

MASSACHUSETTS

ANGELA GRAUERHOLZ

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Angela Grauerholz's large, sepia-toned photographs appear to be the orphaned fragments of larger narratives. Like film stills without scenarios, they have the capacity to suggest stories lying hidden just outside the frame. It is as if we have walked in on the middle of something, slipped into the hushed space of a pregnant pause. If we could rewind the spools we'd know how we got here; then we could start up the projector and the single image would find its proper place in the sequence.

Of course, these images can never be spliced back into the reel. They are free-floating bursts of feeling, isolated, without past or future. In *Window*, two women gaze from the shadows into a blinding light. What are they waiting for? What do they see out there? We can never know. In fact, these images seem to be about the impossibility of ever knowing. They are mute, inarticulate. Grauerholz eschews the factual precision inherent in the medium in favor of grainy prints that are deliberately ambiguous. In the portrait *Raymonde*, most of the woman's face is cropped. Her head is slightly tilted, and her hand lightly touches the side of her face. Her lipsticked mouth is set in a sphinx-like smile. A heavy, black frame masks the rest of her features, creating a portrait that is simultaneously intimate and unknowable.

In Grauerholz's photographs, mundane subjects have an almost mystical presence. *Hospital* shows a very ordinary Modernist building on a quiet city street, but in the soft, warm tones of the photograph its very ordinariness seems merely a disguise. It is like an image on microfilm smuggled out from behind the Iron Curtain, an image whose secrets will be revealed only in a basement in Langley, Virginia.

These photographs could be artifacts taken from a novel by John Le Carre.

Like spies we sift for clues, we hang on every shred of evidence in the maddeningly imprecise emulsion. But, as is often the case in the world of espionage, pictures tell stories whose meanings elude our grasp.

Miles Unger



Angela Grauerholz

La Bibliothèque, 1992

Cibachrome print, 48" x 72".