

**Enright, Robert.— «Secret-Sharer: An Interview with Raymonde April».—  
Bordercrossings, Winnipeg, Issue no 108, Volume 27, number 4. — Pp. 58-71**

## SECRET-SHARER

An Interview with Raymonde April

BY ROBERT ENRIGHT



In 1999 Montreal photographer Raymonde April completed a project that integrated art and architecture called «Le Monde des Images.» Both in its title and methodology, it could easily describe the whole of her omnivorous practice. The work was, indeed, a world of images and included everything from family to found photos. April's photographic projects are characteristically multi-layered and multi-formed. In *Tout embrasser* (another all-encompassing title), her 58-minute-long, 16mm film completed in 2000, she included 517 images that covered a wide range of subject matter: harbour shots, exterior roadways, cottage interiors, studio pictures, natural objects, sheets hanging on a clothesline, a dog playing on a beach, a bedroom and, invariably a number of self-portraits. The photographs are presented in the form of a manual film; much of the time we hear a film passing through a sprocket, and each image is revealed when a

hand, presumably the artist's, lifts the top image from a pile. In «Aires de migrations (Migration Areas),» 2005, a collaboration with her long-time friend and fellow artist Michele Waquant, each artist included 40 albums documenting six generations of personal family history, as well as art reproductions and record covers that were significant in her own life and that of her father. (The record photos are themselves a history, running from Bach, Beethoven and Schubert through Ferre, Dylan and Billie Holiday). She has described the project as «a kind of attentive and retrospective examination of already existing images.» April calls this kind of familial photo-based archiving a «fascinating immersion. It's as if I was trying to write the legend of my family and mine through it. And legends do not die.»

top: Inconsciences (Walker Evans), 2004, from «Migration,» inkjet print on Photorag paper, 91.5 x 265 cm. All photographs courtesy the artist and Galerie Donald Browne, Montreal.

below: Inconsciences (grues), 2004, from «Migration,» inkjet on Photorag paper, 91.5 x 418 cm.

She is equally inventive in the way she presents her photographs; in *Les Fleuves invisibles* she mounted a 37-metre-long photographic fresco; *Soleils couchants* is an artist's book that paid tribute to her father, a policeman and amateur photographer, by using pictures he had taken over his lifetime. In the various parts of «Inconsciences,» 2004, she structures her photographs in horizontal bands, one of her favourite devices, to offer a plethora of images, including a room with a curtained window, a crowd in a paleontology museum, people looking at the Statue of Liberty, a makeshift bedroom scene, languorous in its disarray, a winter exterior, perfect in its white abstraction, a shot of an elegant, stripped wall and a self-portrait. There is in these images a democracy of observation, a levelled-down (but decidedly not dumbed-down) phenomenology. Things, locations and people, as they appear, no more, no less.

While April makes work that is various in number, her vision remains circumscribed in its range. This is more a choice than a limitation. Her world of images privileges intimacy over drama, the personal over the public. There are times when it might seem hermetic and is, at her own admission, obsessive. It is a visual space that finds its written correlative in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. April admires the circularity of the narrative, the way it announces a subject, leaves it behind, only to trace back to that original place, as if pricking its own memory about where it has been. She admits an affinity with Proust's method. «I do it naturally,» she says, early, in the following interview, «and he probably did, too.» This subtle recognition carries with it equal part sadness and exhilaration. It admits we can never tell our complete story, or recover all our connections. But it draws our attention to the complex and urgent need we have to attempt



that impossible telling, to work at re-establishing those impossible links. Raymonde April takes photographs mostly to remember. In the doing, she never forgets that memory goes beyond being found to becoming constructed. We realize it as a thing more made than happened upon.

Raymonde April has exhibited across Canada and in Europe since 1977. She was awarded the Canada Council Studio in Paris (1988) and The Conseil des arts et des lettres du Quebec Studio in New York (2004). In 2005 she was the recipient of the Paul de Hueck and Norman Walford Career Achievement Award in Art Photography from the Ontario Arts Council. In 2003 she won the Prix Paul-Emile Borduas, Quebec's most prestigious visual arts award. She was also a finalist for the inaugural Grange Prize in 2008, which led to a three-week stay in China this past spring.

