Facts and Fables by Luis Medina, Photographer

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David Travis

With an essay by Ricardo Pau-Llosa

The Art Institute of Chicago

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Acknowledgments

No one who encountered Luis Medina left even a simple meeting unaffected by his intellectual and artistic daring. His boundless energies and enthusiasms, for which he was well known in Chicago, were more than likely inherited from his mother, Olga Bohorques. For it is Señora Bohorques who, more than anyone else, has persevered since the sudden death of her son in 1985 to insure that his work would not be forgotten. Several times when funding sources evaporated, she remained undaunted. When threatened by setbacks, she became more determined than ever and never failed to find renewed commitments. It is to her and her husband, Orestes Bohorques, that we dedicate this book.

Señora Bohorques was not alone, however, in her determination to publish these photographs. José Lamas of WSNS Channel 44 Television Chicago pledged the support of his company toward a catalogue, the subjects of which might prove to be controversial, because having known Medina, he recognized him as a photographer incapable of compromise in pursuing his own vision and goals. Rallying to the cause were also the members of the Photo Circle in Chicago, who collectively and individually have been instrumental in helping to secure important acquisitions and to maintain programs for the Department of Photography over the years. Peter Shedd Reed, an architectural historian who had previously commissioned Medina, twice donated funds toward the catalogue. Significant contributions were also received from Harold Allen, Medina's first photography professor at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, and Martha and Jorge Schneider.

We are grateful to many people who assisted with the preparation of this catalogue. Ricardo Pau-Llosa brought a critical Hispanic point of view to the publication, giving it both breadth and depth. Martha Schneider was indispensable in translating Medina's personal notebooks and letters for David Travis as he pieced together the history of Medina's career from his long friendship with the photographer. Other friends of Medina's—Harold Allen, Edouardo Aparicio, Miles Barth, and Wayne Sorce—served as readers of the text, filling in gaps, confirming facts, and making corrections. Our research was aided by Kathleen Lamb's initial organization of the Medina archive after it was salvaged from the photographer's apartment by his friends and the staff of the Department of Photography. Under the editorial guidance of Adam Jolles and the design talents of Nancy Galles, both on staff at the Art Institute, the catalogue came to its present form.

Beyond these participants, there are scores of Medina's friends and colleagues who have supported the preservation of his work in the Art Institute's permanent collection. A steady accession of Medina's photographs dates back twenty years to his first museum exhibition here and continues today through the Luis Medina Memorial Fund. Thanks to those who realized the force and importance of his images, his photographs are now preserved not only in major collections around the United States, but in this publication, the first of its kind to be dedicated to his work.

James N. Wood
Director and President
The Art Institute of Chicago


DON'T DREAM THESE THINGS

David Travis

Curator of Photography
The Art Institute of Chicago

The Life and Career of Luis Medina

Manuel Álvarez Bravo was fond of teasing his admirers by claiming that he had become a photographer in the 1920s because, of all the arts, he thought it might be the easiest. He was, of course, being half truthful. To be sure, photography had been made progressively easier over the years through chemical advances and mechanical conveniences. But, like all worthwhile endeavors, what followed this easy beginning possessed its own captivating difficulties.

Luis Medina heard Álvarez Bravo make his facetious remark in 1974, while the great Mexican photographer was in Chicago to see a retrospective of his work at the Art Institute. It was the first time the younger photographer had met a living master of photography who could converse with him in his native tongue. The Cuban émigré was filled with curiosity and respect, and an instant camaraderie developed. If Medina felt any longing for his former country, he did not show it. Working with his compatriot José López, he had become a chronicler of an American culture that paraded before him on the streets of

Chicago, in the small Illinois town of Quincy, and during occasional trips to Florida. Medina and López could boast of having exhibited their work some six months before in the same galleries that Álvarez Bravo's photographs now occupied. Despite the differences of age and subject matter, the master and the young photographers had much in common. Chief among their similarities was a belief that the open gestures that life concocted in front of them were more consistently revealing than anything their own imaginations could stage.

Medina's progression to this method of making photographs was a conventional yet stimulating one. In one of his early notebooks, he cited the French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry: "Photography encourages us to stop trying to describe what can clearly describe itself."[1] In Valéry's somewhat old-fashioned view, we are left to assume that photographers need to be first and foremost sensitive editors of what the world readily bubbles up or crystallizes before them. But the distinction between empirical occurrences and personal perceptions is never as clear as even evidentiary photographs would have us believe. One reason for this is that photography can be used as a tool that simultaneously deals with the veracity *and* deception of appearances. Thus, while supplying optical accuracy, photographs can still preserve the treasured ambiguity that artists require. Medina may have first appreciated this particular attitude in the work of Walker Evans, a photographer who aimed to remove his personality from his photographs in order to obtain unobstructed renditions of his subjects. Evans felt this severe corrective was the only cure for the excesses of self-indulgence to which both amateur and pretentious "artistic" photographers so often succumbed. Medina agreed in his own way. In a 1980 interview, he half-jokingly said: "A lot of people are exploring *themselves* in photography. Not that I already know enough about myself, but what I know about myself I can probably keep to myself."[2]

From the vantage point of our current period of self-indulgence—replete with startling confessional photographs, daring self-exposés, and diaristic extravagances—such an empiricist attitude seems almost quaint. But this is a common misreading of it. In order to understand the particular sophistication of Medina's empiricist inclinations, as well as the fantastical character of his subjects, we need to have some background on the artist himself.

Luis Medina was born in Havana, Cuba, on June 18, 1942. He attended a private military school and at the rebellious age of sixteen left Cuba to complete his education in Spain. There, he met the Cuban poet Gastón Baquero, who introduced him to the indigenous architecture, painting, and literature. A series of jobs—with an insurance company, delivering cement, and waiting tables—took him on an improvised cultural tour through France, Germany, and Italy. In 1961, he was reunited with his mother and stepfather, who had immigrated to Miami from Cuba following Fidel Castro's rise to power. Supporting himself with miscellaneous, unfulfilling jobs, he took courses in philosophy, history, and sociology at Miami-Dade Junior College, graduating with honors in 1967. In Miami, he encountered old friends again, among them José López, one of his closest friends from infancy, through the military

academy in Havana, and now at Miami-Dade.[3] Medina's ambition, however, was not to be a scholar but a sculptor. In 1967, guided either by practical or capricious desire, he set off for The School of The Art Institute of Chicago. Much to Medina's relief, this decision broke the cycle of uninspiring jobs, as well as the grip of the transplanted Cuban culture of his parents' generation. He felt as if he were escaping not just repression in Cuba, but stagnation in Miami.

To Medina's surprise, López made the same decision. While Chicago was foreign to them in a way Miami was not, the Midwestern city offered them not disappointment and alienation, but rather discovery and adoption. Here, they found two American mentors: Harold Allen, a Westerner who taught at the School and made exquisite architectural photographs; and Hugh Edwards, a Southerner who had become a curator of prints, drawings, and photographs at the Art Institute.

Allen had come to the School of the Art Institute in 1937 and started teaching there on a part-time basis in 1948.[4] His interest in photography led him to enroll in classes at the School of Design in Chicago (formerly the "New Bauhaus") under the tutelage of Gyorgy Kepes and László Moholy-Nagy. Allen must have seemed a remarkable man to the two Cuban students. He was well informed in the history of art and well practiced as a photographer. In addition, he was a special type of American: Mormon in upbringing, he was steadfast, quiet, and unselfish. Life with his family of farmers, carpenters, and streetcar motormen and his own work on a cattle ranch had made him stoic, self-reliant, and respectful of hard work.

It was Allen who first instilled in Medina a fascination for photography. In 1969, Medina asked Allen for assistance in illustrating a proposed conceptual sculpture.[5] Medina's idea was to link two of Chicago's most prominent skyscrapers—the John Hancock Building and Lake Point Tower—with either a rope or a laser light. In working with Allen on a dozen or so site photographs, Medina was captivated by his professor's insistence on calculating a precise point of view and capturing the quality of the light. Shortly afterward, Medina dropped sculpture for photography.

Medina and López found a second mentor in Hugh Edwards, who had come to Chicago from Paducah, Kentucky, in the 1920s to study music. Not able to finish his training as a concert pianist, he began working at the Art Institute in 1930; twenty-six years later, he was appointed associate curator of prints and drawings. Self-educated in the history of art, French literature, and American history, Edwards was not daunted by the challenge of becoming the curator of photography as well in 1959. His tastes and passions were both catholic and eclectic, stemming from his training in classical music, a friendship with Duke Ellington, an appreciation of singers from Frank Sinatra to the Everly Brothers, a love of motion pictures (especially those of Vincente Minelli), and the nocturnal companionship of authors such as Dos Passos, Faulkner, Genet, Jones, Proust, Trollope, and Whitman. Like Allen, Edwards came from a working-class family. His father was an engineer on the commercial steamboats that plied the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers. Thus, through these two mentors, Medina and López gained

a unique education in photography and at the same time an insider's view of two of the most romanticized creations of North American culture: the riverboatman and the cowboy.

Medina and López met Edwards while enrolled at the School in his popular course on the history of photography. Using slides and vintage prints, Edwards introduced the two students to the work of two of his favorite photographers, Peter Henry Emerson and Robert Frank. From Emerson, they could have learned how a photographer might illustrate a culture separate from his own. From Frank's photographs and books, they might have learned a serviceable definition of photography: "It is the instantaneous reaction to oneself that produces a photograph."[6] Such work may have given Medina and López the impetus to begin visually logging their encounters in their new world and, at the same time, the confidence to search for expressions of their own identities.

After their first joint museum exhibition was organized by the Art Institute in 1973, versions of it traveled to Finland (1974) and Australia (1976) as representative of contemporary North American photography.[7] During its initial showing, however, at least one reviewer noticed the Latin-American character behind the work. Alan G. Artner described their photographs as "fanciful, buoyant, offbeat, ravishing, and eye-dazzling," not exactly terms that would have fit the work of Emerson, Frank, Evans, or Allen.[8] Yet the Cubans' photographs did not achieve this character by being extravagant or esoteric, at least not to their viewers in Chicago. They were informed by Edwards's personal view that ordinary life is one of the best subjects for a photographer. Defending their interest in the mundane, the photographers told others that their subjects did not seem commonplace to them. Facetiously, they likened themselves to "Martians" looking at life in North America for the first time. Everything seemed seductive and unique. In effect, their success in a city of diverse ethnicity and opportunity had already situated them inside of the culture they were claiming to portray as outsiders.

It would be a mistake to characterize Allen's and Edwards's influences as limited only to North American culture. Allen's wife was Mexican, and Edwards was constantly recommending French authors to the two photographers. In addition, Edwards insisted they read Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. As he recommended in a letter to them:

> I consoled myself with García Márquez and this wonderful book is beyond all suspicions and expectations. . . . It is more Latin, I feel, than Borges. . . . It reminds me very much of José [López] and is the same kind of masterpiece and I think of him often while reading it. I dread finishing it and am taking it like some rare luxury that when it is used up I shall never have again.[9]

With this infectious encouragement and with introductions to a few of Edwards's Puerto Rican friends, Medina and López realized that there was more around them than the monolithic North

American culture that they had admired in the work of Evans and others. They started taking the first of their images of the true diversity of culture within the city. With Wayne Sorce, they photographed a Gypsy wedding and then, on their own, a Puerto Rican wedding.[10] The latter subject possessed a special lure for them, as López stated: ". . . we were drawn in, almost intoxicated, by this first experience of anything Puerto Rican."[11] But the theme of transplanted cultures was not to dominate their work. Their next series of photographs was taken in and around the river town Quincy, Illinois, which had sprung up during the frontier years of Mississippi commerce and was therefore directly connected with the mythological history of the steamboat era.

