

# Atget photos touch inner longings

By Ira Lax  
special writer

The Albert and Peggy de Salle Gallery of Photography at the Detroit Institute of Arts presents now through Jan. 13 "The Work of Atget: The Ancient Regime."

This is the third of four installments being brought to Detroit with support

from Spring Industries Inc., and organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

I so look forward to seeing these exhibits of the great French photographer Eugene Atget (1857-1927) that I imagine them being titled "A Walk With Atget."

As I wandered among the 120 photographs of the great aristocratic French

gardens of Versailles, Saint Cloud and Seaux, it was as if I was walking with someone who knew their secret essences.

JOHN SZARKOWSKI noted that Atget takes tangential and fragmentary aspects.

The basic elements are palaces, pavilions, reflecting pools, statues, vast lawns and the surrounding woods. The prints are sepia toned with flat, foggy skies.

With these particulars Atget gives us forms, lines, light and reflections, creating his own ineffable world.

Steps leading to a pavilion no longer used are covered with vines and twigs from seasons of wind blown trees; the statue of a lion overlooks a lonely reflecting pool.

Atget made these images during two periods. The compositions from the early period (1904-05) are very formal and well balanced. Those taken in the 1920s, however, are wonderfully angled and more playfully and openly perceived. This may reflect the success Atget had attained late in his life.

The later, more organic images represent forms we respond to from deep inside that touch ancient human longings for unity.

Even today when many of us desire to be shocked and shaken by art, these quiet, unified expressions are worth our serious attention.



French photographer Eugene Atget took this photograph at Saint-Cloud in 1922, five years before he died.



The way Atget established a feeling of isolation with only the reflection of the building (Trianon, Pavillon Francaise) for company makes a powerful statement.

# Yuppie profile creates baby boomer stereotype

NEWSWEEK HAS declared the year just past as the year of the Yuppie. The young urban professionals are profiled in the newsmagazine's cover story.

Michael Doonesbury and his wife are pictured on the cover in dressed-for-success clothes. Cartoonist Gary Trudeau took a year's hiatus and returned with his once activist characters moving to the new beat of the times—grappling with the pains of bloated financial success.

Gary Hart ran a political campaign aimed at this new breed, the baby-boomers come to power. But their vote, and almost everybody else's, went in the end to Ronald (no tax) Reagan.

The Newsweek article is superficial piffle, a series of short takes on the Me-Generation. But it suggests something

about a society mired in materialism. There is a suggestion here that these are people without values beyond acquisition and consumption. One woman says she could live "comfortably" on \$200,000 a year if she didn't have children. Another couple admits to giving up their former '60s ideals because they couldn't afford them.

THESE ARE people into their careers, making the big bucks, climbing the corporate ladder and... What else? There is little suggestion that any of these people think about other people. Even the married couples seem more married to each other's paychecks and "lifestyles" than to each other.

Newsweek makes no critical evaluation of this. It merely says this is how it



Hugh Gallagher

is, make of it what you will.

Some will see this as just fine. The world needs more consumers, right? Keep the old economy rolling. We all depend on those rich young people for our own lesser paychecks. A little selfishness never hurt anyone.

But this seems to be a case of newsmagazine revisionism. In the '60s the same Newsweek and its partner in

crime Time pictured a nation of dedicated, radical, peace-loving, anti-racist, naive but dedicated college students out to save the world from wanton materialism. Those articles got a lot of chuckles at campuses all over the country. There were radicals, there were peace marchers, there were draft dodgers. But most college students just went to college, took courses aimed at

getting a job and got a job. Most joined the anti-war movement because they didn't want to get killed in a war they heard wasn't all the government claimed it to be. Selfish self preservation but understandable and more on target than any idea of altruism that observers thought they saw.

Now we are told these dedicated young radicals have in their late 20s to late 30s learned the American way, forsaken any talent of Marxism and joined the true revolution—the consumer revolution. These formerly selfless young people are now totally self-centered. What a remarkable turn-about.

HOGWASH! NO doubt there are people who perfectly fit the Newsweek-Time scenario or "The Big Chill"

scenario. Jerry Rubin did give up love beads for a briefcase (as anyone could see he would). But most of these people never committed themselves to any cause but themselves and never had anything to reject. Others (a small minority) remain as dedicated to radical change as ever, riding as well they can the shifts of American political life.

It's so easy to build these generalizations and then go find someone to fill in the stereotype. But it tells us nothing about the true makeup of American life. It's awful sociology and not very good journalism either.

I'm of that generation and never felt I fit into any of these neat categories; when I was in college or now. And I doubt anyone else would want to claim membership in this weird tribe that Newsweek calls the Yuppies.

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