The following interview with Robert Enright was conducted by phone in Montreal on March 31 and April 2, 2008.

*BORDER CROSSINGS: In the summer of 1975 you decided to read all of Marcel Proust. Why?*

RAYMONDE APRIL: I felt I was ready for it. I had practiced on Simone de Beauvoir before and Anais Nin, and Proust was the next big thing. I've always been very fond of large literary works, ones of more than 1000 pages, where you can dive into a world. I read all of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. The last book is so wonderful. It was the circular way in which he talks. He talks about some thing, then he talks about other things, then he comes back to the first thing, and that is something I do. I do it naturally and he probably did, too. He must have felt there was still something that hadn't been said. I was finishing my BFA and I had a text to write for a class. It's ridiculous when I think of it now but as an homage I copied 20 pages of Proust by hand. I submitted it and the silly thing is I got an A+.

*BC. Did you become interested in photography by looking at the photographs your father had taken?*

RA: When I was a small kid I looked at family albums, like anybody did. I remember when I was six years old being really scared looking at negatives because they reversed the world. People were careless in their treatment of negatives; you looked at the photograph very carefully, but you had all of the negatives stuck up in a shoebox, where they just rubbed against each other. My

parents used to say, «That's just the film; we don't need the film.» But I became more interested when I was 16 or 17 and in Cegep. A friend had shown me how to develop film in his darkroom. At the time I was very impressed by documentary cinema, all the sociological and ethnographic Quebec films Pierre Perrault did with the National Film Board. I think films were my big fantasy, and photography was a way to reach some kind of fiction without having the crew, the cameraman and the sound. But I lived in Rivière-du-Loup, which is a small town, and there were a couple of magazines I could buy at a newsstand. One was *Photo*, a French magazine where I could see the kind of documentary work Robert Frank was doing, and there was *Ovo*, a Quebec magazine that showed Montreal urban life. In Rivière-du-Loup there was nothing comparable. I was trying to emulate the kind of documentary photography I was seeing in the magazines. Then when I got to university and read Proust, the project changed; I wanted to create images and not just find them. I still took tons of photographs, at parties for example, just to remember things, but there was a clear distinction between what I was doing when I was posing for self-portraits and everything else. I couldn't use both together.

*BC: You have a section in «Inconsciences» where Walker Evans appears. Is that a tribute to your earlier recognition of the documentary tradition you knew about through Frank and Evans?*

RA: Maybe. I admire Walker Evans, but I didn't know his work when I was young. I probably knew more about the work of Raymond Depardon and Robert Frank. I had very little photo history until I started to teach. When I was in Quebec City at the university, I was going to cinema, watching films, reading books and seeing exhibitions. I don't want to be pretentious because there are always a lot of references, but I think photographically I was pretty much on my own.

*BC: When you decided that you would be a workable subject for your photographs was it based on convenience or was there something more philosophical going on?*

RA: It was convenient because I never had in mind what I was going to do. I improvised all the time. I couldn't ask people to perform something so it was a lot easier to use myself. I think because I was reading so many autobiographies — Proust, Anais Nin, de Beauvoir — this way of talking about yourself as if you were another person was philosophically present, too. But it wasn't so conscious.

*BC: So in that sense the world that you read about rather than the one you saw did have an influence on you?*

RA: Exactly. It's interesting because I was living in Quebec City, and Quebec City is some kind of fiction. It's a historical city; it used to have walls around it made by the French. It's like a stage. Although it might feel provincial, it's a capital. When I lived there, I used to dress in second-hand clothes from the '30s and '40s, as if I were playing some sort of character all the time, which is not something I do anymore. I don't feel the same in Quebec City anymore because I find the place has changed considerably since that time.

*BC: It sounds like the perfect place for you to do what you did then in your work.*

RA: I think so, too. There was an artistic community, but the visual arts weren't so strong, so you couldn't see really important exhibitions. You heard about them through art magazines, so we would read *Artforum*. There was also a lot of performance, body art, installations and land art at the time. I could look at these artists and art — from Marina Abramovic to the *Spiral Jetty* — through photographic documentation. There were images of their work, but they were not artistic photographs, they were documentary photographs. I think that distinction between art photography and documentary was very important

*BC: And what you were making was art ?*

RA: Yes, but I was conscious that what I was doing, I was doing only once. It never has been my practice to re-shoot things. I try sometimes, but most of the time it's the first shot that is good. This idea of rehearsing something never works for me.