Medina and López spent the fall of 1973 in Quincy and Adams County working with an art historian and an architect on a pilot program for the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. "Community Rediscovery '76" involved photographing and highlighting Quincy's architectural gems and local crafts, aiming to demonstrate what other communities around the United States might do to celebrate their own particular heritage during the nation's two-hundredth anniversary. On the banks of the Mississippi, the two Cubans found the kind of small-town American community about which Mark Twain, Edgar Lee Masters, Sherwood Anderson, and James Jones have written. Their rendition of it, however, was more reverential and polite, an attitude appropriate to their status as guests. Medina's desire to penetrate beneath the surface of American culture would have to wait until after he completed another project, which the two took on in 1974: documenting the campus of the University of Chicago for a book entitled *Dreams in Stone*.[12]

After an illness in the summer of 1977, López wanted to be near his family in Miami. In addition, both he and Medina had begun to develop more personal expressions. With their aesthetic and philosophical points of view diverging, and without any major architectural projects on the horizon, the partnership dissolved. López moved back to Miami and gave up photography, while Medina inherited their mutual work and stayed on.

Following López's departure, Medina's photography began to reveal a shift in focus. His exploration of the aesthetics of color photography begun with López continued and advanced with Sorce, as the two shared a darkroom. But with the loss of his intimate, eleven-year companion, Medina was forced to develop his own voice and to find his own subjects. His sudden domestic solitude generated more introspective and less optimistic work. After the publication of *Dreams in Stone*, with its cataloguelike treatment of his photographs, he realized that working for others and doing strict documentation had become stultifying. The shift in the photographer's focus, however, cannot be blamed on this predictable frustration. Strong-willed, excitable, and outspoken, Medina thrived more on the resulting complexities of not conforming than on satisfying others—even a mentor. He was slowly yielding to his own experiences, both past and present. Another voice was reasserting itself and pressing its shoots through the ground cover of a long northern winter.

As a boy in Havana, Medina had "explored the brightest and darkest corners of that city . . . in search of ineffable essences, contradictions, and tragedies contained in anything human."[13] Medina rekindled this interest again as a photographer in Chicago. With López, he had photographed neighborhood murals, carnivals, storefronts, lawn sculptures, parades, and street scenes. On his own, Medina developed a more private side of his work in Chicago, one that included subjects related to his Cuban origins. He began a series of photographs on Latin-American life in his adopted city: Puerto Rican day parades and Puerto Rican weddings and, beginning in 1977, the altars and ceremonies of the African-Cuban religious folk cult known as Santería. His attraction to these subjects was encouraged in 1978, when Medina was invited to Mexico City as a delegate of the United States to the "First Latin-American Colloquium of Photography." There, he exhibited his photographs and exchanged views with his colleagues, arguing with those who proposed adherence to strict ideology or political posture, as did the representatives from Cuba. Stimulated through this direct dialogue with his Latin American counterparts, Medina deepened his awareness that North American culture was not quite as singular or as stable as the one he had first celebrated with López.

Although Medina continued to make excellent architectural and art-reproduction photographs on commission, what consumed his attention was his immediate surroundings. Everywhere he saw an explosion of the territorial graffiti of neighborhood youth gangs, many of them Puerto Rican. Fanciful, offbeat, ravishing, and eye-dazzling—all adjectives that had once characterized his own images—were now the terms he might have chosen to describe the work of these anonymous artists. In their graffiti, he saw defiant marks—a kind of art that was a matter of life and death. Something was at stake to the grafiti artists beyond the private, inner agonies of, say, a Jackson Pollock or a Mark Rothko. Graffiti, after all, is a sign of social, not personal, torment and restlessness. Gang graffiti is the result of a performance, one that Medina discovered to be dangerous and real. In the new path he was forging for himself, these subjects served as the first, pure expression of an irrepressibility of life that he was now feeling more than ever before. He registered his own defiance in a notebook: "Each day that passes, each new unhappiness that life presents to me solidifies and fixes my determination to continue on the same road."

Around 1977 or 1978, Medina, in search of the best graffiti, began walking the streets and alleys of his neighborhood near Wrigley Field, ranging north to Wilson and west to Southport avenues. He was not just collecting examples hoping to publish a popular book such as *The Faith of Graffiti*.[14] Nor was he seeking to make an updated version of Brassaï's famous book on the subject.[15] Medina's interest in graffiti was not from the perspective of an archivist as much as a connoisseur. Crucial to him were not only the composition and positioning of these messages at their sites, but also the overlapping struggles of these visual battlefields. Realizing that they are not timeless artifacts, he approached them with a sense of urgency, relating to his friends how, after a certain wall had come to a kind of formalistic perfection, it irretrievably declined into a chaotic mess. The photographer needed to catch it at just the right stage.

The more Medina searched, the more the subject seduced him, and the stronger his work became. In one of his most memorable graffiti photographs, a member of a rival gang has taken a full can of white paint and swung it at a wall of the Cobras' graffiti, producing a dripping arch of angry elegance. Such motifs for him were as vital and as compelling as any he admired in galleries or museums.

Medina tried to make the graffiti subject exclusively his own by joking with other photographers that if they took enough photographs of graffiti in remote alleys, they would eventually meet the makers. In the case of the Latin Kings, the Puerto Rican Stones, or any number of other street gangs, it definitely helped that Medina spoke Spanish, their native tongue. Once the young gang members came to trust him, they willingly posed as a further sign of their defiance and courage to stand their ground. After shooting their portraits, Medina would return a week or so later with proofs or prints of the negatives he had taken. In one instance, a boy he had photographed only a week earlier was killed by a rival gang. The boy's father asked Medina to photograph his son at the funeral. When Medina arrived, there in the coffin with the boy lay the week-old photograph of the young street tough propped up on the satin-covered lid. To Medina, this instance must have served as a reminder that the pictures he was taking were more than artistic expressions of his own perceptions intended for exhibition. They were, in themselves, something real.

If the street gangs symbolized a lifestyle that could not be controlled by outside authorities, so too did Medina's other subjects: the Puerto Rican motorcycle gang called Sons of the Devil; practitioners of Santería; simple, isolated weeds; or the unbridled expressions of local gay life. "Aspects of life that have, by tradition, negative social conditioning, or sheer social necessity been stamped with the stigma of evil" is the manner in which he described these subjects in a 1982 Guggenheim Fellowship application.[16] That Medina identified with anyone struggling for existence in a foreign or adversarial environment is evident in his refusal to judge his subjects on moral grounds:

> To observe, bring attention to, or generalize such matters with a generous dose of pontifical aspersion has been the almost exclusive province of the public media during our century, more insistently so in the course of our present electronic age. . . . Aside from the obvious, often superficial sensationalistic connotations of such subject matter, my preoccupation in showing this kind of reality versus its pristine, ordered counterpart resides upon aesthetic and emotional aims that require that these aspects of experience be reordered by transcendence of immediate temporal content into [a] photographic fable for the mind to ponder about and the emotions to be moved by.

Being an outsider himself, Medina came to realize that the subject of a photograph could not "describe itself," as Valéry had suggested, because of the pre-conditioning of the viewer. Medina

believed, however, that his photographs could suspend a subject in a neutral condition so that viewers could examine their reactions and reflect upon their own presuppositions. At least, this is what he hoped for. He did not physically manipulate his photographs or his subjects. For the most part, he placed the camera in an unobscured, direct stare at what was before it.

Medina's method of dealing with his subjects does not constitute a plea for sympathy or special treatment for them. Neither was his purpose to lead viewers into voyeuristic escapades. He hoped that, after their initial reactions subsided, viewers would be amazed by what they themselves could make of the commonplace or the extraordinary—of either weeds or bikers—and that they would understand his concept of fabling his photographs. In his notebooks, he tried to express the process of fabling photographs in philosophical musings or broken lines of poetry: "Fragile government of realities/Elevated to dreams/On the instant movement of the eyelids." It was simple to him: Just don't dream these things to start with, close your eyes and continue the photograph in your mind. Such notations indicate the sophisticated introspective embroidery that accompanied his seemingly factual pictures.

Medina's images of graffiti, gangs, gays, and the participants in Santería depict powerful and real occurrences that were beyond his control or invention. They are amazing enough as documents. But no longer a strict documentarian of more conventional cultures, Medina asked viewers to go further by proposing new and alternative meanings for his photographs. Now, he deftly invited viewers to question what the photographs revealed as he questioned what he thought of himself: "Rolls the sun through space/Mocking his own name/Guessing the mystery/That it inhabits/The interstices of time."

If he thought himself a poet, it was only while scratching out raw feelings in the privacy of his notebooks. He did not speak to his colleagues this way. They knew him less as a skeptic and more as an experimenter. In his investigation of meaning, Medina was fully the artist, for it is often said of artists that they have an abiding faith that if their subjects are captured in a certain form or as a particular symbol, the conventional meanings associated with them can be creatively reassessed without necesarily co-opting or perverting the subjects themselves. This is the characteristic that Valéry described when he wrote: "The philosopher cannot easily comprehend that the artist passes, almost with indifference from form to content and from content to form; that form comes to an artist with the meaning that he wishes to give it; nor that the idea of form is the same thing to him as the idea which demands a form."[17]

Although this quote does not appear anywhere in his notebooks, Medina would have applauded it wildly. He objected to the photographers of the mid-1970s and 1980s who took an idea or a political position usually not of their own creation and then proceeded to find a form to express it. This, he felt, relegated the photographer to the role of illustrator or art director who could conveniently avoid brushing up against the tangible realities of the world. There was little risk involved here, in comparison to the dangers faced by graffiti artists, or even to Medina's own role in confronting them or the bikers face to face.

Perhaps Medina was making up for the loss of his partner and companion by photographing something unattainable, something extreme. He matched his own audacity with that of the other lifestyles that existed around him. The thrill of discovering and taking on the various Americas he found might have helped him forget his pain. Nevertheless, some of his sorrow shows. After a day of exposing film, making personal photographs of the battered or solitary trees along the deserted lake shore, he might have been reflecting on his own residual loneliness when he wrote: "A long time afterwards/My breath hanging/In the unavoidable wait/I think."

Sometime in late 1984 or early 1985, a cytomegalovirus infection that Medina had developed perhaps as early as 1981 became debilitating. Confused about what was wrong with him, he tried to find out something about neurological diseases on his own through medical books. He lost partial control of his left hand, but slowly regained his dexterity by practicing handwriting exercises in his notebooks. In May, he attended the opening of the André Kertész exhibition at the Art Institute. Nothing looked amiss, and he apologized to his colleagues for not having seen them in a long while.

Medina kept his rapidly progressing illness a secret from his friends to spare them the agony. He stubbornly believed that he would survive, as he had survived his isolation from his native Cuba, the cycle of menial jobs, and his separation from López. As the gang members and the weeds had demonstrated to him, if life is worth living it has to be as an irrepressible force that dictates its own terms. In the course of his handwriting exercises, his resolve becomes ever more apparent. On one page, he listed items for an assignment and continued in a clear, legible script: "I must regain my dexterity in writing—my handwriting is not as good as it was a few days ago, but I am sure it will come back to normal as soon as I get enough practice. It will be necessary to retrain myself slowly and make a new life for myself."

By June, Medina was with his parents in Miami and knew he was dying. A few friends rushed to see him. Unable to escape the city for another adventure up north, he died there at the age of forty-three, in the prime of an extraordinary career, on the morning of October 12, the same date that Columbus had first logged his own discovery of the Americas.

Notes

1 All subsequent unfootnoted quotes are from Medina's notebooks, copies of which are in the files of the Department of Photography at the Art Institute.

2 Cited in John Alderson, "Elegant Photos from Tough World," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Apr. 11, 1980, p. 64.

3 At the time of this reunion, López was working in Tampa as a hair stylist. In 1966-67, the year of Medina's graduation, López enrolled in an art course at Miami-Dade Junior College.

4 For more information on Harold Allen, see The Art Institute of Chicago, *Harold Allen: Photographer and Teacher*, exh. cat. by Deborah Stein Frumkin, 1984.

5 Medina approached Allen for his assistance in the spring of 1969. A month or two later, López joined the project.

6 Robert Frank, "A Statement," *U.S. Camera 1958*, p. 115.

7 It should be noted that the two photographers credited their photographs as "López-Medina" no matter who had taken the picture.

8 Alan G. Artner, "The Fanciful Images of López and Medina," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Sept. 23, 1973, sec. 9, p. 49.

