5-19-1969

Designer's News May 19, 1969

Students of RISD
Senior in Photography Teaches for Her Thesis

Rosalyn Gerstein, senior in photography, is doing something a little different for her thesis. Her photographs, the finished work, are a bunch of 60-second snapshots from Polaroid "Swinger" cameras... and she didn't even take them herself.

What Miss Gerstein has been doing for the past few months, is teaching a group of eight South Providence boys, 11 to 14 years old, all about photography. Some of the results are on this page and Page 4. By way of explanation, she said, "I choose a [degree] project in which I could become personally involved and committed."

She has become committed to the point now, that she is planning to teach a follow-up course in photography this summer, and in addition start a course in gardening. "You need to be spontaneous and honest about the work you are able to produce," Miss Gerstein said. "Communication with people is an important part of my project; it is also very important to know who you're communicating with.

Among her experiences, she had to overcome problems unique to dealing with black ghetto youths. In her project journal, she warned herself to "keep things on a very... [continued Page 3]"
This is going to sound like a small request, which it is, or even a picayune one, which it's not. Why don't a couple of you get some seeds (no, not that kind), or a few flowers, growing ones, and transplant them to The Carr House garden before you leave for vacation. We didn't believe it ourselves until we saw it, but, by damn, the Carr garden really has the potential of becoming a sylvan spot to eat your lunch, draw, read a book, make love, etc. It just needs a little primping. A little TLC. The garden could be lovely by fall if it is planted with seeds and flowers this spring.

So, goeth and primpeth.

That whooshing noise you hear is coming from us at DN our first breath in weeks not mortgaged to the Eternal Deadline. This is the third and final issue of DN for the semester; we'll go cornball a minute to wish everyone, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin--yes, we'll even wish Donald Reutlinger--a sane and serene summer. It just needs a little primping. A little TLC.

As ye son...

That whooshing noise you hear is coming from us at DN our first breath in weeks not mortgaged to the Eternal Deadline. This is the third and final issue of DN for the semester; we'll go cornball a minute to wish everyone, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin--yes, we'll even wish Donald Reutlinger--a sane and serene summer.

A short look at next fall:

DN will be under new editorship, so we can't guarantee the accuracy of our own soothsaying. However, we hope to see regular features on important school issues and events, of which there are many (already we find ourselves rejecting material for lack of space--but never a letter to the editor!).

We hope that news gathering will be highly systematized next fall, with each department reporting to us regularly along with every other news-making office in the school.

Also, we expect to have a fully staffed newspaper in the fall, so the work should be spread fairly thin...if you'd like to work regularly, F3 is our box number. If you have editorial skills in one area or another, contact us now for a position next fall.

The last month of school was absolutely the worst time to start a newspaper, admittedly. But--"We Done It." We've shown the way, schools that are interested.

S: The Vermont program lasted all summer. RISD's is lasting six weeks. Why?

T: I think it's the lack of understanding on the part of the Rhode Island School of Design.

S: The Vermont program was also less structured than ours will be. How do you feel about this?

T: Well, I'm a sculptor, I know very little about running schools, so I ran it the open way. The Rhode Island School's way may work better than mine. I personally really dug the open system because it gave us an infinite capacity to respond to the beauty of the student. The staff was connected with the student, like when a kid came to me and said, Listen, man, I'm an Indian and I want to do a totem pole, like we went down to the neighborhood lumberyard and got him a 12-foot log. Somebody else said, Listen, I'd like to get a music group together, we went out and rented instruments. A woman came to me one day and said I'd like to teach the kids how to make dashikis, using large leaves to dye the dashiki...

S: You'll have to tell me what that is.

T: The dashiki is a colorful, large African shirt worn by young men who are trying to think black and be black.

S: Did you get to know most of the young people in the program?

T: 90 percent of them considered me a relative.

S: Is the ratio of disadvantaged to "advantaged" going to be the same at RISD as it was in Vermont?

T: Well, the Vermont program was very different than what's being proposed here. One hundred percent of the students at the Vermont program were disadvantaged in the sense of economic opportunities.

