AN INTERVIEW WITH GARRY WINOGRAND

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BY CHARLES HAGEN

Garry Winogrand's photographs exist on the edge where facts become symbols—or farce. For over 20 years Winogrand has photographed the variety of life in public places, using the elisions and truncations of photographic depiction to suggest unnoticed meanings in events.

In October, "Public Relations," an exhibition of Winogrand's photographs, opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Many of the photographs in the exhibition came out of a project Winogrand started in 1969, when he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to photograph, in his words, "the effect of the media on events."

Accompanying the exhibition was a book-length catalogue, also called **Public Relations.** The book—Winogrand's third, following **The Animals** (1969) and **Women Are Beautiful** (1975)—contains 75 photographs from the show, as well as an excellent introductory essay by Tod Papageorge. Papageorge, a photographer and longtime friend of Winogrand, served both as curator for the exhibition and as editor of the book. Another Winogrand exhibition—of photographs taken at rodeos—was shown in November, at Light Gallery.

Winogrand was born in New York in 1928, and lived there until he began teaching at the University of Texas at Austin eight years ago. Winogrand returned to New York most recently for the opening of his exhibition at MOMA; we interviewed him at Light Gallery a few days after the opening.

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Q: We were talking on the way over here about some of the differences between Austin and New York. Do you come back here often?

GW: Well, that's a relative question. I come back when I come back. I'll be here at Christmas time; I only managed to spend a week here this summer. Last summer I was here much longer.

Q: So many of your pictures from a certain period of time seem to depend on your being in New York...

GW: That's a funny statement. There's a picture of a horse, that depends on my being in Texas. I photograph where I am. There are photographs I'm taking here that I couldn't take any place else.

Q: Did you feel a certain affinity for being in New York, that you don't feel in Austin—or vice versa?

GW: I never have any problem with that. I just—I get at it. I'd been in Austin for maybe six months when somebody said to me, "Well, your life is different now, right?" And I said, "No, my life's the same. It's a different place; my life's the same." He couldn't understand that. When I'm in New York, I have my family life, and I work, I photograph. That's my life. It's the same in Austin. I'm in a different place, but my life hasn't changed. My clock hasn't, even. By that I mean—the people in Texas are slow. They really don't know what getting something done is about. But I do. For example, the supermarket where I generally shop now has a cash-only line. People are writing these little checks—they do their banking in the goddamn supermarket. They come there, and they don't carry any money—they also live a fantasy life: they don't think they're spending money—they write checks. Somebody will come in and buy something for 75¢, and then write a check for $5.00, so they'll give change. But I'm standing in that line, waiting for somebody to write a check for 75¢, and they've got to go through the cashing thing—I don't like that. And I told the guy that. I was innocent, and I told him, you ought to have a "check-only" line. He said, "Most of our business is with checks." So I said, "All right, then have a cash-only line." And I threatened him then. I said, "One of these days I'm going to be on that line, with a big wagon full of food, and I'm going to walk away from it, and you're going to put it away." So now there's a cash-only line.

They're like a bunch of cattle. They'll wait—they've got all day. They don't think anybody else has anything to do, either.

Q: Do you think that in New York people have a lot more to do? Is that it?

GW: No, I think in New York people have an idea of what getting something done is about. They don't tend to want to dawdle.

Q: I would have thought that for you one difference between the two places would be that in Texas you would have to seek out the sort of public events that here you can just find on the street.

GW: Well, even in Austin I can go into the downtown area—it's the capital of the state—and there's a lot of stuff going on. Then of course there's the campus there; there's over 40,000 students at the university. There's a lot of life. Aside from all of the other stuff, the actual public events—like a fair, or horse races—no, there's plenty to do. That's the least of my problems, believe me. There's an expression they use, that everybody's "laid back." They probably use it all over the place. I'm not! And I have my troubles sometimes because of that.

Q: Do you shoot every day?

GW: Sure, just about.

Q: On your way to work, or what?

GW: Well, whenever. At lunchtime, or if I'm in school, if I have to leave school that day, at lunchtime...

Q: Are there times when you shoot more intensively than at other times?

GW: Well, if I know something is going on—if that's what you mean. But I'm always on.

Q: I've heard that you'll sometimes shoot 30 or 40 rolls of film a day. Is that right?

GW: No, very rarely. It would have to be a long day and a lot of different things happening. But I work. I like to work, and if it's there, I'll do it. Sure. It's not finger exercises.

Q: Do you travel much?

GW: Once again: I travel. I do manage to travel; what "much" is, I don't know. I don't know how much is enough yet...

Q: Do you find it easy to go into a strange place and just start taking pictures?

GW: No problem. You know, you've heard photographers talk about how they want to know the place better and so on—they're really talking about their own comfort. Let me put it this way—I have never seen a photograph from which I could tell how long the photographer was there, how well he knew it. Or if you want to talk about the photographer as a person, maybe—I mean, you can take Diane Arbus's pictures. How do you know from the photographs—forget all the rhetoric—from the photographs, that she didn't rush in and make 'em, bang, and rush out, like a thief? You know, kick the door open? They're really talking about their own comfort.

Q: So you don't think you have to take some time to find out what a place is like, and so forth?

GW: From my experience—I start shooting. I look. I don't have to know the language, I don't have to know where to get a good cup of coffee...

Q: But then do you find that your pictures from one place look like your pictures from another place?

GW: Well, they can't. They can't. If I take a picture in here, it's not going to look like the street does, right?

Q: But if you take a picture in here, and you take a picture in Chicago in the same situation...

GW: Well, if it's physically the same, then, let's face it, if you go into an office in one skyscraper, in New York, and then into another skyscraper, in London, they'll be the same. Concrete is concrete, I don't care where. The streets are concrete in Houston, too.

Q: But you don't think there are regional differences? The way people dress, the way they look?

GW: Look, I saw a guy in a cowboy hat yesterday on the streets here.

Q: But I'm sure you'd see a lot of them in Austin...