*BC: So when you and Fabienne Bilodeau start La Chambre Blanche was that an attempt to create a focussing institution for the community you had found in Quebec City?*

RA: Definitely. I think Fabienne was a lot more clear on that; she wanted to create that community and we wanted to bring the things we wanted to see to Quebec City. It wasn't so much for the whole city, but it was for our artists.

*BC: You called it a «laboratory for experience.»*

RA: Well, there was a lot of idealism and it was made with a lot of improvisation. We were learning so much at the time because there wasn't a multiplicity of things to do. Then, after a while we got tired and decided to go looking for adventure elsewhere.

*BC: So when you left for Montreal in 1981 had you already formed a practice and knew what you wanted to do?*

RA: Pretty much. Except that it's never made any easier by being well defined. You have to go further.

*BC: For what period of time were you using yourself as both the subject and the object of your art?*

RA: I would say probably into 1988. When I went to Paris, the self-portraiture idea was still very important, but there were other aspects, like the transformation of daily objects and referencing a more complex idea of time. But the self-portrait was always there because it was one of the components that could name or label or create that sense of a world. There were 10 years of using myself. Before my departure for Paris I had just discovered a huge field of interest that was landscape. I had always worked indoors. It had to do with going back to the place where I grew up and looking at it in a new way, finding it worthy of interest. It hadn't been a very important part of my work before. It also allowed me to go back to my images from the very beginning and to look at them as being suddenly more pertinent. I always felt that landscape could not fit into a camera; it was very hard to make nature fit into an image. I thought writing was a somewhat better way, and so when I wrote that text for the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, it was summer and I was in nature. It wasn't the photographs that were so interesting — it was everything that I could describe and narrate.

*BC: Narration and storytelling have always been central to you your haven't they?*

RA: Yes. I love storytellers but only when they're good.

*BC: When did you realize that the everyday, the quotidian would be a fitting subject for this ongoing story you were prepared to tell? Did it come naturally ?*

RA: I think so. Each time you do something you have to go back to where you stopped and try to find directions. It's not very defined, you know.

facing page, top: *Christiane et Michèle*, 1989-2004, from «Migration», gelatin silver print, 61 x 91.5 cm.

middle: *Branches*, 2000-07, from «Gravitas», gelatin silver print, 50 x 60 cm.

lower: *Pelican*, 2000-2004, from «Migration», gelatin silver print, 63 x 92 cm.

*L'arrivée des figurants*, 1996, from «Les Fleuves invisibles», excerpt, 19th of 33, gelatin silver print, 120 x 90 cm.

BC: *Were there models you had seen or knew about by this time?*



RA: Oh yes, but I was very critical when I started. Photographers who have a very definite style — like Kertész or Cartier Bresson — can do any kind of subject because it will all have their signature, and we'll be able to identify it. So a show of their photographs can be any number of subjects, and it's always going to work. I was very much against that when I was in my formalist years, and I was reluctant to mix subjects. Maybe I was resistant to the idea of style. I wanted something that was more remote, or less subjective. I know what I do is very subjective, but at the same time I want it to be not personal. These are the things I aspire to do and I recognize that sometimes we don't know ourselves. I'm aware that a lot of people say my work is romantic and subjective, but I find it intellectual and conceptual and not sentimental. Maybe I'm choosing the wrong images; maybe I should choose other images.

*BC: You get so much mileage from what you do. There is a simple image in Les Fleuves invisibles of a woman who looks away from the camera. She is holding a white bowl full of beans and she turns towards a diffuse tree in the background. There is something utterly compelling about that image. Is it a kind of romance that the viewer responds to? I guess my question is, what did you respond to when you saw that image?*

RA: When I took it, there was a very strong wind, and that was what was really fascinating. She's also is wearing a flower dress and she's among weeds. It looks like a big tapestry I've always been very sensitive to that issue of background/foreground and the flattening of all the grounds. I have liked this play with perspective. Maybe it's that, or maybe it's because her face is hidden.