S: Is there a deliberate mixture in the RISD program?

T: Well, the program has a deliberate mixture because I make a poor racist. I don't believe in black racism any more than I believe in white racism.

S: is there anything you would like or advice is there anything I haven't asked, that you would like to talk about?

T: One of my kids came up—that is, up here to visit RISD—came up complaining to me that in her school there had formed a new Afro-American society and one, a Puerto Rican, wasn't allowed to join this society. I hope one day that the Afro-American society can change into a thing which might be called CHE: Committee for a Healthy Environment.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4]
SENIOR TEACHES
[continued from P. 1]
't real' level" with her
way--she wanted to
prevent their mutual
trust from pulling
down the young boys'
"developed protections
and defenses against
prejudices, police
hate, etc., etc., etc.
The senior photographer
did have to be
"adept at handling many
situations. One of
these was when one of
the boys showed shy-
ness at nude photo-
graphs. His next
assignment was--photograph
his younger bro-
ther nude.

Block Island
[continued from P. 1]
reflect the natural beauty of
the island...But we've run into some
problem of identifying just who
we're planning for.

Rattray will be leaving Prov-
idence this year to open a land-
scape architecture firm in his
native Canada. Derek Bradford,
who will replace Rattray as head
of the department in the Fall,
and who has worked with him on
the Block Island survey, will
continue the project, hopefully
"with funds from a national or-
organization."

Bradford is outspoken on the
way Man treats his environment.
"We've got to have much more
respect for the land," he declar-
ed. "We must build what the land
suggests should be built on it.
Man will always pay in the end
when he ignores the requirements
of the environment."

"Look at New Orleans and all
the small towns built on the
Mississippi flood delta, and at
San Francisco, on the San Andreas
fault." About Block Island Bradford
said, "We are lucky there--we
don't have to deal with 15 back-
door steps taken over the last 20
years, as in other areas."

R.I. ARTS FESTIVAL
[continued from P. 1]
An outdoor perform-
ce stage built arou-
nd the war memorial in
the Plaza, "that ugly
thing with the globe
on it."

A children's play
ground using industri-
al products, such as
foam and styrene. (Bly-
denberg: "We will dem-
strate that there
are toys other than
war toys, which anyone
can buy.")

In the playground
will be:
A mock-up of a
tinker-toy on a huge
scale.

Two-foot cubes
of foam rubber, in a
big pile, for people
to jump around in.

AMERICAN BLUE PRINT CO., INC.
PHOTO PRINTS
BLUE LINE & BLACK & WHITE PRINTS
XEROX & MULTI-LITH PRINTING
30 NORTH MAIN STREET PROVIDENCE, R.I. 02903
861-1868
781-1799

RATTANY EATERY
258 Thayer St.
Providence, R.I.

C.A. PETTENGILL
Jewelers Serving R.I.
33 Years
24, The Arcade

GEMMARIUS
GRAFTS: EMPEMS: SHADES OF TATOS, CERAMICS, SILK SCARVES
BROOCHES, EGGS, BULBS, PUSH, IMPORTED SATISFACING COOKERY GATE" RUELKY
Talk Sun, 9:30-11:30,
East South Main Street
JOHN TORRES—'TROUBLEMAKER'

by Julie Scherer

John Torres is a sculptor. He was responsible for getting the Art Students League and the Ford Foundation to begin a summer program at the Vermont Academy last year. The program enabled 85 economically disadvantaged, and for the most part, non-white, students of students to work with opportunities for individual exploration. He is now at RISD helping to coordinate this year's Interdependent Studies program. This interview was held about two weeks ago.

[Michael P. Goode]

S: Could you give me your exact title, what your position is on the program?

T: Troublemaker.

S: Were you involved in dictating committee.

T: I've been working more as a consultant.

S: In getting this started, did someone from RISD contact you?

T: The president, Mr. Lay.

S: Was it because he knew of your work in Vermont?

T: That's right.

S: Is there anything you could say about your Vermont experiences relating to what you think is going to happen here this summer?

