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→ *Micha Bar-Am*
© Tina Ruisinger



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← © Manuela Höfer

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CONTRIBUTORS



↑ Cover: the late Helmut Newton
© Tina Ruisinger. See pages 6–21

Gerry Badger is a critic and curator, and has written several books on photography

A. D. Coleman is an internationally renowned photography critic and author, based in New York

Tim Daly teaches photography at East Surrey College and writes books on digital photography and printing techniques

Colin Dixon is an architectural and location photographer

Eddie Ephraums is a photographer and printer. He is a founding editor of *Ag* and is now a regular contributor

David Lee is editor of *The Jackdaw*, a monthly newsletter for the visual arts. www.thejackdaw.co.uk

Michael Maunder runs the photochemical supplies company Speedibrews



Time and motion studies

Dimensional change and other non-apparent realities, by Chris Dickie

PREPARE TO ENTER a strange world. No wait ... you're already there. It's the real world around you as seen through the lens of Texas-born artist and inventor Ansen Seale. There is no doubt that this is photography of the real world - beaches and parades, junk yards and creeks. But, in the same way that

telescopes and microscopes allow humans a glimpse of reality they are not naturally privileged to see, Seale's 'chronoscope' makes us into time-travellers, at least for a moment. The works have a variation of aesthetic that is both challenging and calming. Some figures are elongated, others are stretched, and

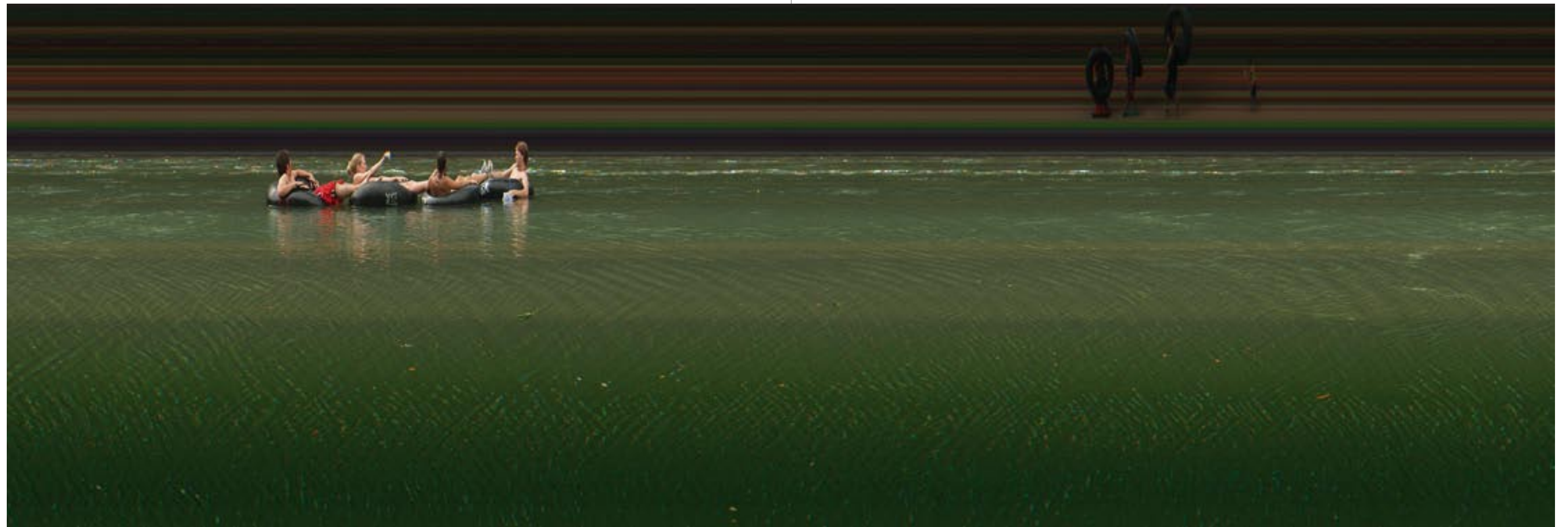
some figures have stick legs while others resemble skis. Shadows curve and landscapes are devoid of perspective. There is often an aura of wild colour surrounding flowing figures. In a world awash in digital imagery, at first glance Seale's work might be dismissed as computer trickery. But, all these effects happen in camera. No digital manipulations have been applied.

