THE BATHERS
BY JENNETTE WILLIAMS/DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS/2009/96 PP./$39.95 (HB)

In the digital age, seeing works like Jennette Williams’s series The Bathers is a delight. The images depict women in bathhouses in Hungary and Turkey; the nude or mostly nude bodies belong to women of all sizes and shapes. Under Williams’s lens they shine with true beauty. The photographs, presented in a landscape-oriented book, are mostly all platinum palladium prints, a medium that pays homage to the past. The images evoke paintings of the female nude, and the classically structured environment in which the images dwell renders the work timeless. Nonetheless, small clues in the pictures reveal these photographs’ modernity: plastic stepstools in the showers, the hairstyles of the women, and the design of their shower shoes. Williams’s images capture a culture and a bond of womanhood; there are images depicting warm touches between women, and images with groups of women sprawled out comfortably. Others stray from this group presentation: one image depicts a lone woman engulfed in the architecture of the bathhouse. The photographs of women in this book can be an inspiration to many: women who are accepting of and confident in their bodies, women eager to embrace female camaraderie, and photographers considering printing methods of the past. The book presents intimate, powerful images of women.

ILANA CHLEBOWSKI works in the Curatorial Department at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo.

ELIZABETH HEYERT: THE NARCISSISTS
SEI SWANN/2009/124 PP./$60.00 (HB)

This book is the perfect format through which to view the photographs of Elizabeth Heyert’s series “The Narcissists” (2009) as the voyeuristic and intimate qualities innate to photography are heightened by these images. Heyert photographed her subjects as they looked at themselves in a one-way mirror, unable to see her or the camera. The photographs, which are reproduced at nearly 11 by 14 inches, depict individuals against a rich black background; the triptychs allow just enough information to be revealed without overloading the viewer. The unique and inviting layout of the book and subtle editing techniques shape the process of viewer observation into one that is intensely immediate, intimate, and firsthand. The photographs carry the weight of each expectation, fear, ambition, and secret that each subject reveals in his or her image. The psychoanalytic definition of the word narcissism describes a sexual eroticism that is aroused when looking at oneself, and many of these photographs bear a tinge of such a description. Viewing someone privately viewing himself or herself, one becomes self-conscious and simultaneously voyeuristic: to stop looking seems polite, but to keep looking is overwhelmingly compelling. As we view these images, the lingering questions remain: “What do I think of myself? What do people think of me? What traits or props reveal who I am or am not?”

ILANA CHLEBOWSKI works in the Curatorial Department at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo.

UPCOMING ISSUE

REPORT
Berlin Biennal

PROFILE
Robotics Photography Technology at Carnegie Mellon

ESSAY
NYC’s High Line

FEATURES
Video games in a time of war
The (non)destinations of Augmented Reality Art (Part I)
Conversation with Gülsen Bal

EXHIBITION REVIEWS
“Haunted” at the Guggenheim
Yves Klein retrospective at the Hirschhorn
Richard Billingham in London
Linn Underhill at Colgate University
Dennis Hopper at MOCA
John Baldessari at LACMA

BOOK REVIEWS
Asylum by Christopher Payne

and more... on our web site and in print...