GW: You go downtown, in downtown Houston, and there are guys in business suits with vests. I'm sure I could walk around here and see—what is it—you know, those double-knit things. That's one thing. I think in a town like Austin, a smaller town, at lunchtime, or whenever there are people hitting the streets, you'll see this kind of white patent leather belt with cotton knit thing. You don't see as much of that in New York as you do in small towns. A friend of mine really put it well; he said, "They look like their mothers dressed them up to go to school or something." They're all wearing the pants that the golf players are advertising—that's what it comes down to. At least in Manhattan, the areas that I'd be most interested in, in Manhattan—you don't see that, so much.

Below: Garry Wino, and, Tenth Anniversary F
Guggenheim Museum, New York 1970. From Public Relat

Below: Garry Winogrand, Kent State Demonstration, Washington, D.C., 1970. From Public Relati

Below: Garry Winogrand, untitled, no date. Courtesy Light Gal

Q: The game itself, you mean?

GW: Oh yeah, you bet your life. I've got a lot of good football pictures, and probably a couple that—you've never seen football pictures like these. Now, they're straight—a picture of a guy running down the sideline carrying the ball; there's all the people on the sideline, the press and what not—it's hysterical! It's a very funny picture. I mean, it's a shock. All the guy's doing is running down the sideline. There's somebody on one edge, a football player, on the ground—part of him—with the referee right behind him. And there's the sideline, the whole sideline, the press and all that; it's a hysterical picture.

Q: But that was a surprise for you when you found it on the contact sheet?

GW: Oh, sure. Absolutely. It's crazy.

Q: Do you remember what you'd seen in the scene?

GW: Just what I photographed. I was in the end zone; I anticipated the guy. I try to anticipate what a quarterback's going to do.

Q: Which I guess is the secret of being a good sports photographer...

GW: Well, I don't know, but I try to figure it out. So I was in a good position, and the guy's coming right where I thought. So the point is, I shoot one play after another, and I'm always trying. This one has its own kind of surprise. There are other ones I have that are different.

I work, you know? And as I say, if I see something in terms of a picture, I'm going to do something about it. I give myself some chance for surprise.

Q: When you say you work, what does that mean?

GW: Well, I'm photographing.

Q: Do you work with an interesting situation or scene? For example, if you find an interesting background, will you wait for the right people to come along, or anything like that?

GW: No, no; very rarely would I do something like that—very rarely. I might wait for people to get out of the way!

Q: Do you try to induce chance, to bring chance elements into your pictures?

GW: What do you mean by that?

Q: Well, you're talking about wanting to be surprised about things on the contact sheet, and not wanting to take a picture that looks like a picture. So do you have exercises, where you might just hold the camera up and shoot over your shoulder, or anything like that?

GW: No way, no. I use the viewfinder. It's foolish...

Q: So you just wait until it doesn't look like something you've seen before.

GW: Well, things happen a lot of different ways. But it's not a question of waiting; it usually doesn't work that way. I'm very active, do you know what I mean? I'm aggressive. If photographing is a passive act, and I think it is—you basically deal with what is—within that context, I'm aggressive. I'm probably, if not the most aggressive photographer, certainly one of the most.

Q: Aggressive just in terms of seeking out things?

GW: Getting out and doing it, yeah—if it's there, I'm at it.

Q: Do you find you shoot as much now as you did 15 or 20 years ago?

GW: More. It seems like the more I do, the more I do. It gets more interesting, the problems. It seems that way, anyway. I always have this sense, also—I mean, I'm in Texas, right? And I know my time is limited there. I don't want to be there forever—I could never live there forever. So I have this thing of getting it in—I want it in the can. I don't want to leave there and then say, why didn't I shoot this, you know? So I always have that urgency. We were talking before about getting to know a place: I could never spend that kind of time. You know, time is limited. You'll hear somebody—like art students, or writers—say, "I'll go to New York when I'm ready." Horseshit! You can go to New York and do your getting ready when you're there!

Q: Do it where you are...

GW: Of course. It's like, "When I'm 65, then I'll live." You have these people sitting at idiot desks moving paper—they bought that fantasy—the retirement thing, you know. There's today! It's nonsense, anything else.

Q: In his essay in your new book, Tod Papageorge talks about your changing, in the period 1960-1963, I guess, to a wider-angle lens. Is that right?

GW: Yeah, I started fooling around with a 28—from a 35.

Q: You said of that, that it made the problems more interesting—was that just because there were more things to account for?

GW: More or less, sure. Ideally, I wish I had a lens that took in my whole angle of vision, without mechanical distortion—that's the headache with these things. Ideally, that would probably be the most interesting to work with. The 28 is probably where the mechanical distortion is least limiting—much less limiting than a 21. It's closest to the angle of attention. It's pretty close to at least my angle of attention. Probably the 21 is more so, but its just extremely limiting. You have to use it very carefully.

Q: If you tilt it at all, you get very strange angles...

GW: Well, it's not a question of tilting; the minute you get in the center of people, a little bit close, you get another kind of nonsense happening, that falling over. In the end, those pictures wind up being primarily about what the lens is doing. If there was a 21 that didn't behave that way, I'd probably use it.

Q: Do you shoot with anything other than the 28 at all?

GW: Yeah, in the last six months I've gone back to a 35mm lens, because I'm sort of bored looking at 28mm contact sheets! So I just started fooling around with the 35mm again. There's nothing very complicated about my reasons!

Q: Does that make the problem easier, then?

GW: No; I can manage to keep it interesting for me.

Q: Do you find that you're putting less in the frame now, with the new lens?

GW: I don't really know; I just take pictures, and they

Q: Have you done much shooting in other countries?

GW: Well, I spent five weeks in Greece this summer. I've been to Europe a few times, and I've done some shooting, sure. Actually, some good pictures, here and there.

Q: Do you find that those pictures have a different character?