9 From a letter by Hugh Edwards to José López and Luis Medina, Dec. 2, 1970, a copy of which is in files of the Department of Photography at the Art Institute.

10 Photographs of the Gypsy wedding were printed in 1970 in a privately issued portfolio credited to the three photographers and entitled *Gypsy Wedding*.

11 Cited in Artner (note 8).

12 Patrice Grimbert, José López, and Luis Medina, *Dreams in Stone* (Chicago: 1976). The project was originally begun by Patrice Grimbert. Only one hundred photographs into the project, Grimbert died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage, on April 19, 1974.

13 From a 1977 draft of a biography Medina prepared for a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Arts Program grant application, a copy of which is in the files of the Department of Photography at the Art Institute.

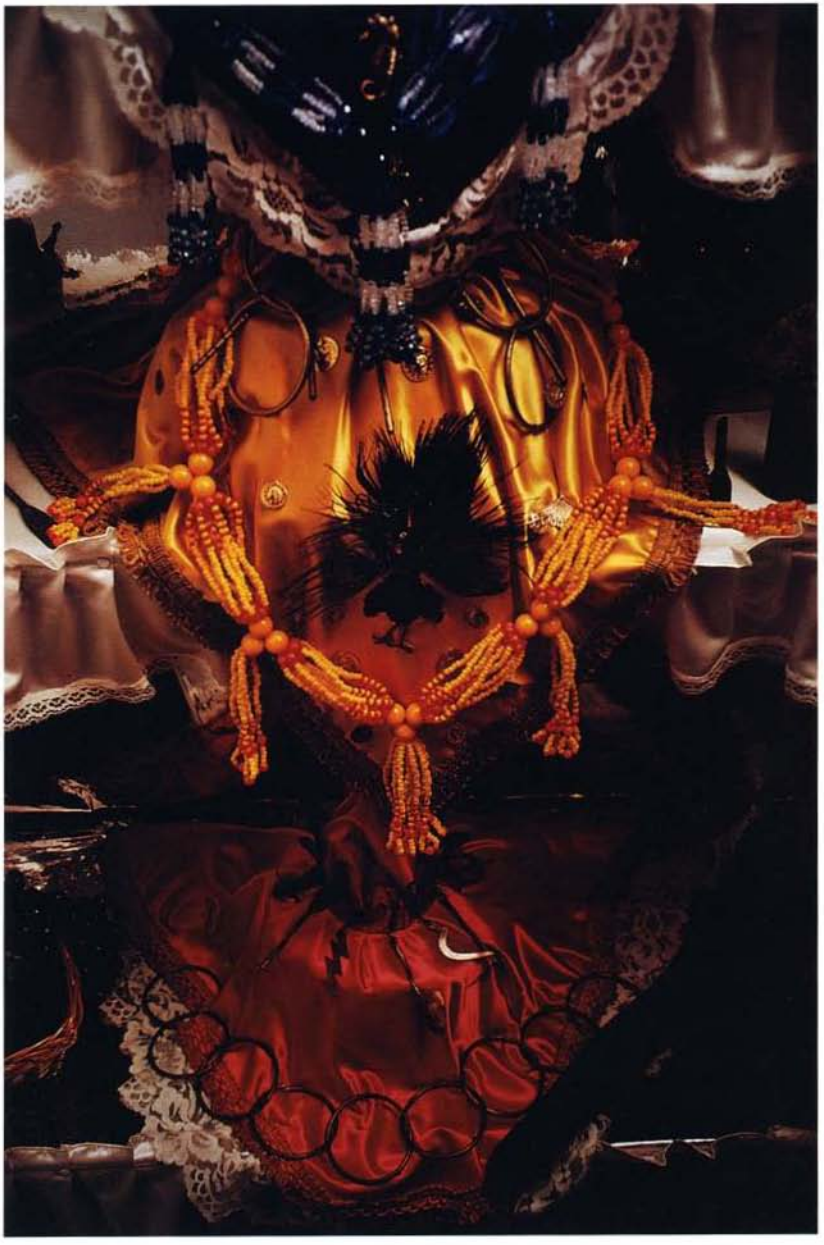
14 Mervyn Kurlansky and Jon Naar, *The Faith of Graffiti* (New York: 1974), with intro. by Norman Mailer.

15 Brassaï, *Graffiti* (Stuttgart: 1960).

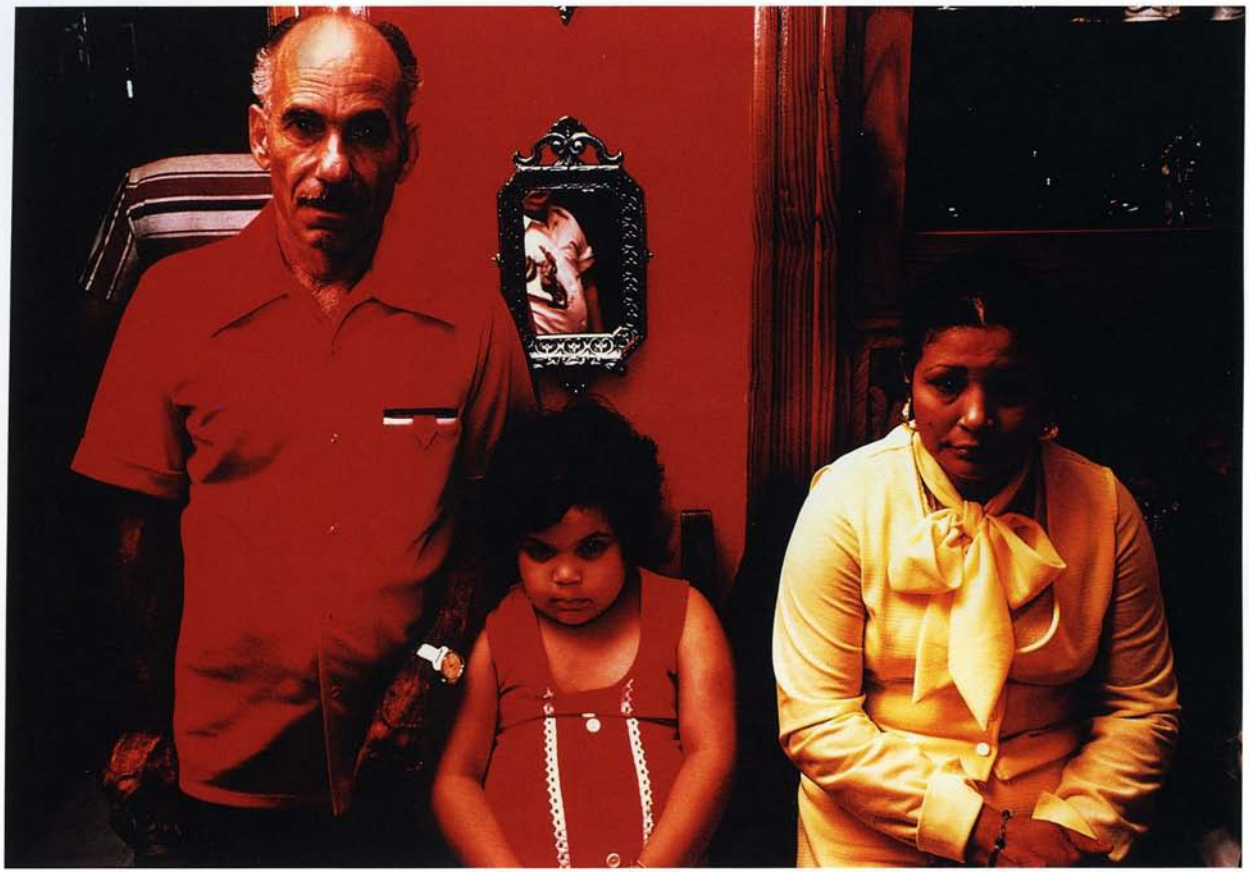
16 A copy of the application is in the files of the Department of Photography at the Art Institute.

17 Paul Valéry, "Leonardo and the Philosophers," *Paul Valéry, Selected Writings*, trans. by Anthony Bower (New York: 1964), p. 113.

