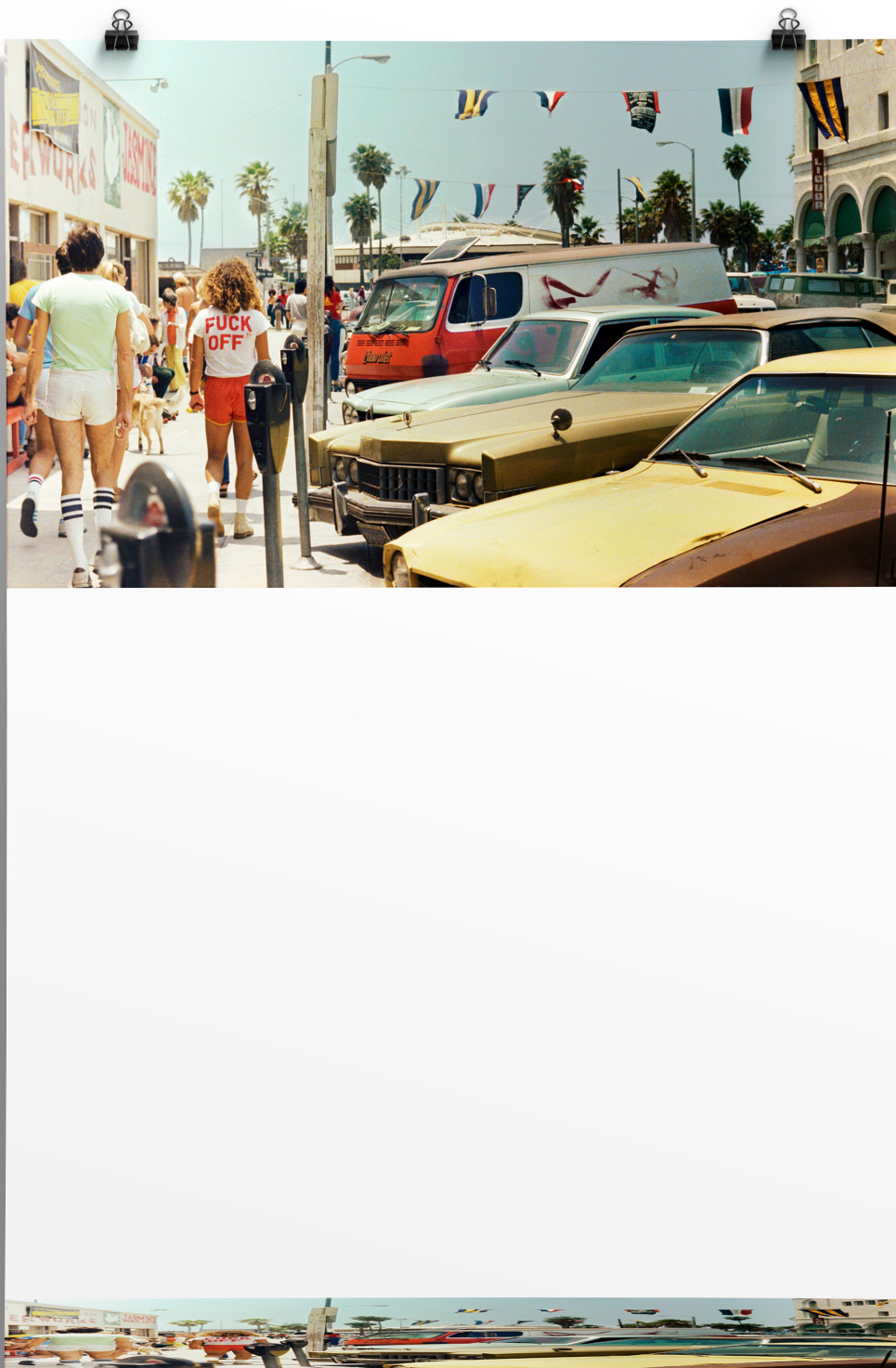


haphazard

Press Release, January 9–February 20, 2016

Greetings From LA: 24 Frames and 50 Years

George Porcari



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Beginning the 9th of January, 2016, haphazard presents *Greetings From LA: 24 Frames and 50 Years*, a new collection of photographic collage work by George Porcari. *Greetings* includes 24 large-scale collage works. Each collage, titled by the location and year, is comprised of a photographic image of Los Angeles organized around a blank space or “void” with similar scale and resonated by a graphic “footnote” at the bottom. These images are taken in Los Angeles between the years 1964 and 2015; they are not digitally manipulated except for the bottom “footnote” which has been radically compressed to virtual non-existence. Robert Frank once said, “I leave it up to you. They don’t have an end or a beginning. They are a piece of the middle.” Like Frank’s *The Americans*, Porcari’s *Greetings* is a collection of personal meditations on the world around us while exposing the emotional rhythms of Los Angeles in the middle.