*BC: That's an image that can stand alone, but so often what's interesting in your work is the way you combine images. They seem to operate more poetically than they do literally. How do you think about the combination of images you use in any body of work ?*

RA: First, it's visual and formal, like a proportion of contrast and tension between two compositions. There has to be just enough difference. It's like some attraction that images have together. They balance and something happens between them. Of course, it's okay if there is something of a poetic nature between the subjects. But it's not just the subject matter because it wouldn't last very long. It would be very literal.

*BC: It's a complicated procedure to hold these things together isn't it, because they could easily drift into poeticism and romanticism? Are you always on guard against moving in those directions?*

RA: Yes, I'm very conscious of that, and I'm very aware when things are too sweet, or too romantic, or too full of the speaking subject, where there's not enough space for the viewer, not enough openness, not enough play.

*BC: But you do have a strong formal instinct. In Zenith, 1991, you combine a container, a spool of string and a wine glass, all with perfect tonal harmonies and balance. When you do an image like that is it conceived as part of a larger narrative ?*



RA: Well, the first image in Zenith is the tree, and then the glass and the rope are added as objects, so what you see is a documented installation. But the tree image looked pretty perfect when I saw it. It's a 4-by-5-inch negative, which has a very special quality. I worked with 35 mm most of my life, so the larger format is seductive. Another thing: for many years the grain and the special texture of 35mm kept me going formally. There was some kind of filter and so everything got transformed, but then I got tired of it and preferred to go to something that looked very real, like large format.

*BC: Was your discovery of landscape a catalytic thing for the archival impulse you developed?*

RA: Possibly. Going back into my negatives and seeing older images of places that had been transformed made obvious the time that has passed. But even my self-portraits were always more like figures in a space, or a landscape, or a room, or an environment, a context. I don't think I ever did any real portraiture; I think it was more like scenes and figures. So landscape is part of that, too, because it acts and reacts with figures.

*BC: Are the landscapes meant to be about the recollection of sensation, or do they play a more formal role?*

RA: Both. In any place, you are always where you stand when you photograph it, and when you move towards a landscape you keep moving; but if you frame with the camera, you always calculate the perspective. So the bigger the landscape is, or the bigger the site is, the greater the distance. You get really caught in that exercise of circling around. It becomes an appropriation also. Beijing made me work really hard because the place is so big. I had to set up boundaries and find my way from there.

*BC: What made you decide in 1986 to use your family as subjects and how do you think it has affected the work?*

RA: I started to use my family the same time that the landscape became important. I wasn't close to my family; I had left Rivière-du-Loup, gone to Quebec City and Montreal to be an artist and then went back. It had to do with my own desire to be with them. I thought I had to leave in order to become myself, and I never thought that Eastern Quebec would be a significant subject. I

wanted to take all my influences from somewhere else; I wanted to see the world. Then I went back to work in the summer and, suddenly, it was like an inspiration.

*BC: In an earlier interview, you talk about using your own archive as if it were a collection of found images. Did you experience a sense of strangeness in looking at them?*

RA: Yes, because it's always about context. Sometimes you simply forget why you've taken a photograph. The images in *Tout embrasser* were images I'd never printed before; they were on the contact sheets where they slept for 20 years. Then I started to notice I had taken shots of the same building, or I had taken images of my family's house. I wanted to look at what had changed and why did I take this. Some images did look very strange.

*BC: And the family photos were the ones that had both entranced and frightened you as a child. So who was the person who came back and how did she look at them?*

RA: In a family there is always some kind of fight to appropriate the memory or the archive. These images were given to me as slides, and so the family didn't look at them very often. I have to say I manipulated my father and my mother to get my hands on them. I felt a little bit like I was stealing them, as if I were appropriating something that wasn't only mine, but because I was a photographer I would take care of them.