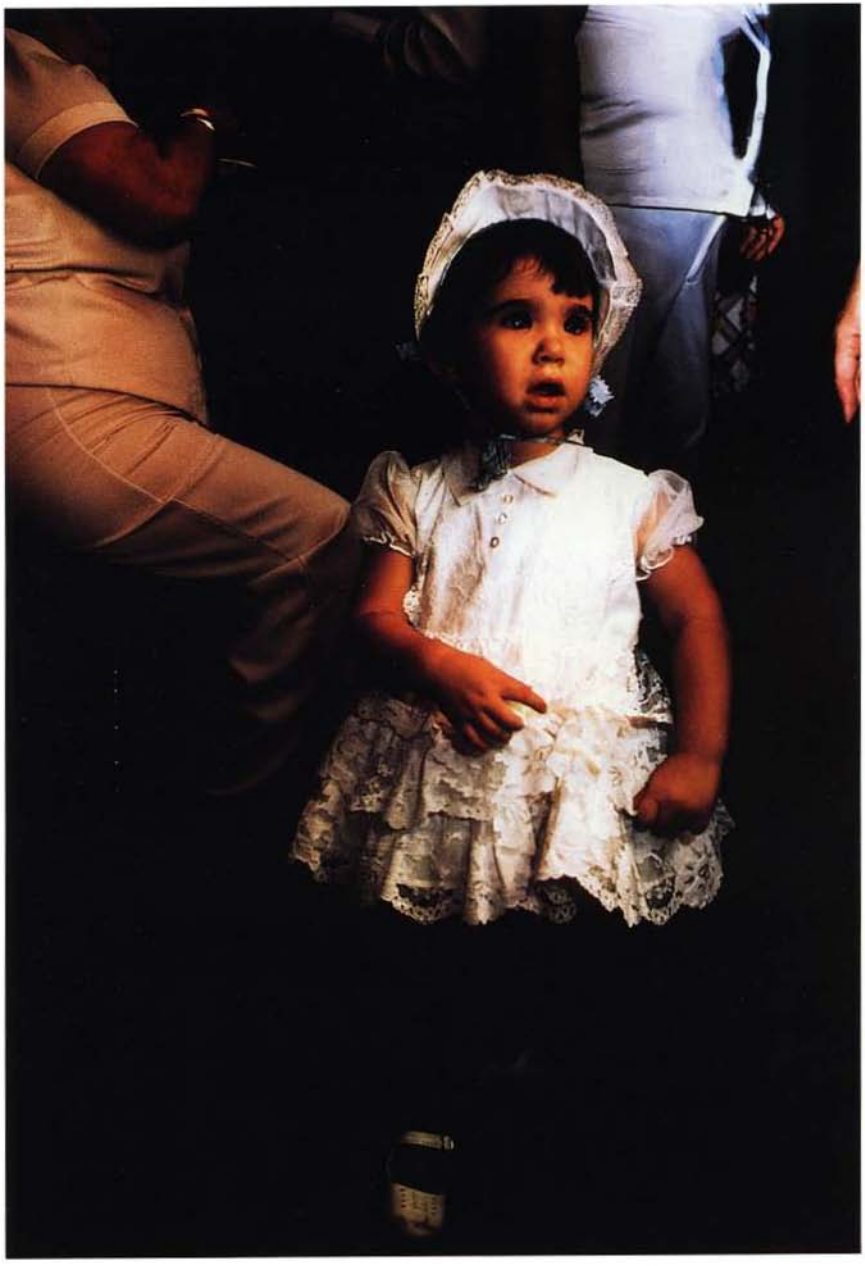
Plate Section



Altars Covering the Songé of Yemayá, Ochún, and Ogún, Chicago, 1977



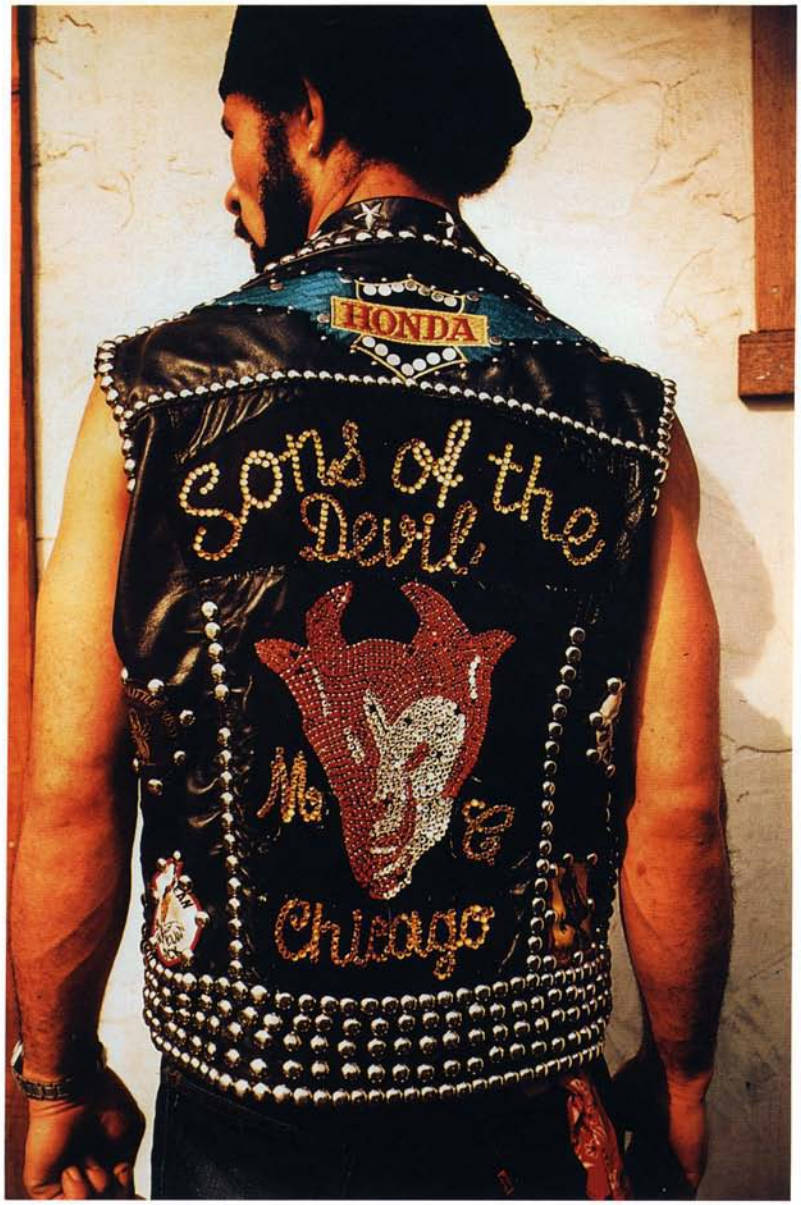
Santeros Worshipping, Chicago, 1977



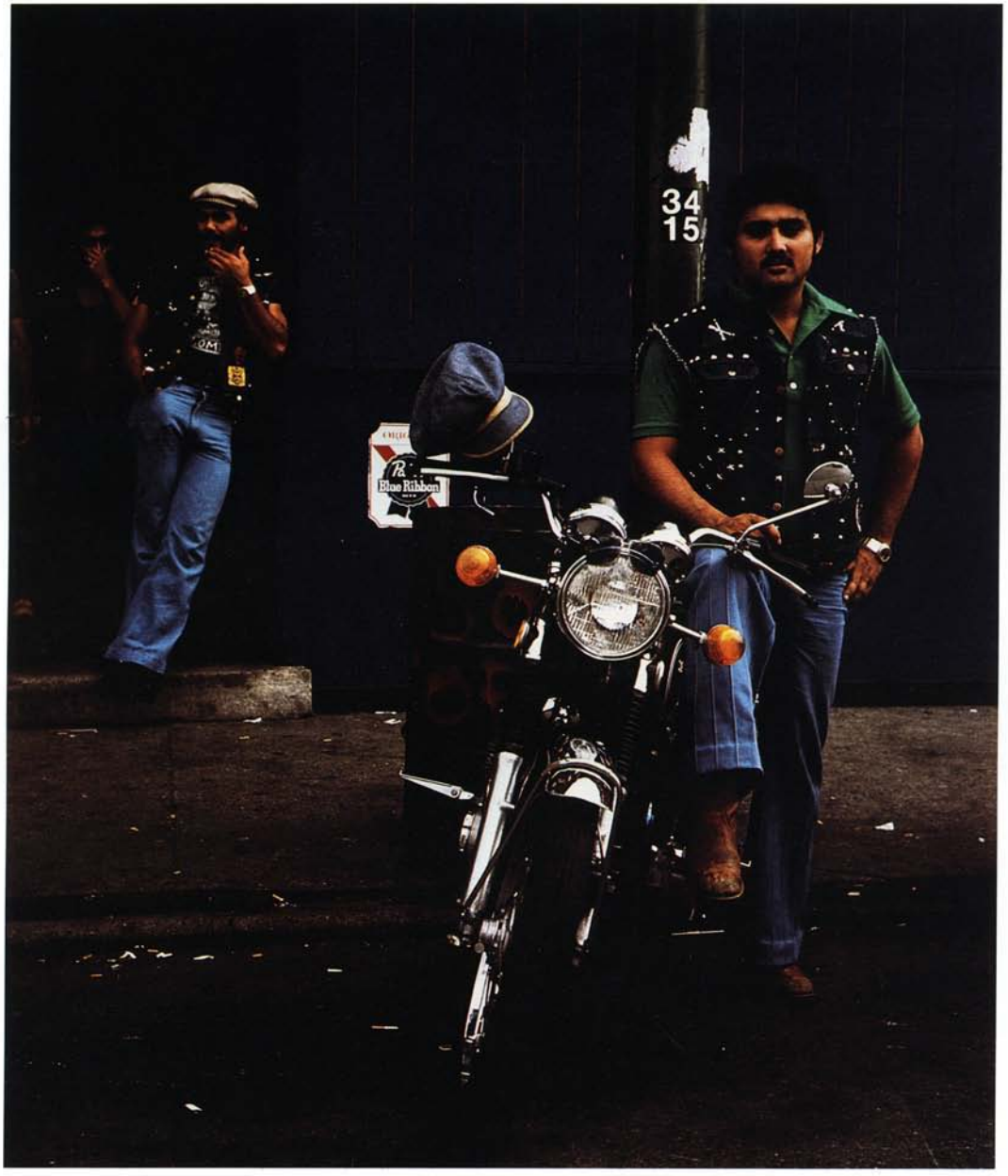
Santero Worshipper, Chicago, 1977

Changó Altar, Chicago, 1977

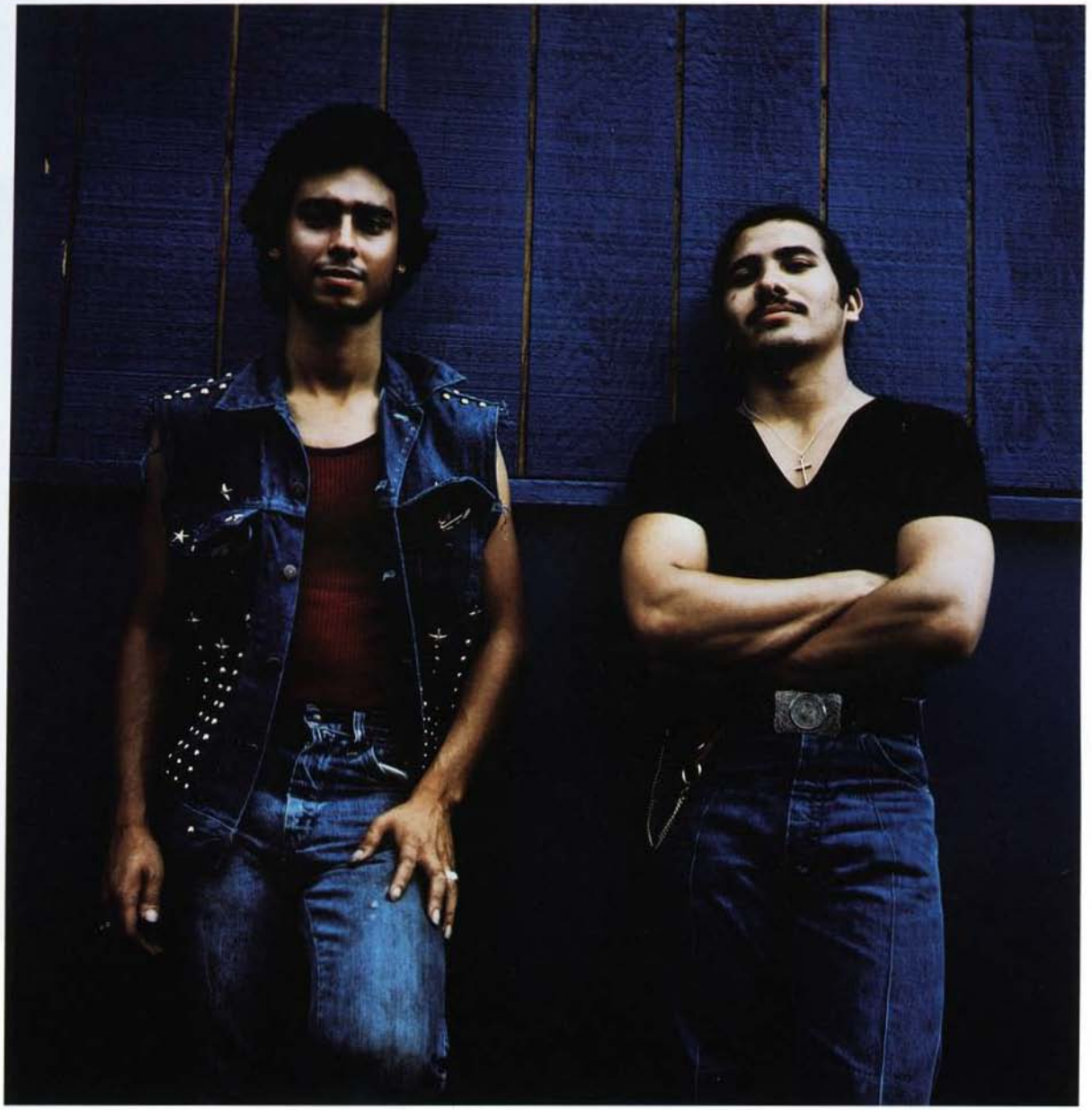
"Duende," Sons of the Devil, Chicago, 1978