GW: They look different, because it's a different place. Particularly Europe. The buildings are allowed to get old there, and they're not being torn down as much. But that's changed. I haven't developed the film yet—I shot a lot of film in Greece this summer. I found the streets—very, very interesting shooting there. Very aggressive place. But I haven't seen the pictures yet, so I don't know.

Q: How do you decide what to print, after you've shot and developed the film?

GW: Well, if it looks interesting. I look at the contacts; hopefully, if all is going well, looking at the contacts is a similar kind of adventure as shooting is. I photograph in terms of what looks interesting. You see what I'm saying? When I'm photographing, I don't see pictures. I deal with things in terms of what's interesting. When I look at pictures, when I look at the contacts, then I have to ask, is the photograph interesting? It's no longer a question of whether what I photographed is or isn't—what I photographed was interesting. Now you're looking at a photograph.

Q: The interest is a different kind of interest, then?

GW: Absolutely. When I'm photographing, I don't see photographs. I see faces, I see this, I see that. I don't see photographs until I see photographs. When I'm dealing with a photograph, I have to deal with it as a photograph, not as the interesting face in a photograph.

Q: So the interesting face in a photograph isn't enough to make a photograph...

GW: Well, it may or may not be. But the point is, I have to deal with it as a photograph. You know, your face doesn't have four corners. There's space that has to be accounted for—the whole frame. You know, what's the subject of a photograph, but the photograph?

Q: Are you aware, when you're taking the photograph, of the frame?

GW: Absolutely. I always have an overall sense of the frame, and everything in it, even though at any given instant my attention is probably at no more than one spot. But I know the 10 figures that are there. I know exactly how they're arranged. At any given instant my attention could be on the turn of this head, but I know if something comes in on the edge, or whatever. Sure.

Q: I would think over time your sensistivity to that would increase.

GW: I know what I'm doing; sure. Anyway, you've got to deal with the whole photograph. That's all there is. When you look at a photographer's work, you can almost see when they see pictures and when they don't.

Q: Do you find that works with you, too?

GW: No, I really don't see pictures. The fact is, when I look in the viewfinder, if I do see it as a picture, I'll do something to change it.

Q: Why?

GW: Because, in the end, the pictures that you see when you're working are the pictures that you know already. Either somebody else's made them, or you've done it already. I'm not interested in that, I'm not going to learn anything—if I make that picture again I'm not going to learn anything, I don't have a chance to learn anything. And I'm interest in learning—testing what's possible within the frame.

Q: Is it learning something about photography...

GW: Absolutely...

Q: Or about life?

GW: Well, I don't know—are they different? But I'm learning what's possible in the frame. It is about photography, of course. That's really what I'm interested in.

Q: So are you always testing what you know?

GW: Hopefully, yeah. Well, what I don't know. I want to see something new, if something's going to happen that's a surprise. You know, even with a photograph of Bresson's—there's a picture in that book, **The World of Henri Cartier-Bresson,** and, of what's been published of his work, I think it's one of the later ones. It's a landscape. There's just a hill, snowswept—it's not even heavy snow. You can see the ground. And there are three black tree stumps. Do you know the picture?

Q: I think I do. (The photograph is the next to last one in **The World of Henri Cartier-Bresson.**)

GW: There's no way, when Cartier-Bresson took that picture, that he saw a picture. That happened—that's an act of photography. It's a beautiful photograph, a marvellous photograph; it's also terribly instructive. Just to make the point, when I say there's no way he saw a picture there: I wouldn't be surprised if he whacked it out of a moving car. That had to be a surprise for him, looking at the contact sheet. You know the picture, so just to make the point stronger, consider this: through the whole history of photography—or art—you've never seen a painting of a landscape of that type, or a view camera picture of that kind. There isn't any great tree, or reflecting pool, or beautiful ray of light through a cloud, right? There's nothing to take a picture of. You'd never go do the work of making a painting, or setting up a view camera, to try that. I'm simply saying, check it out. It's never happened. I'm not hypothesizing.

Q: But then how do you know it, recognize it, when you see it on a contact sheet?

GW: That's intelligence. There it is. I mean, how do I know to look at that page and learn from it myself? Something happens there. I use that picture for teaching; it's a beautiful photograph, and it's instructive in so many ways. It's a remarkable photograph.

Q: So that element of surprise in seeing a picture on a contact sheet—is that...

GW: Well, look at that photograph. You look at that book, and it has to be a surprise, when you hit that page.

Q: Do you find that happens for you a lot?

GW: Hopefully!

Q: Now and then?

GW: Well, I'm lucky. It happens reasonably often. Enough, I guess. There's funny things going on. I've got a photograph—it hasn't surfaced yet—I've been shooting a lot of football. I shoot the action, too, very much. And I shoot all the other stuff; I can't resist. But I do the thing itself.

look almost the same to me. I really don't know how to answer that question. The only real difference is, with a 28, racking it out as far as it'll go, let's say in terms of a face, there's a lot less space, with a 35mm, left. It's an interesting little difference. The minute you back up a little, then it becomes a question of how far you've got to back up. So with a 35 you're probably going to back up more, usually. Or you'll do things without feet... I really don't want to look at contact sheets that are going to look the same as a 28. Even if I could do that with a 35, by changing my distance or whatever. I'm playing, in a sense. It's all about not being bored.

Q: Again, just to keep the problems interesting...

GW: Yeah. And the only way you do that is finding out how much you can get away with, you know? It's true.

Q: Do you ever make radical shifts, like change format, or do color, or something of that sort?

GW: Well, I've shot color; I just don't want to, for a number of reasons. Changing formats—if I ever did that, I'd go to either an 8x10 camera or an 11x14 camera. If I wanted to change, I certainly wouldn't enlarge.

Q: Have you ever thought seriously about doing that?

GW: Well, I know about it, because I've thought about it. The only reason I would do it is—here's the thing. The fact is that there are two reasons to use a view camera, only two. One: if you want the verticals to be parallel. Two: for great depth of field without loss of definition. You can do almost anything else with a small camera just as well.

