "Mosque, Jakarta, Indonesia" (1996/2002), but Blake Eskin has a single bearded young Muslim with an open book on a New York subway in "Morning Prayer, 3, Eastern Parkway" (2011). Hasidic Jews celebrate Lag BaOmer with a picnic in the woods in Barry Frydender's "The Blessing" (2005), and a soldier stands on a tank saying his morning prayers while black smoke rises in the background of Rina Castelnovo's "Gaza Border" (2009).

Take note, Prof. Dawkins.

### Henry Horenstein: Honky Tonk: Portraits Of Country Music

◆ **ClampArt Gallery**  
531 W. 25th St., (646) 230-0020  
Through Oct. 13

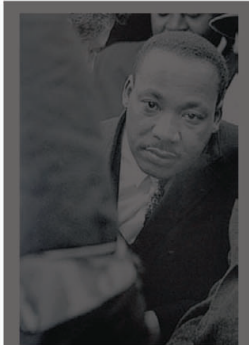
It is probably appropriate that "Honky Tonk" is in the back room at ClampArt, given country music's elusive presence in New York. But Henry Horenstein's 17 black-and-white pictures shot in the 1970s take us to places where the music is indigenous, and show us the performers, the audience, the bartenders and the joints that are its ambience. There is an unpolished aspect to the pictures as there is to much of the music but, I suspect, in both instances the quality is a product of artifice.

The 1967 Chrysler New Yorker in "Ponderosa, Near Pikeville, Kentucky" (1974) was a nifty car when new, but it sits in the gravel parking lot of a cinderblock roadside joint with its hub caps missing and its sculptured side filthy. Many of Mr. Horenstein's people look hard worked, too. "Patron (1), Hillbilly Ranch, Boston, Massachusetts" (1972) leans wearily on his table, a pack of Kools on the checkered tablecloth. The woman sitting in a banquetette covered with graffiti in "Last Call, Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, Nashville, Tennessee" (1974), wears a faux leather faux Indian vest, and holds up a can of Pabst; of course, Pabst. There are informal pictures of Waylon Jennings, Minnie Pearl, Loretta Lynn, Jerry Lee Lewis and Dolly Parton, "The Queen of Country Music." Ms. Parton's baroque pile of very blonde hair is a country-music icon.

### Benedict J. Fernandez: A Life's Work

◆ **Robert Anderson Gallery**  
24 W. 57th St., (646) 455-0393  
Through Oct. 19

Mr. Anderson has mounted a sampling of work from Benedict J. Fernandez's long career in photojournalism. Mr. Fernandez (b. 1936) does not belong to a photo agency and does not shoot on assignment. He selects his projects and, since

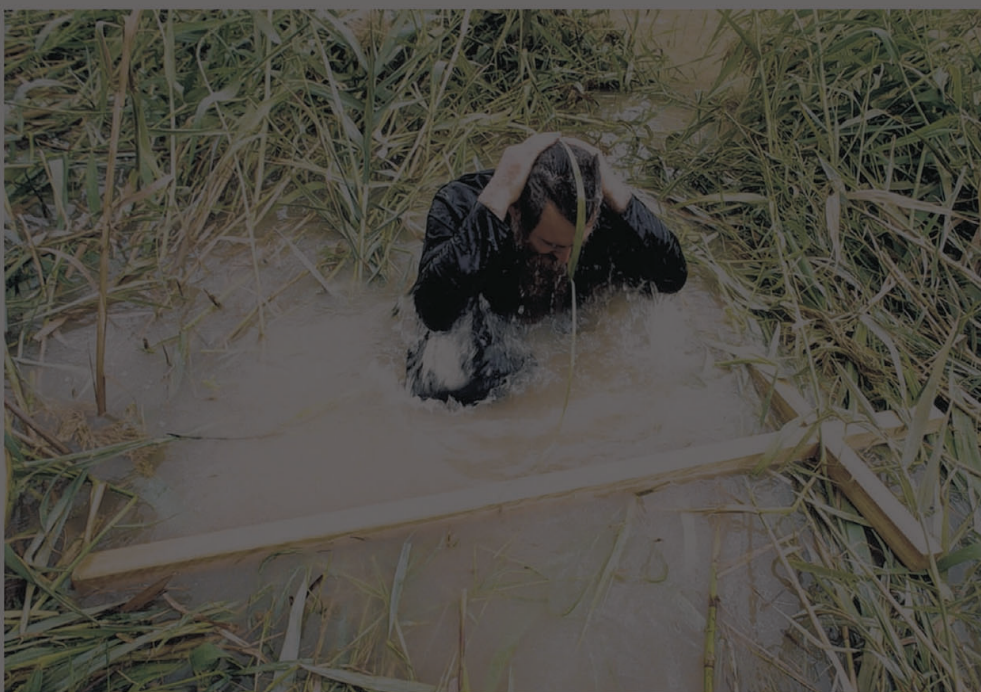


Benedict J. Fernandez photo of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967

he is not working against a deadline, works on them until he is satisfied; as a consequence, his pictures frequently have an art photography quality. Unlike much photojournalism that simply records an event, Mr. Fernandez creates images that distill its essence.

The top half of "Wall Street, New York City" (1970) is dominated by a fluttering American flag, but the scene beneath Old Glory is one of strenuous conflict as hard-hat construction workers battle police during a demonstration in support of U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam. The flag is backlit and light glances off the police helmets and the demonstrators' hard hats, charging the image with vitality. Mr. Fernandez shot both pro- and antiwar demonstrations, as well as actions in favor of, and against, the civil-rights movement. In one a young boy with blonde hair and a crew cut holds a sign that says, "Who Needs Niggers"; there is a swastika in the middle of his placard. Mr. Fernandez took many pictures of Martin Luther King Jr.; in one taken in New York in 1967 King's face exhibits somber determination. In another, taken in Georgia in 1968, his young daughter wears an expression of astonishment at seeing her father in his coffin.

Mr. Meyers writes on photography for *The Wall Street Journal*. See his work at [www.williammeyersphotography.com](http://www.williammeyersphotography.com).



Top: Henry Horenstein/ClampArt, New York City; top right: Benedict Fernandez/Robert Anderson Gallery; above: Noel Jabbour/Andrea Meislin Gallery