Gang Member, Sons of the Devil, Chicago, 1978



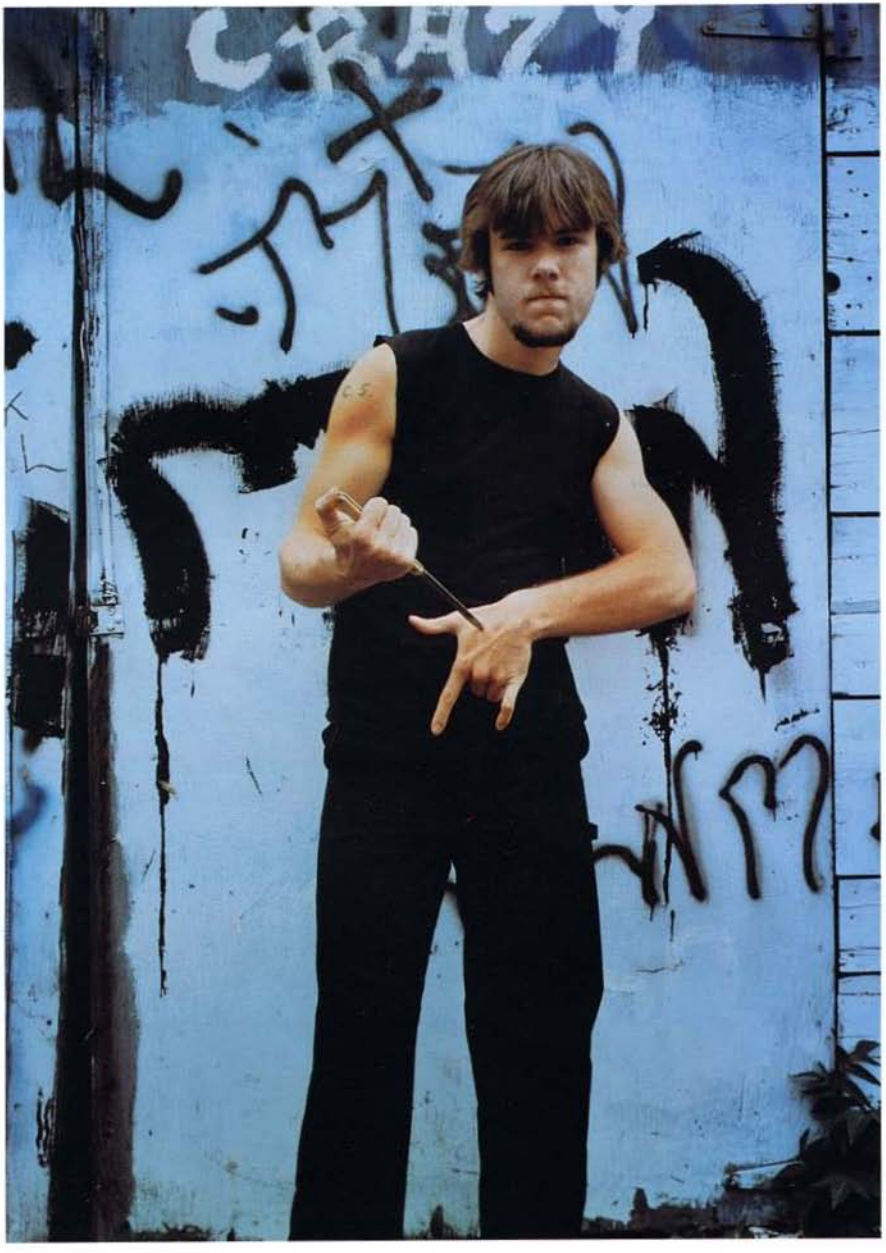
Sons of the Devil, Chicago, 1978



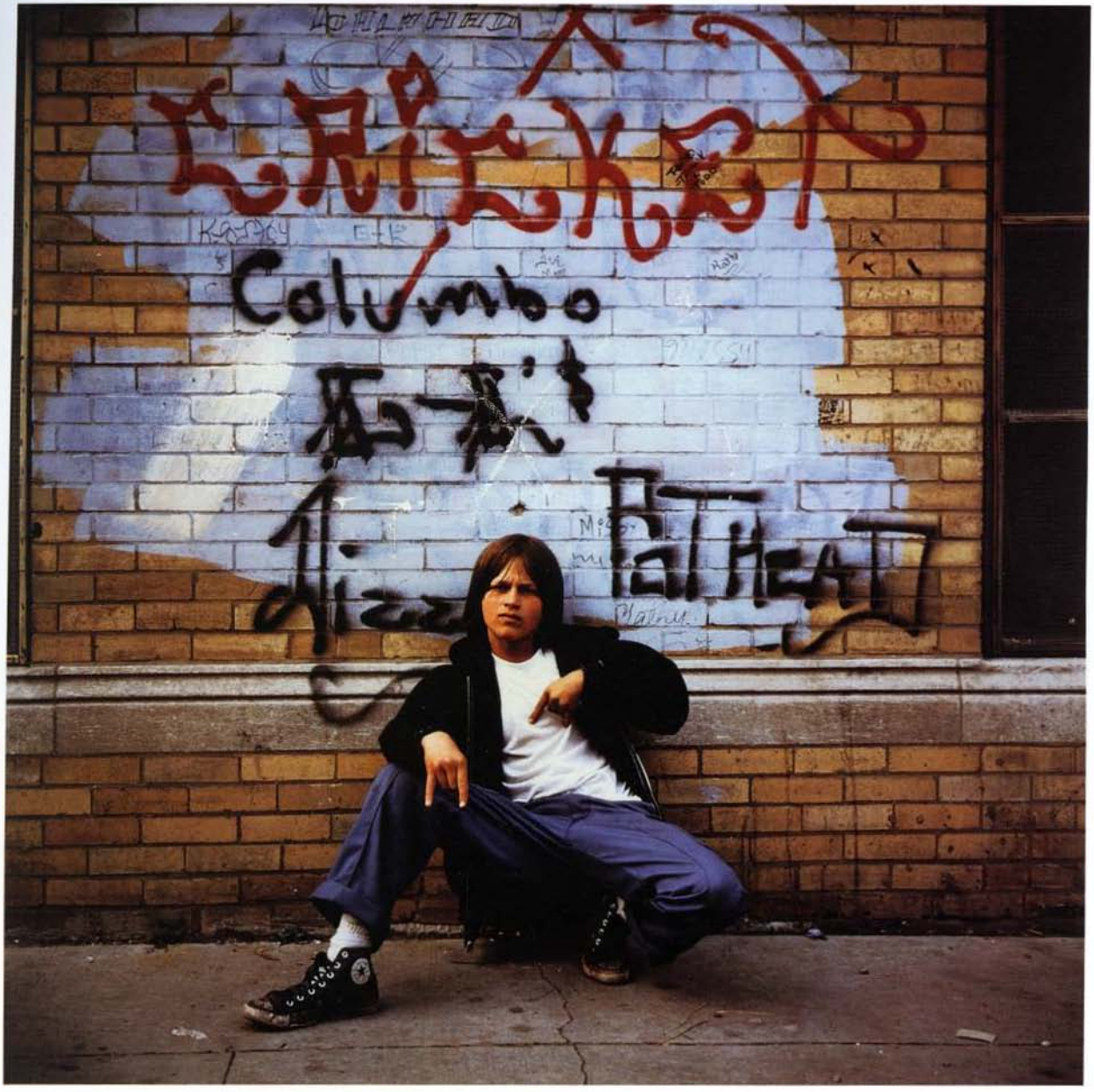
Sons of the Devil, Chicago, 1978

Gang Scene, Sons of the Devil, Chicago, 1978

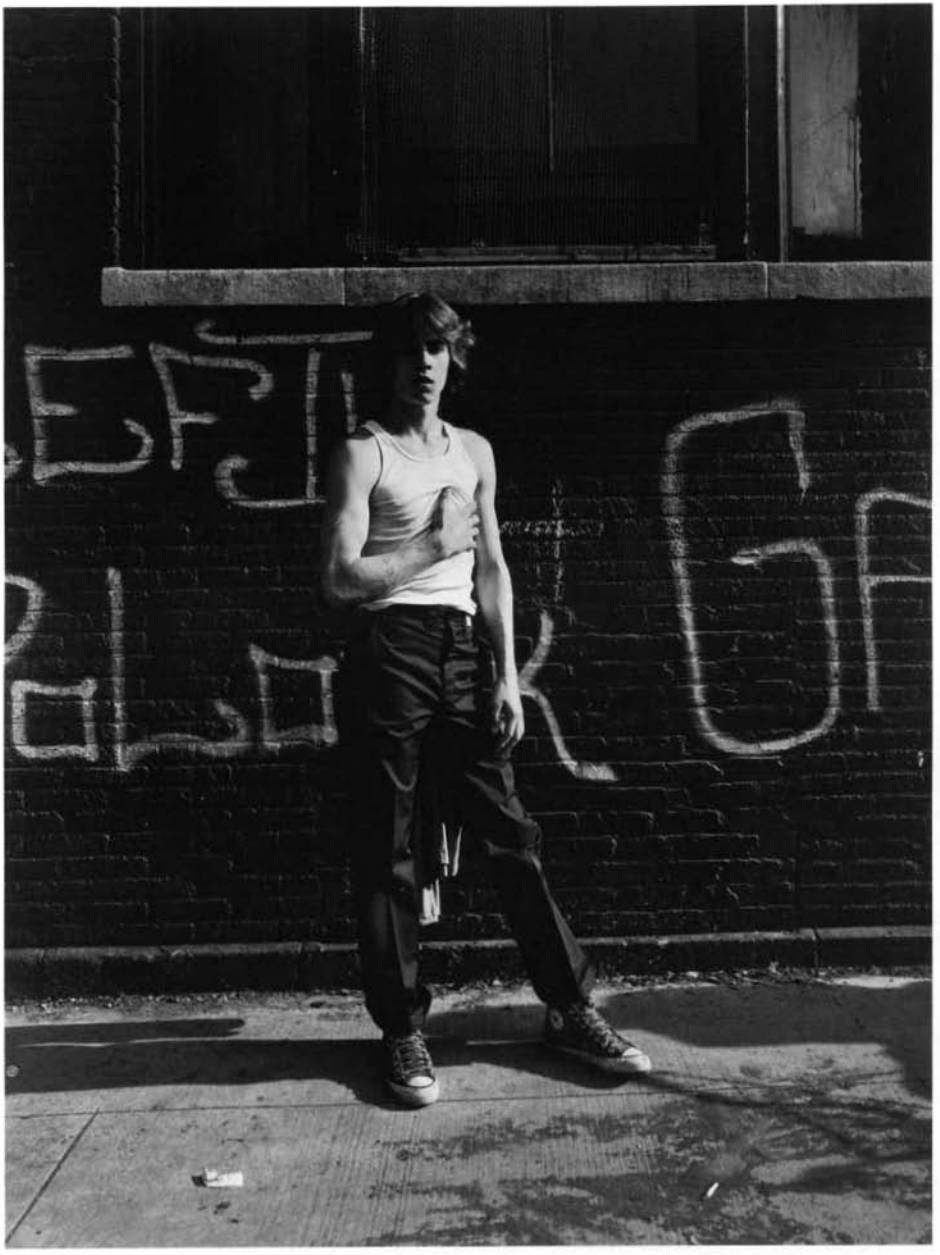
Sons of the Devil, Chicago, 1978



Royal, Chicago, c. 1980



Cricket, near Montrose Avenue, Chicago, c. 1980



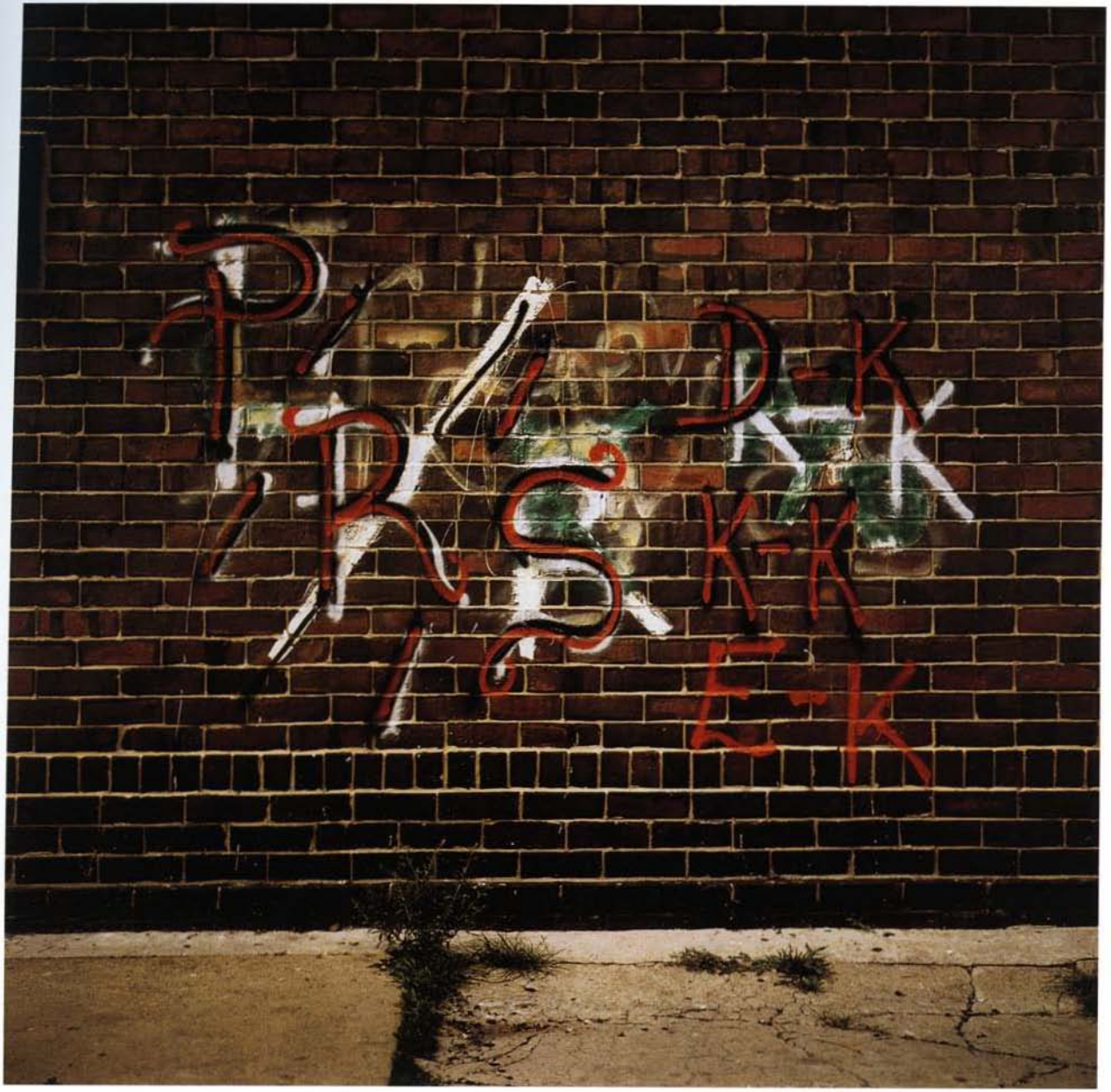
Gang Member, Chicago, 1979

Dead Gang Member in Coffin, Chicago, 1979

Latin Kings, Chicago, 1980

Latin Kings, near Wilson Avenue, Chicago, c. 1980

Graffiti, Chicago, c. 1980



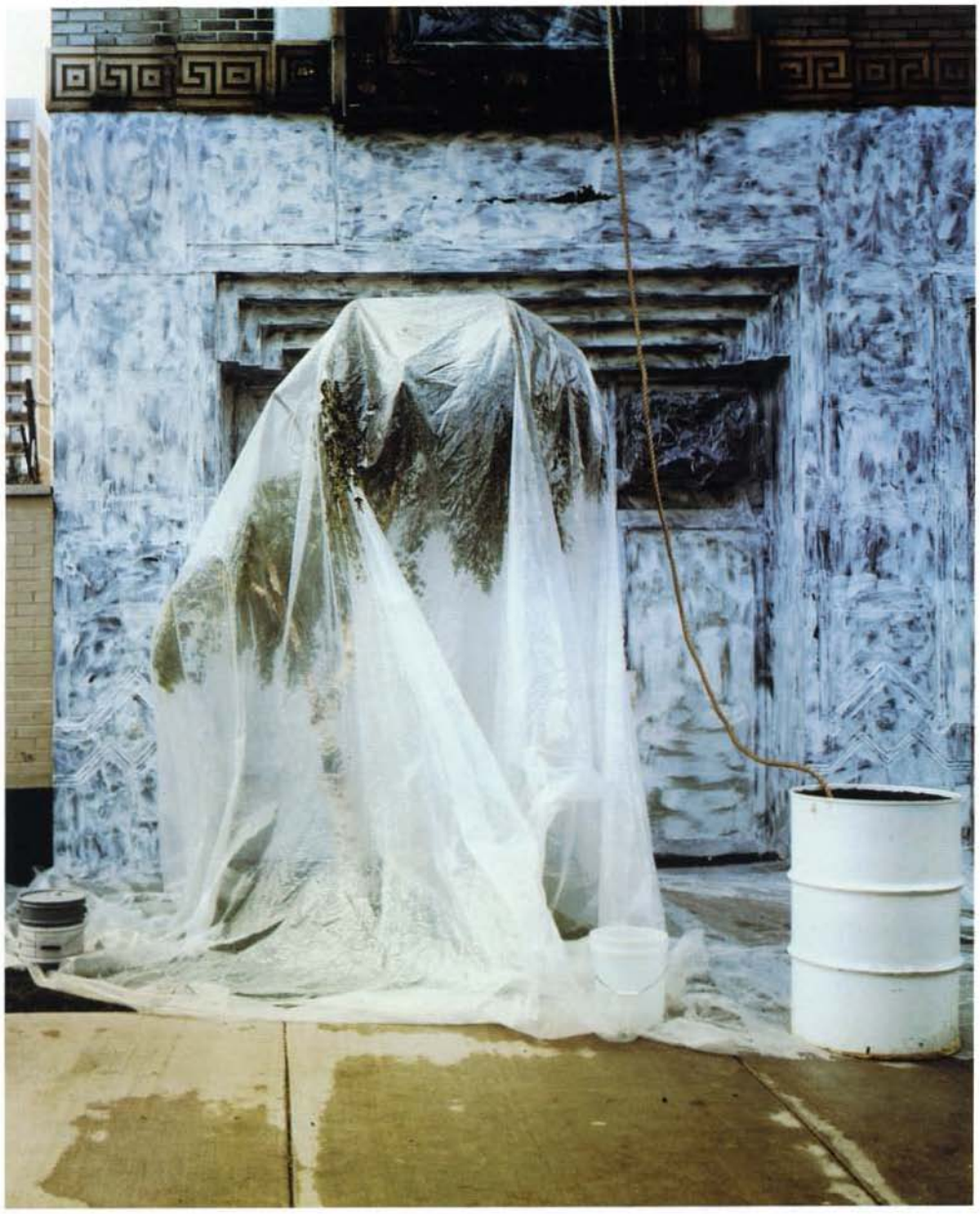
Graffiti, Chicago, 1980

Chicago, Westside, 1980

GRAFFITI, CHICAGO, 1980

Graffiti, Chicago, 1980

Graffiti, Chicago, 1978/80



Plastic-Covered Tree near Lawrence and Kenmore, Chicago, 1984

Weed and Spot, Chicago, 1978/84

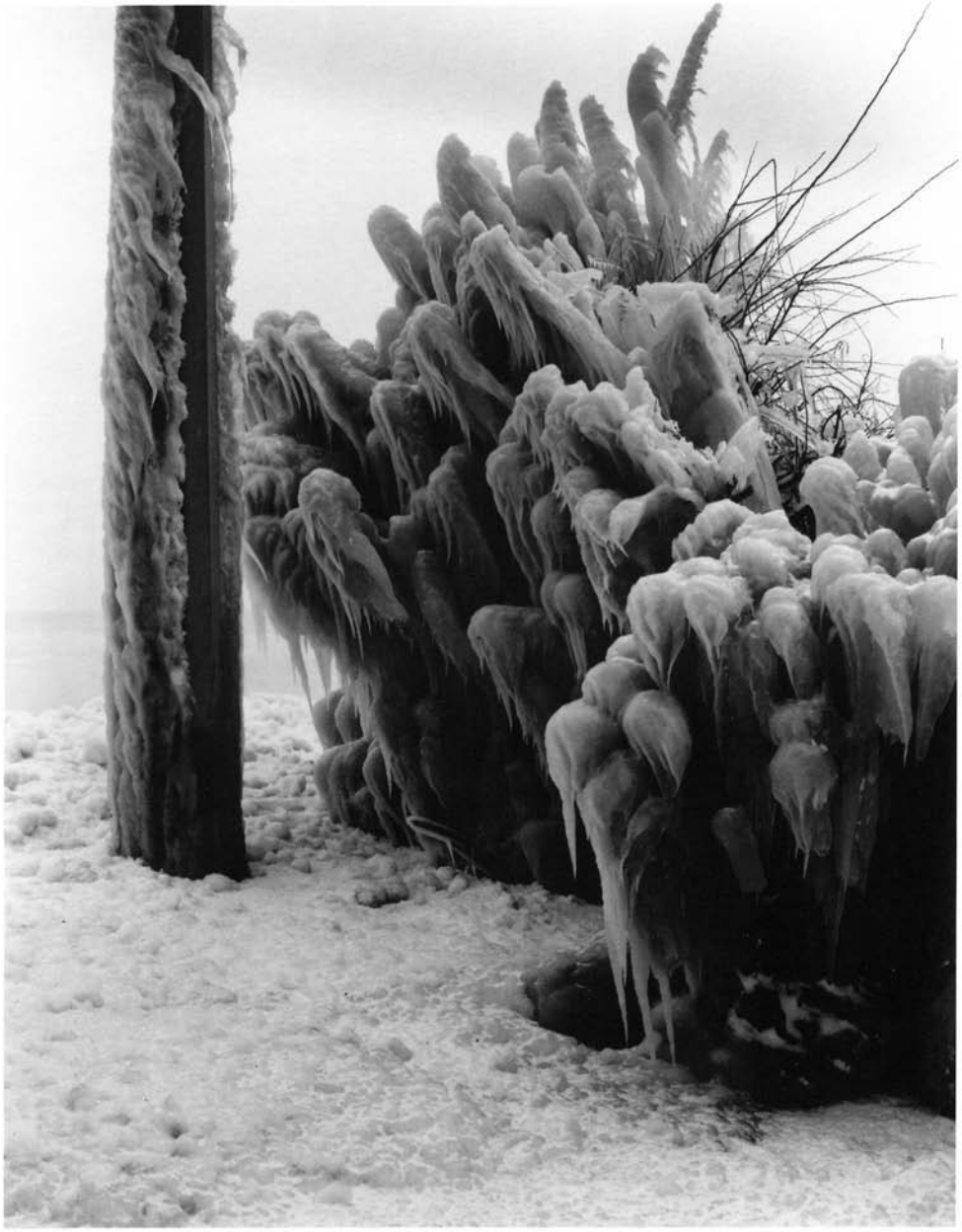
Weed against Wall, Chicago, 1978/84

Tree, Lake Michigan, Chicago, 1980/84

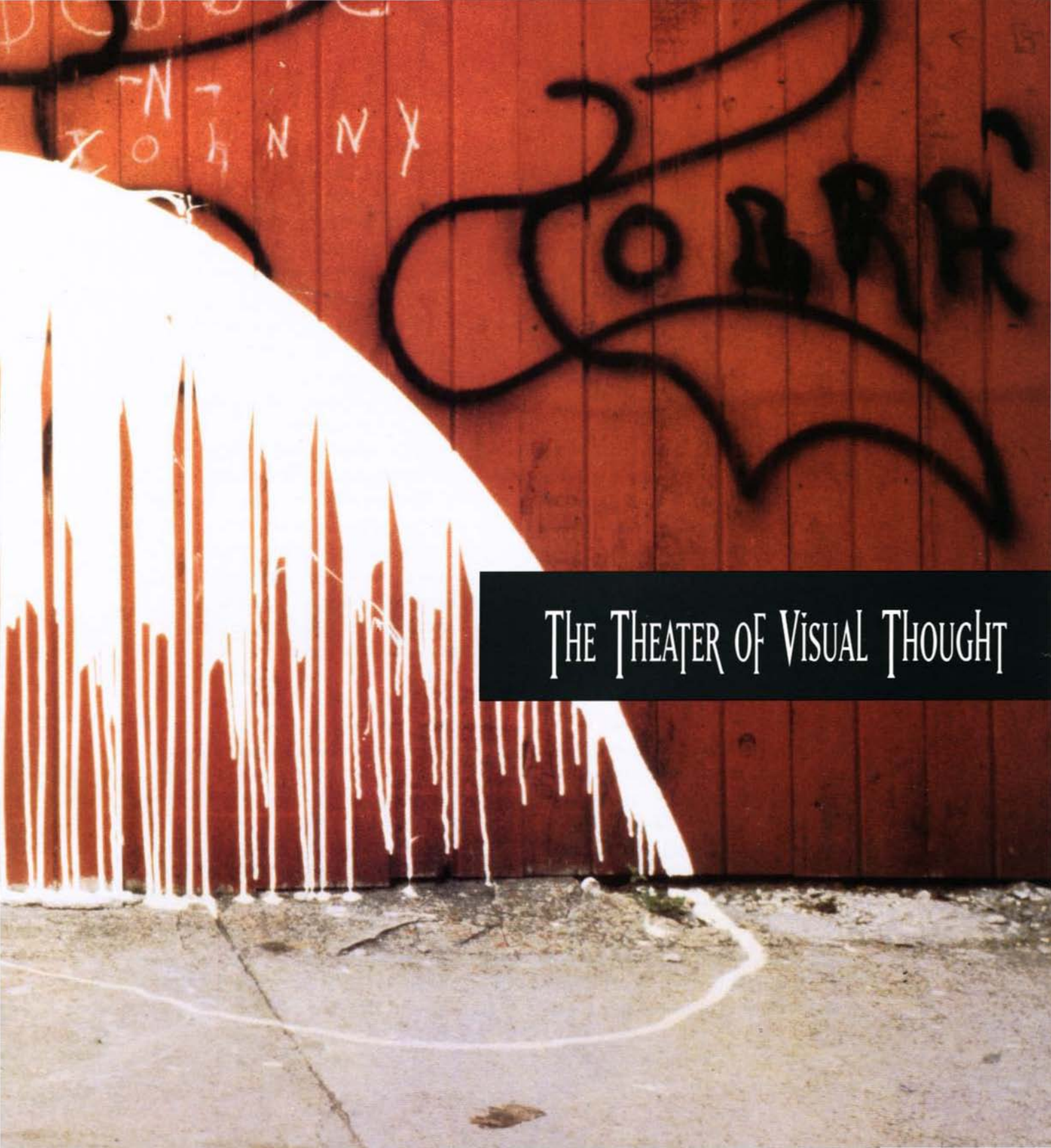
Weeds and Mailbox, Chicago, 1978/84

Tree and Mural Advertisement, Chicago, 1980/84

Two Trees, Lake Michigan, Chicago, 1980/81



Ice on Bushes, Lake Michigan, Chicago, 1980/84



The Theater of Visual Thought

Ricardo Pau-Llosa

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The Latin-American Sensibility in Luis Medina

The conviction that art is fundamentally theatrical has been a staple of Latin American visual thinking in this century, revealing itself in every style and school that has flourished in the region and in every medium and genre, photography being no exception. In contrast, the essential theatricality of visual expression has become openly accepted only recently in North America, and then as part of the postmodernist program. The role theatricality plays in the visual arts is tied to cultural attitudes toward the visual representation of complex ideas and transcendent values; syncretistic, liturgically eloquent Latin America never shared the Calvinist North's suspicion of icons. Where icons are embraced, there thrive the melodies of paradox, the luxuries of polysemy, and the delight in tropes.

This comfort with ambiguity and theater lies at the heart of the photographs of Luis Medina, one of the most gifted photographers of his generation. Medina, who was born in Cuba and emerged as an artist in Chicago, was one of the glories of the first generation of bicultural exiles. His work drew freely from the diverse traditions of this hemisphere.

Three extraordinary series of photographs—on the themes of graffiti, gangs, and weeds—define the vision of Medina. These series are unified thematically; they focus on marginal realities that typify our raucous, decaying cities. However, an artist's vision is defined by how structures of thought lead creator and viewer simultaneously to confrontations with enigma. That calculated simultaneity of vision and thought, grounded in the artist's capacity to make the world of collective experience (what Edmund Husserl called the *lebenswelt*, or life-world) seem truly and deeply shared, is the substance of artistic subjectivity. In Medina's series, the exploration of the theme of marginality is bound to reconsiderations of visual space and composition. While Medina paid homage to North American modernism's reductions of pictorial language, his aim was to disclose the stagelike character of aesthetic observation.

In the visual arts, theatricality involves an acceptance of representation—an openness to integrate the collective and personal meanings of images to the success of a work of art. If the sequence of styles that constitute modernism, particularly in North America, operated mostly on a theory of purist reduction—what can be taken out of a work of art and still have a work of art?—theatricality works in the opposite direction. How can the meanings of images on the stage of the pictorial plane be broadened through ambiguity, tropes, and allegory? The impulse to accept the theatricality of a work of art heightens the intersubjective function of art, its role as a clarifier and explorer of ideas and feelings that bind subjectivities in the life-world we share. Reduction strives to turn the artwork into a separate, discreet world. Theatricality sees the artwork as a distinct form of discourse grounded in the physical, analytical, emotional, and oneiric experiences of the beings who make it and view it. It presupposes these contexts; reduction seeks to bracket them.