Although there is not a strong emotional tension or separation between the photographer and the photographed, like much street photography where privacy is often invaded or confronted, George Porcari’s photography, analogous to the works of Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank and Arthur Fellig aka “Weegee,” is shot on the streets and is documentary in style. It is visually free, edgy and spontaneous and yet it is ordinary and nugatory by appearance and highly personal. If *Greetings* were a film, it would precisely be a one second time-lapse during Porcari’s fifty-year-long “road trip” in Los Angeles; descriptions of ordinary details, uncertain plots and flights of fancy sent to us (those who are not there) in the form of postcards.

Greetings shows us a different Los Angeles from the wholesome, commercialized, glamour-filled images that have been popularized and politicized by the mass media. The Los Angeles many of us have come to call home is depicted in Porcari’s collages as 24 theatrically compact vignettes; you may not recognize the street intersection by name, but you feel a vague familiarity to this Los Angeles. Photographed through portals commonly found in our urban vernaculars, like windshields, window panes, phone booths or the mirror-finished façade of corporate architecture, these fragmented sceneries or reflections of Los Angeles are incidental, forming their own histories and ecologies of a city with its disjointed suburbs loosely connected in a labyrinth of freeway. Raw realities and insignificant encounters of our everyday are transformed into marks, signs, unrecognizable symbols, or pieces from a jigsaw puzzle; and details from the past, like dated fashion items, vehicle models, corporate slogans, and messages from advertising are collaged into new context and coded with disappearance, causing a certain kind of nostalgia without being melancholy. These “collections” of found cinematic moments in Los Angeles are evanescent in nature and fall short of being sentimental or surrogates for any hidden narrative or social commentary.

Without any discernible purpose, this personal visual vocabulary forms shards of existential riffs or philosophical musings needing a space to meditate. A form of recitation occurs at the base of the collage; this “footnote” completes the composition and gives the blank space a shape. Like an echo or the last flicker of an image on-screen when the monitor is switched off, one wonders if this footnote contains additional information or other extraneous material that may aid our understanding or if it’s just an abstract artifice to create a mirror of our past. When viewing these collages, our senses occupy the blank space that Porcari has set up to complete the collage; perhaps by what was not presented or photographed. At times, visual elements from the upper image pierce through the blank space and reappear at the footnote, like an anchor in the storm; often the blank space or “void” dominates the composition and confronts the viewers who may be fascinated by the unseen in a landscape that is so familiar to an Angeleno.

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Frame by frame, we are introduced to Porcari's blank space; an actor of many characters and whose gazes barely betray anything at all. As if to make amends with the voluntary imprisonment on the other side of the viewfinder and the impossibility of being a neutral observer, the blank space is a pause from all the senses of dislocation, an ambiguity in the face of the eternal mystery or a medium where language, in light of its uncertainty, attempts exchanges or communication. Sometimes the "void" carves a refuge, sometimes it shields from an aversion, and sometimes simply invigorates the viewers to try put the puzzle pieces together.

George Porcari is an artist and photographer based in Los Angeles. Born in Lima Peru, George emigrated to LA in the 60s and begun his lifelong vocation in observing, documenting and greeting his cities and his surroundings. Porcari attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and Art Center College of Design in Pasadena where he has also taught film and collage history classes and worked as an acquisitions librarian for many years. Porcari has exhibited widely and internationally since his very first solo show in New York back in 1988; among the most recent were solo exhibitions at Tif's Desk in 2012 and at China Art Objects in 2010. His numerous critical essays and other writings have appeared in such places as *CINEAction*, *NY arts*, *Inflatable Magazine* and many others.

An exhibition catalogue is being published to commemorate the exhibition. The catalogue will include the photographic collage work from *Greetings From LA* and essays by George Porcari, Jorge Pardo, Sylvère Lotringer, Veronica Gonzalez Peña and Colin Blodorn.

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Undesirable Alien: A Diptych

by Veronica Gonzalez Peña

"...His work is so de-centered that it appears to be perpetually involved in the pointing toward that which lies beyond it; and in this directing out is implied the gap, the interstice, which we as viewers obsessively try to fill, though we know we never fully can. And so, the question remains, in his work (as in that of many others): how to consider the space between, the gap, and those things, like music, or the best writing, and art, which depend on that space: on the this, to that...to that...to that. If transition, or the space between is all there is, really, then how to think about the moment, the image, the thing? Can flow and vitality have something to do with it?"

New Palimpsests From the Zen Arcade

by Colin Blodorn

"...Empty areas and distorted spaces, though we might forget at times, accompany us in places and ways both subtle and deceptively apparent, carrying a weight intrinsic to the particular qualities of its own absence. George Steiner writes on this, defending the notion that with intention:

*Modernist tactics make of blank spaces between the lines, whether typographically declared or inferred acoustically, as in music, something altogether different from nothingness. They can contain the suppressed, the apparently forgotten which exercises a felt pressure. They can be loaded with futurity, with potential eruption into significance on the very edge of deployment. Emptiness is made fertile, a paradox made fascinatingly actual by the speculations of string theory and dark matter cosmology on 'vacuum energized.'*¹

¹ Steiner, George. *The Poetry of Thought: From Hellenism to Celan*, 158