Q: I've seen a number of your pictures that deal exclusively, or almost exclusively, with patterns—wallpaper, fabrics, floor tiles, things like that. That's not the kind of picture you're usually thought of doing. Are the problems the same with those pictures as they are with your pictures of people, or on the street?

GW: Yeah, of course they're the same. I don't photograph things that I think of as "pattern pictures"; I just make pictures. Let's face it—there's nothing without form. In the end, it's all about form.

Q: But then don't things have meaning for us looking at them, too?

GW: What do you mean by "meaning"? The point is that everything has form.

Q: But don't we respond to people differently than we do to bedspreads?

GW: No; in a way yes, and in a way no. Only in the sense that the symbolic meaning, or something, is part of the content.

Q: Do you think it is?

GW: Absolutely. If you have a photograph with Richard Nixon in it, yes, it's a face, just like your face. But the symbolic meaning of that face is special, no question about it. Of course, a photograph has to work no matter what the symbolic meaning is. There could be six different meanings, you see, to six different people—even to somebody who's never seen Nixon. A photograph has to work all around. But it is part of it, no question about it. If I look at a Tintoretto, and there's a large scene and in the corner there's Christ—I'm a Jew. What the hell's Christ to me? But the picture works for me, too. It has to.

Below: Garry Winogrand, untitled, no date. Courtesy International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House.

Below: Garry Winogrand, untitled, no date.

Below: Garry Winogrand, untitled, no date. From Women Are Beautiful.

Q: So are the photographic problems separate from the connotational problems, or the symbolic problems?

GW: It's all the same. No, in the end that's part of it. That question of narrative is part of it. It's crazy, and it may seem somewhat paradoxical—photographs do not really have any narrative ability. You don't really know what's happening; you don't know what happened a second before or a second after. You don't know if the guy's walking backwards or forwards—or is standing on one foot. You don't know. But you do, from your own experience, surmise something. You do give it symbolic content, narrative content. The narrative idea that the photograph conveys is in a certain sense part of its symbolic content.

Q: Do all photographs have a symbolic or narrative content?

GW: To some degree, yes. Look, everything is symbols to somebody. A tree trunk has some meaning to somebody. And the form gives it meaning, and the form can change the meaning, of the same thing. The whole thing is crazy. But it's nothing to worry about! It doesn't have anything to do with taking pictures! God forbid you should have all this mumbo-jumbo in your head when you're working! But it's interesting to try to understand.

Q: Do you think about that after you've finished shooting?

GW: Well, I think about it now and then—I think about it when I'm teaching, certainly.

I've been lucky, in the sense that I've never had to think about what to photograph. I've always known what to photograph—at least for me. I've never had to plan. Even when I've gotten grants, it's always been for something I'm working on. I never dream up something to do and then try to do it—I've never done that. I just never have to think about it, what to do with myself in that sense. All I really do is keep my eyes open. I learned a long time ago: I trust my instincts. I don't ask myself, "is that interesting?" If it is, I shoot; if it isn't, I'm not interested.

Q: Do you find yourself, after a while of looking at things, going back and saying, well, I tend to be interested in this kind of thing?

GW: No, I don't look for those kinds of connections. They don't make sense to me. Oh, I know there are things that key me; I know certain things that fascinate me, so I'll try them.

Q: When you see those things that fascinate you, do you then go over and try—I'm thinking, there are certain themes that I see in pictures of yours, that you go back to—scenes of accidents, how people look at them...

GW: No, I don't...When I say I get keyed by certain things—most of the time the idea of the action turns me on. Most of the time in my work I come at the problem from the standpoint of content, in a sense—what's happening.

Q: What do you mean by content, here?

GW: Well, most of the time when my photographs are interesting it's because the content is on the verge of overwhelming the form. The contention will come from that. But there's a kind of thing which keeps interesting me, which I keep shooting at—which constitutes form, really...Let me explain something: it's all about form. Everything. You can talk about content, but art is all about form. There's a particular thing that happens—usually it's just where people are lined up across the frame—that interests me. If I see anything that resembles that, it'll make me try a picture. I'm aware of that now.

Q: Anything that's close to that?

Garry Winogrand, untitled, no date. Courtesy Light Gallery.

GW: Oh yeah, in one form or another. It interests me to try to make a picture from that. It's very clumsy form. It's very resistant, let's say, and that's why it interests me. But I know it, I began to catch on, so I come at it for me differently. A lineup—boom! I want to try it. I never thought about it, until I started seeing that happen.

Q: That's such a rich device, because it implies a connection between each of the people...

GW: Go back to your family album pictures, the dullest thing to try to make something really interesting out of. You know what I mean? I've got a few of them that are pretty good, actually! You find out, begin to see certain things you're doing.

Q: I guess that's what my question earlier was about, of how you choose pictures from the contact sheet.

GW: Again, it's whether it's an interesting photograph. I can talk about lineups all I want, but maybe two seconds after you make the picture, the lineup doesn't exist. You've got to deal with the photograph, again.

Q: That idea of comparing different elements in the frame—

GW: How do you mean comparing?

Q: Well, if you've got two people, there's an implied comparison between the two...

GW: No, no, I don't think of it that way at all.

Q: Don't you? In the picture of the fat boy and the sheep, at the rodeo, there's an obvious comparison...

GW: Well, they both have the same existence; I don't know about comparing them.

Q: Really?

GW: Really.

Q: Don't you see them as looking about the same?

GW: I see what that's about, but I don't think of it as comparing. That doesn't occur to me. I don't see things that way—I see the frame, I don't see it...

Q: I'm fascinated by your saying that, because I'm thinking also of the photograph of the old women and the bags of garbage—

GW: Yeah, but that's just the whole frame. You know, I've never completely understood why everybody laughed at that picture.

Q: But you chose to print it...

GW: Well, its an interesting photograph. There's a young, kind of attractive girl between two of them; you get this and that happening—it's a whole frame. There's a physical energy, the four women, where they are...I don't know. I don't deal with it that way. I don't.