Theatricality accepts tropes (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, irony, synecdoche, hyperbole, and other figures) that reveal truths about the world but that are, on the literal level, false. Reduction glories in the compositional and technical insularity of pictorial space—its "dehumanized" intrusion into reality. Reduction is territorial; theatricality is textual. Reductivist art abhors discourse and seeks to become a self-sustaining thing. Theater turns ideas and feelings into meaning-filled objects of reflection within the fictive parameters of the stage. Theatricality delights in its referential and tropological power to alter our view of the world through aesthetic reflection.

Medina's theatricality is different from that of other photographers—one thinks of Annie Leibovitz—who emphasize the posed nature of photography in general. The conceptual foregrounding of the "pose" is a function of hyperbole, an exaggeration that elicits interrogations of the medium and its devices. Foregrounding of such devices as the pose is a typical modernist reductivist strategy. In Leibovitz's work, theatricality is thematic, the very focus of her visual discourse. Medina's theatricality is integral. Neither theatricality nor any of its tropological devices is explicitly an object of suspicion or scrutiny. Medina used these devices daringly to explore the life-world, not the medium. In all original art, the medium interrogates itself automatically.

In Medina's work, theater does not signify tongue-in-cheek irony, a game, or an illusion. Theatricality is not a ploy by which an artist legitimizes his critique of high culture by identifying himself as a cynical if gregarious collaborator. Neither is it the leveling of appropriated signifieds as a back-handed way of elevating the intellectual prominence of the vainly self-effacing artist. In the Latin American tradition in which Medina participated and to which he richly contributed, theater is *temenos*, ritual space, a lens that employs tropes to clarify thought and feeling, a way of facilitating a confrontation with the fleeting scenery of daily life in order to transform it into unabashedly aesthetic experience. Theater is not tormented by scripted fears of its own illegitimacy; it is a necessary, confident, self-reflective recovery of experience. In the art of Medina and other masters of this tradition, theater is candid transcendence of the mundane.

What could be more mundane than graffiti, the sign that subverts possession by scarring itself into plain sight in the urban life-world? Gangs combat their rivals. One of their weapons is the sign, the nightly erasure, the eclipsing of one territorial marking by another. The process by which these angry invasions of architectural surface become intricate, spontaneous compositions captured Medina's imagination. In every shot, Medina evidenced his awareness of the moment. Even though the process is nocturnally episodic, permitting him to carefully compose the shot by day, it is still a process. The wall, by morning, would be changed in the course of another sign-making battle. Medina's approach to sign warfare was actually a study of time.

The cold gaze revealed in Medina's graffiti pictures parallels other Latin American artists' approaches to temporality. The graffiti images can be seen as an ironic homage to Mexican Muralism, the first modern school to link walls with historical narrative. In Fernando Botero's *bodegones* (still lifes), flayed fruit, pierced sausages, and the snickering, bodiless head of a pig present themselves to the viewer—the credentials of mortality. Santiago Cárdenas's *trompe-l'oeil* paintings of blackboards are elegant predecessors to Medina's linkage of sign, effacement, and time. The strongest parallel to painting is to the sign-filled grids of Joaquín Torres-García, one of the founders of Latin American modernism. Torres-García coalesced the constructivist grid; allusions to pre-Columbian cultures; and myriad pictographs, letters, and numbers. His aim was to capture multiple representations of the infinite—history, language, geometry—in one lucid image.

Medina harvested the accidents of allusion. The arched spill of white paint dripping to the ground recalls action painting. The giantism of painted letters and commercial signs comments on similar imagery in Pop art. The consistent frontal stare at the wall seems to quote minimalist extensions, Diebenkornian lineations, ghosts of Constructivism's flat geometries. Above all, the spectacle of these walls tugs at the dusty laurels of urban civilization. The city is the telos and shrine of Western culture and the definitive womb of its great ideas. What eminent myths has the great modern city not spun to its glory? Marxism, capitalism, psychoanalysis, the enlightened rule of science and logic, the cult of

