



## View Masters

Walker Evans, the great midcentury American-scene photographer, once composed a list of photographic subjects:

...Architecture, American urban taste, commerce, small scale, large scale, clubs, the city atmosphere, the street smell, the hateful stuff, women's clubs, fake-culture, bad education, religion in decay.

The Movies.

Evidence of what people of the city read, eat, see for amusement, do for relaxation and not get it,

Sex.

Advertising, A lot else, you see what I mean.

Evans' omnium-gatherum tradition of street photography continues today, aided substantially by the digital revolution, which makes both shooting and disseminating images faster and cheaper—and by the acceptance in the 60s and 70s of photography as a fine-art form. Stanford Art Spaces is pleased to announce that its final exhibits for 2015 (November 16, 2015, through January 15, 2016) will feature the urban photography of **Jon Rendell** of San Francisco, **Joshua Smith** of Pacifica, and **Maurice Stevens** of Stanford.

### **Jon Rendell, *San Francisco Obscura***

Rendell, born in Australia to “an auteur/photog family,” was given a Brownie camera when he was eight, and learned traditional darkroom craft in college, switching to digital in 1999, a few years after moving to California. His mastery of composition and tone—and his eye for the absurd and incongruous juxtapositions of the urban scene as well as stunning lyrical landscapes—are evident in his widely published and exhibited images. The critic Gary Catalano wrote: “His splendidly composed images of European places (Italian museums, for the most part) all respect their subject and convey the sense of a world being seen for the first time.” Rendell: “I’m captivated by light and shadows. I find myself hard-wired to focusing on the transitory, abstract shapes that come and go with the available light.” Now living in San Francisco, Rendell has focused both on the private domain, in his 2013 25’ *RADIUS* series, still lives shot in natural light inside his apartment, and the public environment, in his 2015 *Is This Frisco?* Series, a yearlong blog series, one shot posted per day, of his peripatetic rambles around town, with historical context and technical notes—a deserving book project, with images that transcend postcard clichés (<http://isthisfrisco.tumblr.com>). Forty of those San Francisco photos included in this show. JonRendell.com.

## **Joshua Smith, *Places You Know***

If Rendell combines graphic punch and humor, the more conceptually oriented Smith opts for a slower, meditative effect; his work asks the viewer to create through imagination the connections between everyday surroundings that are not inherently dramatic, or immediately meaningful—the antidramatic 1960s New Topographics work of Lewis Baltz comes to mind—although Smith’s cropping transforms them into strong abstractions that ‘talk’ to each other and the viewer. W.G. Sebald, wrote: “The present falls forward and backward — receding, breathing — at the bottom of a glacial sea .... The earth is a map.” Smith’s three series, *Paris*, *Places You Know*, and *Things You Know Have Changed*, each comprising six to thirteen separate photos, map “the surfaces and spaces of the mundane.... These images affirm the photograph’s ability to diffuse, transform, and redirect meaning. Through a meticulous examination of this banal visual matter, these objects and surfaces become elevated to a level of scrutiny they are not typically permitted.... The viewer is encouraged to enter into this conversation of the ordinary, reflecting upon a shared perceptual existence.” JoshSmithPhoto.com.

## **Maurice Stevens, *Vedute***

*Vedute*, (veh-DOO-tay) the Italian word for views, and a name commonly given to suites of etchings and engravings published in the Renaissance to herald “the grandeur that was Rome.” Stevens has made numerous trips to northern Italy—Venice, Udine (though not Rome, yet)— in search of the antique, and, occasionally, sublime and eternal—and sedulously avoiding the postcard views. His telephoto shots, printed on silk, of classical figures adorning the cornices of Renaissance palazzo and of the narrow alleyways separating them, immerse the viewer in the art and architecture of a culture that always cared about aesthetics. Orson Welles’ famous comparison between Italian creativity (ignoring the Machiavellian skullduggery and machinations) and Swiss practicality (as embodied in the cuckoo clock) remains. Don’t miss Stevens’ views of Bryce Canyon, too: architecture without architects.

There will be a **reception** for the artists on **Thursday, November 19, from 4:30 to 7:00pm**, in the foyer of the Paul G. Allen Building. The adjacent David W. Packard Electrical Engineering Building will be open as well.

**Parking** at all university lots and parking structures is free after 4:00. The Via Ortega Parking Structure (formerly Parking Structure 2, entry on Panama Street) is closest. The **Cantor Arts Center** and the **Anderson Collection at Stanford**, only a block away, are open until 8pm on Thursday nights; free admission to both. Those wishing to visit these museums may wish to park in the street lots in front of the Cantor, or in the Roth Way Parking Structure (formerly Parking Structure 1, at Roth Way and Campus Drive Loop). [Please see our Facebook page for directions and parking locations \(link below\).](#)

**Stanford Art Spaces** is an exhibition program serving the Paul G. Allen Building, housing SystemX Alliance, the program’s sponsor, and the David W. Packard Electrical Engineering Building, with smaller venues located throughout campus: The Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, The Center on Longevity, The Department of Human Resources, and Building 52 at the Stanford National Accelerator Laboratory. All except Building 52 at SNAL (or SLAC) are open during normal weekday business hours. For further information, or to arrange a tour, please contact Curator DeWitt Cheng at 650-725-3622 or [dewittc@stanford.edu](mailto:dewittc@stanford.edu), or see Facebook.com/Stanford Art Spaces.