'I've never been a big proponent of the f/64 Club mentality that says your photograph must be fully formed and conceptualized in camera with no postproduction work such as cropping, much less digitally manipulated.

But the amazing part of this process is that all these effects are happening in the camera. To me, that says that there is a reality here we have to look at and accept. There is an honesty that is undeniable. Of course, I choose where and when I want to shoot and edit from hundreds of images the ones I want to show. This, in itself, is a manipulation of the data. But the basic image remains pristine and fully formed within the process of the capture.'

Although these images are undeniably unusual, the principles behind the camera on which they were made are well estab-

↑ *Relativity*



lished. The 'chronoscope' is a rotating digital vertical slit camera of Seale's own devising, originally conceived for the production of 360 panoramas for virtual tours. In conventional use, the image is built up as a series of narrow vertical stripes during the camera's rotation. However, to produce these images, recently exhibited in a show entitled *Flux & Flow*, the turning motor has been disabled. What appears at first to be distortions in the pictures, could really be described as a more

accurate way of seeing the passage of time even though unfamiliar to our traditional concept of the depiction of time and space in art. These photographs are in fact a kind of time exposure where only one tiny slice of reality is imaged at any given moment. The result is a mind-bending swap of the dimensions of X and time.

Seale explains: "a normal flat photograph actually contains four dimensions. These are 'X' and 'Y' for the horizontal and vertical, 'Z'

is the suggestion of the direction extending away from the camera, or depth, implied by perspective, and the fourth is time. Time is implied by the depiction of moving things. Like the 'Z' axis of the picture, this perception of the passage of time is an invention of the mind of the viewer and brought about by the intentions of the photographer. It's a virtual dimension, not something which actually exists but is only implied. The intertwining of these four dimensions in a very

intricate way gives the photograph its unique power to fool the eye and gives the impression that the photograph is a proxy of reality like an image in a mirror or a window. My new digital camera exchanges the horizontal spatial dimension of 'X' with the implied dimension of time. This is done by imaging only 'Y' or a vertical line of pixels of the same subject over and over again, up to a hundred times per second. The internal processor of the camera arranges these pixel lines side by

↑ *Flow*



side, in effect building up the second (horizontal) dimension of the picture plane, 'X'. The theory is similar to kaleidoscope in that a small section of any given scene is repeated over and over again to fill up the picture plane. Pointing the camera in a slightly different direction will produce a completely different scene.'

In Seale's world, only moving or changing objects register as clear. Static objects are rendered as lines across the picture plane.

This is the opposite of what you would expect with traditional photography where moving objects are blurred and still objects are clear. Deeply influenced by the principles of Taoism, Seale uses water as the medium to express the metaphor of time. 'Water is without form yet can wear away the highest mountains, given enough time. I want to show the flow of time, not stop it dead in its tracks. In our normal lives we only see the passage of time as it affects us, much like we

only 'see' air when the wind blows.'

Seale says that the biggest influences on his work come from pioneers of imaging who, at the time, were perhaps more rooted in the science of the image rather than the art. These include Harold Edgerton and Eadweard Muybridge. 'There is a lot to be learned from slicing time thinly as in a microscope specimen or a movie frame. Edgerton's bullet through the apple shows that the explosion of the apple happens in both directions at the same time. But

my work is about watching time flow continuously and showing things that aren't readily apparent.' Each image is built up from as many as 10,000 vertical slices. An understanding of the mechanics of how these images are created is useful, but not necessary. 'I hope my work will be accessible to people on many different levels. For me, art is about communication. If you're turned on by what you see, I've done my job. How I got there can add to your enjoyment, but it shouldn't be a hang up.

↑ *Sympathetic Vibration*



↑ *Reality takes a U-turn. (This image was created through a car window during a U-turn.)*

Overleaf: Face of the Deep. All photographs © Ansen Seale