culture, to name a few. While urban civilization's titanic back is turned, nocturnal ires unfurl their riotous defacements. If the city is the twentieth century's Gothic cathedral, its gang members may well be its gargoyles.

With his sense of theater, Medina allowed the gargoyle his bluntness. There is no contrived confusion about heroes or antiheroes in his approach to graffiti or its authors. Medina was no more a moralizing journalist than he was an ecstatic scavenging among the violent poor for a romance with chaos. Like any consummate artist, he joined the viewer in a confrontation with enigma and allowed his craftsmanship to guide the confrontation, make it incessantly fresh. That is what theater does—it defies time, it says knowing the outcome of a plot has no effect on the embrace of a fiction. The opportunistic romantic and the sanctimonious journalist are all finale and moral. They are the great paraphrasers of the ineffable. As a dramaturge of the eye, Medina entered their thematic domain and produced visual theater. The enigmatic core of all reflective experience, not the medium, is the message.

In photos where gang members pose in front of their graffiti, Medina explored the layering of signification with brilliance. Indeed, in all of Medina's work, sensitivity to layers of form, space, shadow, and line is exhaustive. The gang members pose the only way they know how, turning their bodies into signs. Their middle and ring fingers close and their hands become the initials "L" and "K" (for "Latin Kings"). They grimace pride in aggression. They don or hold out symbol-cluttered jackets, expose their tattoos. The signs have devoured them and control even their rage. These modern gargoyles are tribal beings whose existentiality is collective, whose identities are inalienable from signs. This explains why they wage war with symbols—graffiti becomes aggression because aggression itself is a sign in a universe conceived solely in terms of language. "Sons of the Devil" is an expression of a code. The irony is that language is communicated order.

In Medina's oeuvre, we understand a deeper irony. The essential character of the gang and its graffiti can only be imaged forth in vivid terms through the aesthetic act of an artist focusing on the mechanics of subjectivity, conscious that he is composing a unique and illuminating fiction. The artist turns the collective sign into a fiction and does so within the stage of his image. As a fiction, the sign can become the object of reflection, aesthetic or otherwise. Reflection and the theater it depends on do not themselves belong to the world of signs they marvelously reveal.

Medina's irony, then, is not postmodern—it is not self-referential. Rather, it is focused on the truths behind the layers of language and experience that compose the life-world and that the phenomenological attitude implicit in aesthetic reflection seeks to reconstitute in eidetic terms. Medina's irony is essential to the truth his theater discloses. The function of other tropes in his work is also profound. Metonymy, which governs transference of values between elements proximate in space or function, rules the gang members' identification with their sign system.

But metonymy also affects the way the syntax of the photograph unfolds. Layered, effacing signs at war with each other at first appear to underscore the two-dimensional nature of the composition. But, in actuality, the layering of the signs denotes a three-dimensional reality, like sedimentation, even if this third dimension is coded primarily in temporal and discursive terms. One reads these utterances through layers, not in two dimensions across the neat highways of a printed page. Medina played on these subtleties of space and process metonymically. The layering of the signs is echoed by other three-dimensional cues: the sidewalk, a glimpse of a background (usually down the left side of the image), the gang members posing in front of the wall, footprints in paint.

Far from breaking the proscenium, these metonymic transferences of dimensional values between sign, wall, people, and surrounding spaces augment the theatricality of the image. In other words, dimensionality acts out ambiguities much as the combat of signs does, except that the dramatization of spatial variability is controlled by metonymy, not irony. Medina's intense yet subtle manipulation of space came from years of working as an accomplished architectural photographer. What this training produced in his later pictures, however, was not a facile fascination with formal composition, but a gift for stagecraft in photographs whose prevailing two-dimensionality would seem to leave little room for such explorations.

