

STEPHEN SACK

INTERVIEW

by Maurice Lapin

ML - Stephen Sack is an American photographer who was born in 1955 and has been living in Brussels since 1977. As a graduate in Economics and History at Rutgers University, he finished his studies with a Seminar on' the Common Market in Brussels. He stayed in Brussels and studied photography where he graduated from the «75» in 1981. Sack has numerous exhibitions and publications to his name and it appears that he has developed an unusual and sometimes bizarre approach to photography.

His series «The Chromosomic Memory» combines diverse disciplines such as archeology, painting and sculpture and by using a historical analysis concerning the technological and biological revolutions projects them into the past and the future. Stephen Sack claims to be some kind of photographer/philosopher who creates a form of fiction through which he projects his ideas. Because his photographs often pose more questions than they answer, I have decided to ask Mr. Sack a few questions.

*ML- What, in fact, do you mean by «Chromosomic Memory» ?*

SS- Well, it's a bit complicated. I'd just say that it is a theory I've developed which teaches me how to see and what to photograph.

*ML - You mean this is all you're willing to tell us ? Where does this photographer/philosopher come in ?*

SS - The traditional logic dominated approach usually doesn't convince but merely creates counter arguments and objections. You should not forget that I am expressing myself through /photography and consequently through an image. I don't want the viewer to «understand» the pictures but rather to react to them in a special way; first with the body - a direct experience - and only then, and not even necessarily, with the mind. As a visual philosopher I can only communicate without words and penetrate directly into the subconscious of the viewer. My purpose is to propose a reality that will subtly change the observer and hopefully set off a chain of events which eventually transforms him and his perceptions of the past and present and man's potential for the future.

ML - Oh, yes, I see, That certainly sounds like quite a modest proposition. Are you serious?

SS - Of course not. That's the problem, everyone is so serious these days. So serious that we don't see the things which are really important, the expansion of consciousness and creativity, the capacity to express love, and to feel who

we are in relation to a society that has gone absolutely mad. The Chromosomic Memory series liberates the creative forces imprisoned by our fear of death. Only when we recognize death can we live, only when we recognize that we are destroying the Earth and all life on it can we hope to change that.

*ML - This is all very interesting, but what about the images ? Do you use special techniques in making these pictures? And why always portraits?*

SS - All right, since you insist. But you asked for it. The Chromosomic Memory is the theory that we all possess a common memory which consists of all the experiences of mankind since the beginning of our race. These memories are subliminal and responsible for much of what we call instincts. At the same time, as Socrates pointed out, all discovered knowledge is in fact merely remembering what has been forgotten. This implies of course that we know the future, but have forgotten it. And as we also «know» all of man's past, the «now» represents only a subjective interpretation of time which of course does not exist in any way as we perceive it. Reality is closer to the concept of integral time, where past and future are the same and the present is when we can influence them. The important thing is to use these resources in the conscious re-evaluation of our evolution, both in the past as well as in the future. In the photographs there are no special techniques; I have chosen portraits on small worn objects such as coins and photographs on gravestones. If we look closely we see the influence of time on man. As the face is the window of the soul, it becomes a jumping board for projecting these transformations on to man's spirit.

*ML - I see, you're proposing new archetypes of man for the future?*

SS - If you like.

*ML - Oh yes, of course, it really is quite simple.*

Interview Maurice Lapin