Q: That seems to me such a constant thing through much of your work...

GW: But I don't deal with it that way. To me it's a whole frame, it's a picture. The photograph is more interesting than that little idea. Otherwise I wouldn't have printed it.

Q: What do you mean by "the whole frame"?

GW: Well, I don't know how to say it...The photograph is more interesting than that little sight gag that you're talking about. Let's call it a sight gag. Let's say the content doesn't overwhelm the form. It's more interesting than just a little joke.

Q: Because of the gestures of the women?

GW: No, because of the whole frame. I can't even tell you why. I don't know what's responsible, why it's an interesting photograph. I know it's interesting! It's got a lot of contention between content and form—they threaten to divide. They don't, but they threaten to divide. The content is on the verge of overwhelming the form, let's put it that way.

Q: The content being—what?

GW: The content being the joke, etc. We're discussing the symbolic meaning, you see? Because otherwise they're just things.

Garry Winogrand, State Dinner, Apollo 11 Astronauts, Los Angeles, 1969. From Public Relations.

Q: You seem to have that sort of broad joke, but at the same time to have subtler comparisons between people...

GW: There's nothing subtle in the photographs. They're all seeable. There's nothing subtle there. That's another word that I think doesn't apply to photographs—like the word "abstract." I've never seen an abstract photograph.

Q: Because there's always some content?

GW: Something has to be photographed! People call it abstract because, if you move the camera in that close, you can't name what the photograph is of. But it's not abstract. Something's been photographed. Even with painting the word's badly used. In a Jackson Pollock painting, the content is the behavior of the materials—there's nothing abstract about it at all.

Q: Do you prefer to show your work in exhibitions, or in books? Does that make any difference to you?

GW: They're different things. Let's face it, I show in a gallery just to sell prints. I don't have too many confusions about that—that's about making money, hopefully. The show at the Modern now—in about '71, John Szarkowski saw some of the pictures, and said he wanted to do a show. I said OK, but we both agreed that we wanted time. A show for me is interesting in terms of forcing you to deal with the work. That's why I said I wanted a lot of time—I wasn't ready. In the end, Tod did most of the editing. I'm involved—there's nothing hanging that wasn't discussed with me. But it's primarily Tod's editing, and it's good. I think it's a good show. That's what's in it, for me, with a show—the question of contending with the work—seeing what I can learn from the work.

Books are funny. I think I've probably lost any fantasies I had about possibly making money with books. With **Women Are Beautiful** there was a screw up with the printers, and we missed the first Christmas shopping season. I'm not going to kid myself. I thought with the **Women** book I'd see a chunk of cash, which has never really happened. We'll see what happens in the future. But I'm going to put together a "Men" book—I have the pictures. I have a few more things to attend to, and then in a month or so I should be able to get started, putting it together.

Q: Do you have other book projects in mind as well?

GW: Well, when you say book projects, yeah, I've got the pictures already—like the rodeo thing. I've got pictures there, too. That's what most of this show here at Light is going to be, from the Fort Worth rodeo. But that's going to be all laughs. If I make money, fine, but I've given up any idea that that's the reason. I just don't expect to make money from books any more.

Q: The question of editing the work comes up here again—

GW: Well, it ends up the same story—unless you do it for money; then you have a different story. But I'm grown up about it now. If I do a book, it's just for laughs. That's it. Let's face it—you may not see a direct payoff from a book, in terms of royalties. But if you put a book out, and it's reasonably interesting, or it's reasonably well promoted, you get a few more lectures, sell a few more prints—it pays off one way or the other. Up to a point it's fun to put it together; beyond a certain point most of the time it's aggravation. That's one nice thing about the Museum book, **Public Relations:** they do it; I have no aggravation, I don't have to move a muscle. They're going to make sure this comes out looking good; they're going to handle everything, and I don't even have to think. And that's a pleasure. There are things I don't want to know about—I don't want to know what happens at the printers. Lee Friedlander and I are very different, in that respect. Lee has energy for stuff—I'm very narrow. Certainly in these terms he's much closer to being a Renaissance man than I ever have been or will be! He gets interested in mat boards, all that stuff—he's got the energy to do it.

Q: Would you rather not edit your exhibitions, too?

GW: No, no, that's fun! I mean, the fact is, Tod made one trip west, and we did a lot then. If I had been in New York, I'm sure we would have worked on it together more. There were all sorts of surprises in the show for me, because there are some pictures in the show that I was under the impression we were disagreeing about—that I wanted in and that I didn't think he'd put in. But there they were. So I got some more jollies than expected.

Q: You've been teaching now for how long—eight years?

GW: Yeah, roughly.

Q: Do you enjoy it?

Q: But they're forms, actually, on the paper...

GW: Exactly, it's light on surfaces. The thing about photography—what's interesting is, that happened. Those people passed those things. It really wasn't funny to see; but in the photograph those plastic bags have the same existence...

Q: Same look?

GW: Same existence, as the women. The camera doesn't know that one is inanimate and one is animate. It is about photography, to a large extent.

Q: It is, but it's also an editorial statement.

GW: It wouldn't be an interesting photograph if it wasn't, in a lot of different ways, about photography. It's about pictures, and how pictures look.

Q: Do you think about caricatures, in relation to your work?

GW: No, no. Whenever I've seen anything approaching caricatures in photographs, they're bad. Avedon has done some, although I don't think his intention was to make a caricature. Whenever he gets bored with what he does very well, he gets in trouble. So he'll do that thing with Perle Mesta, from under the chin, and it becomes a bad caricature. You're working with a camera, and it's hard. Caricatures can be done best with a pencil.

Q: Well, some of the pictures in your new show...

GW: You think they're caricatures?

Q: Well, you catch people in moments that are...

GW: It's not caricature. What's caricature? What you're talking about is that in some photographs you suspect that something characteristic is being shown—you suspect it, you can't really deny it. Cause you've only got a fraction of a second, and maybe it's someone you'll never see again. But caricature is the wrong word. I think you can say that something characteristic is being dramatized about somebody. It's not caricature, though.

