



## Artist Profiles

### May / Janice Mehlman - *Sculptured Light*

Janice Mehlman has shown her photography, internationally, in solo and group exhibitions since 1981. Her work is represented in galleries located in New York, Los Angeles, London and Pietrasanta, Italy. Her art has also been featured in numerous books and articles. This includes a review of her last show at Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art on these pages in October of last year. Among the awards she has received is one for research in 2002 from the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York.

The first thing that catches your eye about these magnificent photographs is the dramatic quality of light and shadow they create. Create? Given that these are photographs shouldn't that be *capture*? No, create is correct because, although photography is better known as an objective documentation medium, Mehlman applies it rather subjectively in her work. While the pictures are of actual places, the question of what sort of reality they portray is open. Mehlman uses her camera to bring a personal reality to bear and the result is images that are as sensuous as they are elegant. The patterns of light and shadow hold plenty of deliciously softened contrasts. It's the same sort of quality that Alfred Hitchcock's often tapped into with his classic black and white films.

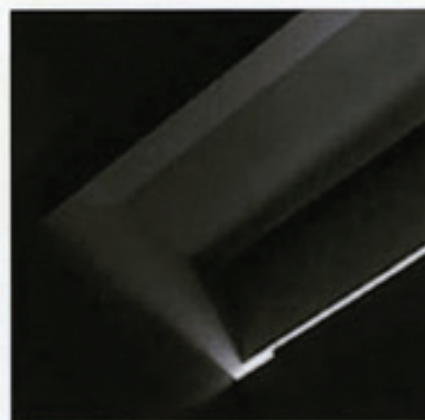


Janice Mehlman, *Streets of Desire*, 2002, silver print, 25 x 24 in

But step back for a moment and consider the absence of color or rather how these images would be affected by its presence. A large part of the beauty of this work is in how the blacks, whites and multitudes of grays simplify the forms. The result is that sublime relationships between the forms are captured and made explicit. The images are imbued with an inviting sense of mystery;



Janice Mehlman, *Resurrection*, 2001, silver print, 30 x 24 in



A Slice of Light, Iris Print Photograph, 30"x30", Ed: 10, 2002

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something just beyond our knowing; like parts of dream recalled in daylight. This also plays into and supports the concept of using the camera to sculpt light and shadow. Mehlman deconstructs architectural space and simultaneously rebuilds it in her own image. So, its not that the photographs would be worse for using color but more that the black and white quality offers something uniquely special in and of itself.

Something else this work expresses is a sense of visual rhythm. In some pieces this is innately driven by the architectural space captured. But the artist masterfully enhances this quality enough to take ownership of it. One of the best examples is found in a piece like "*Sudden Lightness*". Here planes of light and shadow long with portions of an exposed railing seem to almost gyrate and dance with each other while presenting the tactile quality of soft of skin. You are cognizant of this in the imagery even as you are also aware that the materials the picture portrays are actually the opposite. The magic is in how the contradiction is resolved. The light and shadow possess a



Janice Mehlman, *Sudden Lightness*, 2001, silver print, 30 x 24 in

stronger sense of reality over mere architectural space and so release the visual dynamics of the forms. Look at a piece like "*No Crossing*" where shapes containing the ephemeral characteristics of light and shadow more than hold their own against the tangible elements.



Janice Mehlman, *No Crossing*, 2002, silver print, 30 x 24 in



Radiant Black, Iris Print Photograph, 30'x30", Ed: 10, 2002

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What these photographs offer is what any great art offers: a whole new way of seeing. Encounter any of these places directly and most likely you will simply see stairwells, nooks and crannies. They are places of utilitarian function; passageways from one place to another that most of us rarely give a thought to. But Janice Mehlman pulls off a minor miracle by transforming them into images of quiet beauty, without color via a medium that is primarily supposed to be objective. With her camera she virtually sculpts a special sense of place that is only accessible through her photographs.



Utopian Vision, Iris Print Photograph,  
30"x30", Ed:10, 2002

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