T: It's difficult for anybody to tell what's going to happen this summer, because the students that you want to work with are very vital and changing and growing. If you're dealing with groups from the general population, this particular group is a powderkeg. They have fantastic levels of energy, and if the program hits them the right way they can do fantastic, beautiful things. But if the program happens to turn them off you're in for a hard ride. Anybody that runs a program like this knows that.

S: Is there a direct relationship between the young black people who were here a month or so ago and the summer program?

T: Most of the people that were here last at the recruitment weekend, Operation Pilgrimage, were in my summer program in Vermont. Some of them have made it through admissions and will be full-time students at RISD in September.

S: I'm working on a book now. It's on growing up black and it's about young people in Harlem, what they go through, why they change and why they are the way they are.

T: We hope so. We're raising funds for it now. The Ford Foundation decided not to fund it, so we're trying to replace the Ford fund with money that we hustle up.

S: Would you care to go into why the Ford Foundation decided not to subsidize the program again?

T: Well, major foundations like the Ford Foundation don't like to use their money as maintenance money. They like to try and experiment and if it works, cool; and if it doesn't work that's cool too. Unless you can get them to commit themselves to a specific number of years and you're into a grant, they're just as likely to cut out on you after the first year.

S: RISD and the Vermont Academy—aren't they the only two schools you know of involved in this experiment?

T: We hope so. It's about the number of schools—Art League and the Ford foundation that's not just the art high schools, but any high school that responds and some that don't respond. I go in and talk to the grade advisor and tell them who I am and what I'm trying to do and usually they've got a few students that might fit my particular program.

S: If this is mostly local, who is doing the recruiting?

T: It's being handled through Mr. Barkley and Charlie Appleton will be doing the recruiting. I'm trying to stay out of it of the simplest reason that if RISD can do it, and do it right without blowing it, without doing the sort of thing that frees up to go somewhere else and start another program. Like in the next ten years—at the end of ten years—I want to see ten programs over the country doing the same thing.

S: With the emphasis on art?

T: Yes.

S: Do you think you would get into recruitment for liberal arts schools, and would you leave that to other people?

T: I think anybody that recruits people that are interested in art, naturally overlaps into the liberal arts area, for a couple of basic reasons. Number one: the liberal arts colleges are now scrambling like mad to become very relevant in art education, especially in studio work. And number two: the art schools aren't going to produce the number of scholars that are necessary for the art schools to do their thing. Everybody, you see, that leaves a prime group going to the art schools, and then everybody else is going where they can get. You know, the choices between staying on the street, and getting into a liberal arts college, is certainly everybody I've ever talked to would rather get into a liberal arts college.

S: In reading about your past program, I noticed that a lot of the people were from [the High Schools of] Music and Art and Design. How do you go about reaching the other people in non-art schools?

T: We go to high schools in Boston, Chicago and New York. And that's not just the art high schools, but any high school that responds and some that don't respond. I go in and talk to the grade advisor and tell them who I am and what I'm trying to do and usually they've got any students that might fit my particular program. When I recruited last year for Vermont summer we sent letters to all the New York high schools. The problem is that high schools don't pay much attention to art. They're verbally oriented, rather than visually oriented. All the high schools all through the country are like that, so that the few schools that do exist, that specialize in art usually can provide enough people to make a program, but because they themselves are screening processes. Like Art and Design and Music and Art, take students from all over the city, so it's a pre-screening right there. The other thing that I did was, I went on the street, literally on the street, and walked around neighborhoods and asked people if there was any art program in the neighborhood, like Bedford-Stuyvesant or East Harlem. Believe it or not, there's nothing going on in Spanish Harlem.

S: In Bedford-Stuyvesant, can they take art courses at Pratt?

T: They can, but there is no art courses at Pratt, if they're lucky enough. They can get courses at the Brooklyn Museum School—if they're lucky enough. But you know the size of it, and you know how [it] is, and they'll expand it. If they expand it, then students from that neighborhood could come and be in the summer program.

S: If this is mostly local, who is doing the recruiting?

T: It's being handled through Mr.