Q: I guess that's what I would think of as caricature—taking one element and blowing it up...

GW: It has to do generally with the correlation of physical things to character things. Traditionally that's been done with drawings and with words. But the camera can't handle it. You wind up with a face. No matter how Nixon's nose is, it won't come out exaggerated. Let's say, the minute you do something photographically to make it exaggerated, then the picture's going to wind up being primarily about the process. If you talk about wide angle lenses and stuff, you see? I don't know what the right word is, in talking about the photographs, but caricature is a wrong word.

Q: Do you know what I'm talking about—getting people at a moment which may not be a typical moment, but which seems to express something about their character?

GW: Who knows, who knows? I don't get into that, myself. I just don't get into that speculation. In a certain sense the meanings of these things are mystifying to me...

Q: But you do seem to be attracted to facial expressions...

GW: Well, that's part of everything. It's conceivable that with every picture in the show, maybe by the time I took the picture I missed what I really wanted to get. I don't know. In the end I've got to deal with the picture. What am I interested in—who the hell knows? I don't know.

Q: But your pictures must satisfy you, because you keep doing them.

GW: Well, maybe it's because they don't satisfy me that I keep doing them. Do you know the story about the concert artist who finishes playing, to tremendous applause; he does one encore and then another, and this goes on? Finally the applause has gone on so long he's tired, and he says, "I'm very tired, and don't think I'm not appreciative. I have the feeling that you would have me do encores all night." And somebody in the balcony says, "Yeah, until you get something right!"

Q: In the interview that was in **Image**...

GW: It was a long time ago...

Q: Yes, seven years ago. You were talking about the picture of the black man and white woman with the chimpanzees, and you said that perhaps that was too easy a yuk...

GW: Well, I don't know; I said I don't trust the picture—and I still don't. It may be a good picture, I don't know; but I don't trust it.

Q: Do you try to avoid things that are so obviously funny?

GW: No, are you kidding? I don't talk myself out of things. I don't shoot things that are foolish, but no, I don't talk myself out of things. I'll shoot, I may even make a print. I'll try things.

Q: Do you see a difference between things like that, which are sort of a joke...

GW: It's no joke—those people were there!

Q: Well, of course in itself it isn't a joke, but the photograph and the implication—

GW: Well, once again: the symbolic meaning is part of the content. But can you make a picture out of it that's fundamentally interesting—can you or can't you? It's worth trying. Otherwise why do this?

Q: Photographically interesting?

GW: Yeah, it's always got to be that.

Q: Why is that picture photographically interesting? I think it's the event that's interesting...

GW: There's a question of the tension again—does the content overwhelm the form, or doesn't it? I really don't know. I still don't trust it, but I'm interested in it.

GW: Yeah, I wouldn't do it if I didn't. It's interesting to try to figure out how to talk about these things, see how they work. I find it very interesting. It's also very useful. I very specifically wanted to photograph in Texas, and it's the only way I can afford to put in the time, shot of getting grants.

Q: How'd you get the idea you wanted to photograph Texas?

GW: Well, I travel around the country a lot. Since 1955 I've done quite a few small car trips. I found that the two parts of the country that I really wanted to put time in, that I wound up gravitating to, were Texas and the Los Angeles area–California. So teaching is a way I can do it.

Q: Were there certain factors about those areas that you responded to?

GW: I don't know; it's just something about them, a crazy energy. I don't know what it is, it's just something that draws me there. And things have worked out pretty well.

Q: But you like the teaching, too?

GW: Well, look—you only live once, right? In a certain sense living is about fighting boredom. So if I'm going to put in time teaching, I'm going to make it interesting for me. I will not just go through the motions.

Q: I guess I'm asking if the teaching itself, being with students—

GW: Look, I'm interested in the subject; I'm not interested in the students. That's probably one of the reasons I have big classes. There are other reasons for having big classes, but one of the reasons is that I don't get close to them. It helps me keep distance. And I insist on distance. I'm interested in the subject—photography. I'm interested in discussing that, trying to find ways to. I'm not interested in students.

Q: Do you think photography can be taught at all? In a school?

GW: You can discuss it; you don't create photographers, if that's what you're asking. Is there a school that's been responsible for the creation of a photographer—or any artist? Come on. No. Out of the question. I don't care whether you're talking about graduate students or undergraduate students. I'm in an art department, so I'm talking about photography, I'm talking about painting, sculpture—there isn't anybody who I would bet a nickel on, that two years out of school they're going to be doing anything they've been studying.

Q: People doing anything, or anything interesting?

GW: Well, doing anything related to what they're doing in school. The fact is that during the time you're in school your life is designed for you to do the work. That's what school's about. When you get out of school, nobody gives a shit. You've got to make a living, you may even have a kid to feed—who the hell knows? Nobody cares whether you make a picture or not. So it ends up you, your own passions, for the thing that are going to be tested. And there's nobody I would put a damn nickel on, that I see in school. You don't know anything about what's going to happen to somebody's life from the way they are in school.

Q: So would you suggest that young people not go to school?

GW: I don't suggest anything! Let them live their life, one way or the other. I certainly think it's idiotic for people to go to college right out of high school, and for people to go to graduate school right out of college. It doesn't make sense. You've got a country full of

Below: Garry Winogrand, untitled, no date. From Women Are Bea

Below: Garry Winogrand, Opening, "New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970" Exhib
Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1969. From Public Relat

Below: Garry Winogrand, Apollo 11 Moon Shot, Cape Kennedy, Florida, 1969. From Public Relatic

GW: No, in the end there are at least a dozen photographs that are at least as great as any work by anybody—that's it. And that'll get you out of that separation. That was Weston, you know, and then I could pull out some Robert Frank, and they're totally different. Or Evans, or—I could make a list. My god, photography has had great artists! It's amazing.