Metaphor, which binds its elements on the basis of resemblance, weaves surprising links throughout Medina's photographs. The art-historical allusions discussed above are ruled by metaphor. On a broader plane, the graffiti-writing gang member and the artist parallel each other. Both are involved in artifice, intrusion, communication, sign-making, and decoding. Much contemporary art is, sadly, a closed sign system penetrable only to the initiated, not unlike the gangs' graffiti. On an even wider plane, Medina the dramaturge is also Medina the viewer of a slice of urban life turned into theater. The analogy between artist and viewer—essential to the simultaneous confrontation with enigma—is signaled in the images by the low level of rhetoric implicit in the frontal point of view Medina always took toward these scenes. Metaphor links every photograph to stage, painting, text, and architecture.

The images themselves play out intricate metaphorical strategies, especially in Medina's photographs of weeds and trees. Although much of what is said above concerning the graffiti and gang photos is true of Medina's images of weeds and trees, there are some important differences between the series. The frontal point of view is not uniform in the photographs of weeds and trees. This variability allows Medina to become lyrical without plunging into pathetic fallacy. There is undeniable pathos in Medina's shots of ice-covered trees braving the winter near Lake Michigan, but it is not oppressive. Medina was interested in the metaphors of the image that sprang from the surreal forms the ice took: at times looking like cotton candy draped over leaves and branches; and at other times resembling marble, resin, or moss. Once again, the trope—metaphor in this case—focuses the gaze on time. Seasons, the process of congealing, the sculpting power of wind and temperature all disclose Medina's fascination with the effects of temporality on being.

In the photographs of weeds, pathos is replaced by mordant humor. Medina never overplayed his hand. The weeds are never cast in grand roles. They are approached as evidence of the stubborn forces of life breaking through cracks, colonizing any available patch that can sustain them. At times, they are shown frontally, a wall behind them, like prisoners before a firing squad. In one photograph, the weeds seem to be scaling a castlelike U.S. mailbox whose oblivious, olive-colored geometry is surrounded by tangles of nameless and rejected life. In another, a bare tree is set against thick potted cacti in an ad for imported beer painted on a wall. In Medina's work, there is no Adams- or Weston-like fascination with gorgeous form or shadows of the plant-in-itself, as if inspiration entailed spotting sculptures hidden in the hairy randomness of nature. Time and again, Medina's protagonist image appears on the stage, discloses its ambiguous intent as both delinquent life and solitary champion of a cemented realm, and says no more.

But it is impossible to dismiss the feeling that the weeds and the trees were icons for Medina, symbols of the artist at odds with a world unconcerned with his reflections and dreams. Subjectivity is that other life force that plunges through stone, canvas, page, and lens to assert itself.

The icon of all triumphant if unassuming intruders, the weed is nature's gargoyle; it is self-absorbed, untamed because indifferent to the possibilities of grandeur. The weed abandons to more civil plants the chores of beauty and the largess of providing shelter and fruit. The weed is living debris, the lone claimer of ruins. It clings to what it knows, the earth, and resists the temptation of flight that trunk, bark, and branch offer. No artist, and certainly not one with the unsparing theatrical sensibility of Medina, could avoid feeling an affinity. That is the enigmatic spell that Medina's images cast when, in charge of their stage, they reverberate in all their meanings, textures, and connotations, enveloping artist and viewer alike. The baroque passion of every image is to stake a claim in our psyches, sink its roots, and change us forever.

Chronology

by David Travis

1941 January 24, José López born, Havana, Cuba.

1942 June 18, Luis Medina born, Havana, Cuba.

1958-61 Medina left Cuba for a three-year stay in Europe. Met the Cuban poet Gastón Baquero in Spain.

1961 Rejoined mother and stepfather in Miami as émigrés from Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Reunited with López in Miami.

1965-67 Enrolled at Miami-Dade Junior College. Graduated in 1967.

1967-73 Attended The School of The Art Institute of Chicago (S.A.I.C.) with López where, in 1969, he met professor Harold Allen and developed his interest in photography.

Earned B.F.A. (1971) and M.F.A. (1973).

1969 Allen assisted Medina in photographing a proposed conceptual sculpture.

Medina met curator Hugh Edwards and, with Lopez, took his class in the history of photography at the S.A.I.C.

1971 Exhibition with López at the Light Fall Gallery of the Evanston Art Center, Illinois.

1972 First photographs published in the *New York Times*, Apr. 24, sec. 1, p. 35, and Apr. 25, sec. 1, p. 43; and the *Saturday Review*, May 20, pp. 24, 26. Included in exhibitions "Recent Acquisitions," The Art Institute of Chicago; and "Five Chicago Photographers," Wabash Transit Gallery, Chicago.

1972 Hired as instructor of photography at Columbia College, Chicago, and at the College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

1973 Exhibition with López, "Photographs by José López and Luis Medina," The Art Institute of Chicago.

Featured in Alan G. Artner, "The Fanciful Images of López and Medina," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Sept. 23, sec. 9, pp. 44, 47, 49.

Began six-month documentary project with López about Quincy, Illinois, for the American Revolutionary Administration, out of which three traveling exhibitions were prepared.

1974 Included in exhibition "New Photographs of Illinois," The Art Institute of Chicago.

Exhibitions with López, "An Architectural Heritage: Quincy and Adams County," Quincy Art Center (exhibition later toured Illinois); and "Two American Photographers: José López and Luis Medina," Amos Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland.

Began two-year project with López to photograph the University of Chicago for the book *Dreams in Stone*.

Mentioned in Douglas Davis, "Photography," *Newsweek*, Oct. 21, p. 68. Met Manuel Álvarez Bravo in Chicago

1975 Included with López in survey of recent American photography, *The Photographer's Choice* (Danbury, Conn., 1975), ed. Kelly Wise; exhibition drawn from the book tours during 1978 and 1979 to Witkin Gallery, New York, and the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

Included with López in exhibitions "Contemporary Still Life," Renaissance Society, University of Chicago; "Photographers from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; and "Recent Acquisitions in the Photography Collection," Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Solo exhibition "Recent Color Photographs," Peter M. David Gallery, Minneapolis.

1976 Included in exhibitions "Recent American Photography," Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; and "Spectrum," Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

Exhibition with López, "José López/Luis Medina: America, America!" National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Featured in Paul Gapp, "Neglected Beauty," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 13, sec. 2, p. 10.

Dreams in Stone published by the University of Chicago Press.

1977 *Dreams in Stone* reviewed in Robert C. Marsh, "Masters of the Midway," *Chicago Sun-Times Midwest Magazine*, Sept. 4, pp. 10-11; Jonas Dovydenas in *Chicago* 26, no. 2, p. 78; Carl Lavin, "Scissors, Paper, Dreams in Stone," *Chicago Journal* 1, no. 21, pp. 3, 7. Presented exhibition at John Hancock Center, Chicago, of photographs selected by Hugh Edwards from *Dreams in Stone*.

Included with López in exhibition curated by Max Kozloff, "Warm Truths and Cool Deceits," which toured to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York; and Miami-Dade Community College South Campus Art Gallery.

Portfolio of photographs reviewed in Philip Herrera, "Four Eyes—One Vision," *Nuestro Magazine* 1, no. 1, pp. 41-44.

Included with López in exhibition "The Photographer and the City," Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (for reviews, see Alan G. Artner, "Chicago Hybrid Takes Wing, But Awaits a Happier Landing," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 13, sec. 6, pp. 6-7; Marie Czach, "Is There a 'Chicago School' of Photography?" *Afterimage* 4, no. 9, pp. 9-11; David Elliot, "Face to Face with the True Chicago," *Chicago Daily News*, Jan. 15-16, *Panorama* sec., pp. 3-4; picture spread in "Scenes from a City's Life," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Jan. 16, pp. 24-25).

López left Chicago for Miami.

1978 Medina traveled as United States delegate to the "First Latin-American Colloquium of Photography" in Mexico City, where photographs by López and himself were included in exhibition "First Exhibition of Latin American Photography," Museum of Fine Arts, Mexico City.

Exhibition with López, "Two Photographers: José López and Luis Medina," Centre for Photographic Studies, Sidney, Australia. Included in exhibition "Recent Acquisitions in Photography," The Art Institute of Chicago.

Served as juror for exhibition at "Hispanic Festival," Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago.

Began teaching as visiting lecturer and later as visiting associate professor (through 1979/80) at Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois.

1979 Included in exhibitions "First Photographic Biennial," Venice, Italy; and "American Photography in the Seventies," The Art Institute of Chicago. Exhibition with López, "Architecture, a Personal View," Chicago State University. Included with López in Max Kozloff's *Photography and Fascination* (Danbury, Conn., 1979), pp. 200, 206-07.

1980 Solo exhibition "Luis Medina," The Art Institute of Chicago (for reviews, see Alan G. Artner, "Meyerowitz's 'St. Louis' Explores a World of Vibrant, Living Color," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 24, sec. 6, pp. 10-11, 20; David Elliot, "Making Art of Gang Grafitti," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Aug. 24, sec. 3, p. 6; and "Genial Grafitti," *Art News* 79, no. 9, pp. 174-81).

Interview with John Alderson in "Elegant Photos from Tough World," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Apr. 11, pp. 64, 66.

Commissioned to illustrate Stephen M. Salny, "Historic Interiors: Frances Elkins," *Architectural Digest* 37, no. 6, pp. 86-91; these photographs issued in 1982 in portfolio form as *The Home of Mrs. Kersey Coates Reed—Lake Forest, Illinois: David Adler, Architect*, with text by Peter S. Reed.

1980 Exhibited commissioned photographs in "Documentation of Monuments Acquired with the Ferguson Fund," The Art Institute of Chicago.

Included in exhibitions "Selections from the Collections of George Irwin," Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana; and "Recent Acquisitions in the Collection of Manuel Álvarez Bravo," Institute of Graphic Arts, Mexico City.

Guest lecturer at The Art Institute of Chicago on the exhibition "The Photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson."

1981 Included in exhibition "Traces: Three Chicago Photographers," Ukranian Institute of Modern Art (for reviews, see Alan G. Artner, "Graphic Power Comes into Local Camera Range," *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, sec. 6, p. 15; David Elliot, "Michael Johnson's Photos of Nature Blooming Again," *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 14, p. 25; and Christopher Lyon, "Jonas Dovydenas, Luis Medina, and Laura Volkerding at the Ukranian Museum of Modern Art," *Chicago Reader* 10, June 12, p. 44).

1982 Commissioned by The Art Institute of Chicago to document Daniel Buren's conceptual work with Illinois Central commuter trains. Included in exhibition "Recent Acquisitions," Columbia College, Chicago.

1983 Began photographing the George F. Harding Collection of Arms and Armor for The Art Institute of Chicago.

Included in exhibitions "Chicago Photographers," Friedus Gallery, New York; and "Chicago: The Architectural City," The Art Institute of Chicago (for review, see M. W. Newman, "Institute's Photo Show a Cook's County Tour," *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 31, *Show* sec., p. 6).

Delivered guest lecture at the Midwest Chapter of the Society for Photographic Education entitled "Documentary Photography—Ethical and Social Issues."

1984 Included in exhibition "Harold Allen, Photographer and Teacher," The Art Institute of Chicago.

Three photographs of graffiti published in "Urban Combat," *Aperture*, no. 96, pp. 30-33, with text by Danny Lyon.

1985 Included in exhibition "Color Photography: New Work," University Art Museum of the University of Wisconsin, Madison (for review, see James Auer, "Camera + Color = A Spectrum of Expression in UWM Show," *Milwaukee Journal*, Mar. 10, *Entertainment* sec., p. 10).

Died of a cytomegalovirus infection in Miami, October 12.

1986 Featured in David Travis, "Luis Medina," *Hispanic Image*, Mar., pp. 6-12.

1991 Included in exhibition "Cuba-USA: The First Generation," the Fondo del Sol Visual Arts Center, Washington, D.C. (exhibition traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul; The Art Museum at Florida International University, Miami; and Lehigh University Art Galleries, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania).

1992 José López died in Miami.