Q: But that transparency—

GW: It's my direction, that kind of rigorous photographic surface, however you want to put it. But I'm trying to make the point that I'm not making a value judgement. I'm not saying what's best. They've all produced great work. I don't argue with the work—I don't give a shit how it was made, that's the point. My personal taste, preference, whatever you want to call it, is in the direction of Evans. But that's my personal road. I wouldn't prescribe to anybody. Everybody has their own psychology. You've got to find your own way.

That's one of the problems students have—particularly if you teach workshops, where they see you photograph. The two photographers I learned the most from—Evans and Frank—I never saw either one of them ever take a picture. I knew what machines they used, but I never saw them take a picture. And I think that probably was good for me. I think that students who see me shoot can take on the physical actions without an organic reason for it. Whatever I'm doing, has been worked out—in terms of my body, even. Over the years I've designed my actions, I function a certain way. But students take on the physical thing without the reason for it. They tend to do that—they do tend to imitate their teachers. I'm not so sure it's the best thing for people, who are interested in photographing, to see me work. In the end if they work it out, they'll work it out—they'll find their own way, too, if they do enough work.

That's another thing about the schools, and teaching, and what not. I'll tell you this: the student who can learn from a good teacher, doesn't need him. Maybe the teacher saves that student a little bit of time—maybe. I wouldn't bet on that, but if it does, I don't know if that's worth anything, either. I'll also say that there's no teacher who can fuck anybody up. If somebody can be fucked up, somebody will—whether it's a teacher or whatever. You can't screw anybody up, you can't help anybody.

Q: Did Tod Papageorge and Joel Meyerowitz used to go out shooting with you?

GW: That's a long time ago. Well, Tod and I, we were walking around the other night.

Q: But it wasn't a regular thing?

GW: No. Well, Tod and I—when I was living in New York we'd spend a lot of time together. It's not the thing of going out to shoot together; that's not what it's about. I may be out shooting, and he may meet me. I may say, OK, the weather's nice, meet me at such and such a time at 57th and Fifth. Maybe because—first of all, I'll be out shooting; second of all, if my friend is late I don't have to get mad at him if I'm busy. I tend to be early. Then we may walk somewhere and get coffee, and I might shoot on the way.

Q: You've been friends with Lee Friedlander for a long time, haven't you?

GW: We're very good friends, for a long long time.

Q: Have you two talked about pictures a lot?

GW: No, not really. I don't know what the hell we talk about!

Q: Do you see connections between your work and his?

GW: I think we're very different photographers, in a lot of ways—in terms of the worlds we deal with. And we function differently. Lee will tend to concentrate on a thing—I could be wrong, but almost to the exclusion of other things—he'll produce a **Monuments** book. In that time he was taking other pictures, but I don't know if it would be conceivable for me to do something with monuments, which are for all intents and purposes inamimate. We're different. He's doing more landscape things now. He's carrying a tripod, in certain situations—not me! We're very different; our work is very different.

Q: How did you happen to become friends?

GW: Well, we met in New York a long time ago, and we had similar interests. I feel confident in saying we both really like each other, enjoy getting together. But we are very different! Lee lives in a house and I live in an apartment. He moved out of the city—you can't say it's suburbia; really it's the country, where his house is. That's not my thing. He does everything on a much more regular basis. He generally is close to being up to date with his shooting, printing, whatever; I just am very different. We're very different, in just about every way. I'm much married, he's had only one marriage!

Q: How often do you print up stuff?

GW: That depends. I haven't in a while. Except—I just made some work prints. I was curious...

Q: Do you go back over your contact sheets at a later time, after you print through them the first time?

GW: No, rarely.

Q: Do you find that your ideas about what is interesting in your work change?

GW: Not much, no. Usually I know what I'm interested in—usually!

Q: I was interested to find out from Tod's essay that you'd been connected with dance. It's funny, because one of the things I wanted to ask you, from looking through your books and so forth, was about dance...

GW: Well, my first wife was a dancer, and I did do some shooting around rehearsals. But I had no real connection with it.

Q: But so much of what you respond to seems to be gesture, body attitude...

GW: Yeah, right. I can't explain it. I don't stretch myself out on the couch much.

Q: Have you ever done films at all? A lot of your pictures have a narrative quality to them.

GW: No, never.

Q: Have you ever wanted to?

GW: No; if there was a film I wanted to make, I'd make it. Photography fascinates me; still photography fascinates me. And you know, it doesn't relate—they're two different processes. They both use the same kind of camera, and film, and that's the end of it.

Q: They're different processes, but in a lot of your pictures I find the implication of motion.

GW: No, they're all still lifes.

Q: They're all still lifes, but you'll have three people doing the same thing at different stages in the action...

GW: They're all still lifes.

Q: They're all still lifes, except in our heads, maybe—

erschooled, undereducated people. A lot of waiters and mechanics are possibly being ruined. There's nobody to sweep a floor up—they're all in college. Forty thousand—that's one campus only! Who's going to feed the pigs? They're too good for that! They'll walk though school, they don't know how to read; you can go through college without knowing how to read, read intelligently.

Q: Do you teach photography courses as such?

GW: That's what I teach, yeah.

Q: Do you give students assignments?

GW: Well, I don't tell them what to photograph; I tell them to photograph. But again, I don't take attendence, I'm not a cop. They couldn't pay me enough to be a cop.

Q: But you don't have exercises or anything like that that you want them to do?

GW: No. What happens in a class, I'll show slides right off the bat. Let's see, who'd I show last week? I think it was Diane Arbus, actually; before that it was Robert Frank, before that Bresson, Evans—you know, I show a collection of slides. Then a discussion takes place. And then we deal with their work. I meet with my classes once a week. I have a—call it a critique—on Monday afternoon and another one on Wednesday morning, and that's it.

Q: So that leaves you a lot of time free.

GW: Well, whatever I need, I have. Like this week, I'm not there at all. That's how it goes. Like I say, I'm interested in the subject, and what takes place is what I want to take place. It's all for me, in a certain sense—what's discussed is what's on my mind, more or less. If they have questions, sure, but it really revolves around what I'm interested in—which is the subject.

Q: Do you find a lot of people, outside of your students coming to you with work?

GW: A certain amount; not often. I'll get calls...

Q: You talked before about the need for energy in your pictures...

GW: What do you mean, need? There's nothing without it! It's not a question of need. Let's say, the ones that I show don't need it!

Q: Well, let's say you seek out scenes with energy, or—

GW: Well, that's not necessarily so. The energy is generated by what happens in the frame. There are pictures where people are not animate—they're sitting, or they're standing; there's no movement. There's not that kind of energy. It's a different thing.

Q: You've also talked about tilting the frame to put energy into a scene...

GW: No, I never said that.

Q: I'm sorry, then; I misunderstood you.

GW: I never said that. There are a few different reasons one might do it. One is, if the thing looks like a picture, to change it, to try to make it not look like one, to make it fail—to see how much you can get away with. There are a lot of reasons. Sometimes I'll tilt the frame just because it's the easiest way to include certain things, get more in. And there's another reason—you know the **Women** book? There's one picture in the **Women** book. Here—in this picture, this telephone booth is distorted, wide at the top from the 28mm. It's my guess that if this thing was not tilted, then this would take over, and the picture would be primarily about the way it sits there. But tilting it contended with that. In the end, you can only get away with it in a photograph if it's rational. I can play games—if somebody says to me, why'd you tilt the picture. I say, it isn't tilted. It's only tilted if you insist on the horizontal edge being the point of reference. That's just arbitrary. All right, the legs are parallel to the vertical edges. The picture pivots on her legs, but her legs also rationalize the tilt. It is rational. That's why it gets away with it. And of course you only see ones that work!

Q: There's a reason for it...

GW: There's always a reason why I do it; whether it works or not is another story! I can have all the good reasons in the world, and it doesn't make it work. Like Tod said in the essay—I'm impatient with intentions, my own, too. In the end we're down to the picture. What I'm really telling you about is how the tilt functions here. It jives you, it's a piece of jive.

Q: Yeah. But the tension between...

GW: Well, the tension, all that—that's something else. It's not just because of the tilt. This one isn't tilted, but this is a picture, too. Basically the contention between form and content is responsible for the energies and tensions—that's what it's about, in the end. So the energies and the tensions in all art, I think, and all photographs, are the same.

Q: How did you first come to tilt the camera?

GW: Well, some of the things that Robert Frank did in **The Americans** were a big help. I learned a lot from that book. If I didn't learn anything more than just about camera operation, it was a lot, you know what I mean? That's where I saw it first, became aware first that the tilt could work. Without understanding why, I began playing with it. I only started to understand this when I started teaching, when I started being forced to deal with these things in words. The thing that interested me about it, when I first saw the Frank book, the only thing that I could put in words about it, was that it had to do with his strategy—the pictures are seemingly casually made. There's an artlessness about them; they almost seem to have happened without a photographer. Actually, that's what the photographer did. It's very interesting. Evans, you know, was sort of in reaction to Weston, let's say—it's almost like part of the content of Weston's pictures is the desire to make art. And in a sense Evans is in reaction to that. And then you've got Robert Frank, who's sort of in reaction to two things at the same time—Bresson and **Life** magazine, that kind of picture. One of the things that's interesting, in discussing these people, is that Robert Frank's winds up as much a strategy as anybody else's—it's as much art-making as anybody else's. It's self-defeating in that sense. It's great work, but—of all the photographers that there were, whatever, Evans may be the most transparent of all of them, the one where there's the least evidence of the hand. Evans and Atget, let's say, are probably the most transparent—where the photographer seemingly exists the least.

Q: And do you think that's the best kind of photography?

GW: Well, I'll say it this way: there's a lot of different roads to Chicago. Weston was a great photographer, did great work; I don't really give a shit how it happened. My personal predilection is in the Evans direction, no question about it. I could pick ten, a dozen Westons that are as good as any pictures that have ever been made in any way. I could easily do that. So—I don't ask questions!

Q: So you're interested in picturing the world rather than saying something about how you see the world? I'm just trying to set up this separation between what I would see as the conscious art-making—

GW: Then we're discussing your head, now; we're not discussing the picture...

Q: That's true, but the picture only exists to be seen.

GW: No, the picture is innocent of the audience. If we're going to talk about the picture, we'll talk about the picture: they're still lifes. If you want to talk about your perception, that's a different subject. The picture is innocent of your perception. Ten different people can see the same thing differently.

Q: But the picture obviously isn't innocent of **your** perception.

GW: My intentions also—or whatever you want to call them—are irrelevant, once the picture exists.

Q: Except that you chose to print it.

GW: They're irrelevant once the picture exists. In other words, even if I put down a still picture and I say, that's somebody running, the picture is innocent of that.

Q: Yes, but you wouldn't print it if it wasn't of interest to you.

GW: That's another story. Once again—I could print shit that's interesting to me—so what? Just because it's interesting to me doesn't make it interesting.

Q: What does?

GW: The photograph has to be—not my ideas of it. I don't give a shit what the hell was in his head when he took the picture. I don't even know if that's what he saw. How do you know?

Q: But when you said the photograph has to be interesting—

GW: The photograph has to be interesting.

Q: To you.

GW: No. You mean to me, in order to make a print? Sure. But that doesn't make the photograph interesting to anybody else. Yeah, I have to be interested in it enough to make a print. But after that, I'm out of it.

Q: Well, I'm trying to make the point that people make pictures.

GW: Yeah; I make pictures to amuse myself, I guess. That's why I make pictures, primarily—for jollies. My jollies.

Q: Finding out about the process...

GW: More or less, yeah. And it's fascinating—at least it fascinates me!

Above: Garry Winogrand, at the opening of **Public Relations**. Photograph by Helaine Messer, courtesy Museum of Modern Art