*BC: To quote Anais Nin, you were the thief in the house of love although not a spy. Well, maybe you were a spy too?*

RA: Maybe. But I knew I wanted them very much and my sisters couldn't do anything with them, while I could claim that I would magnify and clean them. At that time I hadn't done a lot of colour photography and they were in colour, although they had faded. But it was really exciting, like a Garden of Eden.

*BC: The photographs your father took in the '50s are quite fascinating.*

RA: Yes, my father was a really good photographer. He worked as a policeman and he had a darkroom in the basement of our house, so I think the whole thing about photography has always been with me. Sometimes I was on really bad terms with my father because of the usual rebellion,

and then I would get back in favour. But some of the photographs he took are ones that I would be happy to have taken.

*BC: When you do the homage to your father in 2004, is it a way of recognizing and making peace with him?*

RA: I think so. Before that I had used his images in a couple of projects and he was happy with them. He kept saying he would charge me for their use. Michèle and I wanted to explore everything that made us image makers, the vinyl record jackets, the paintings, the postcards, the TV shows and the family photographs, all these things. My father's images were part of that.

*BC: «Aires de migrations (Migration Areas)» was a remarkable and ambitious exhibition. For someone who has been escaping the declaration of personality, your contribution to that two-person show had a significant amount of personality. It's one of the things that makes it so compelling.*

RA: I would never have done a project like that on my own because it is almost like a pathology. It is very obsessive, going back and cataloguing and archiving, making lists of images and putting images in albums. It's not an artistic gesture — it's more like a personal gesture. It's something that everybody can do, but not everybody does it because it's too time-consuming and demanding. I scanned literally 2000 images, and since these people are all dead, it was like having their ghosts all around. I think it was good that it was an exchange between two women who have a similar background and life stories that are different. What was especially nice was that people paid a lot of attention; they looked at the albums and the images and left the show saying they were going to do the same thing with their family photos. The artistic dimension wasn't a priority ; it was more like a gesture of collecting and archiving and looking. I think that's what made it work for me. It's utopian to think you can give a project like that the time it needs because it is not finished and will never be finished. It has no centre because there are two of us, so it has two heads and it branches in all kinds of directions. That's why it's never-ending.

*BC: You talk about artists and madness and a sense of disequilibrium that's present in artistic creation. Is that madness an occasional by-product or a necessary condition of making art ?*

RA: I think making art makes you crazy in some ways, but that's good. There is always the threshold where you say, «Maybe I should stop because this is becoming a problem.» When I was cataloguing all my family photographs, it was a bit compulsive and the same thing happened when I started scraping my dining-room walls. At least that was for a project; it wasn't just an activity. It's artistic and it was redeemed in that way.



top: *Gravitas, Mur nord, 20 juin 2007*, gelatin silver print, 102 x 127 cm.

lower left: *Autoportrait au couteau*, 2007, from «Gravitas,» chromogenic print, 43 x 56 cm.

lower right: *Gravitas*, installation view, Galerie Donald Browne, Montreal, 2007.

left: *Papillon*, from «Quelques sujets,» 2006, inkjet print on Photorag paper, 71 x 91.5 cm.

middle: *Fumeur*, from «Quelques sujets,» 2006, inkjet print on Photorag paper, 71 x 91.5 cm.

right: *Clip*, from «Quelques sujets,» 2006, inkjet print on Photorag paper, 71 x 91.5 cm.

*BC: Are you involved in a private mythology? Will the work stay distant but sufficiently rich and compelling to somehow be a mythological story of contemporary life?*

RA: I don't know. Any lifetime artistic project can be that. No more, no less. You don't often take in its totality and look at the whole thing; you always look at it in fragments from one side or another. So it's the present, but it cannot be that only; it's about the past, but it can't just be about the past either.

*BC: The Autoportrait au rideau, which you began in 1991, has a gestation period that goes all the way to 2004. Did you go back and rework the image?*

RA: It was shot in 1991 and I printed it in a final format in 2004. It had not been exhibited before. It's a funny story. It was part of a special publication project in *La Presse* in Montreal for Le Mois de la Photo in 1991. It was supposed to be a photographic diary in the newspaper every day for one week and that was the first image. But the series could not be completed because there was some sort of issue with the editor who wanted to have images about Montreal, and he felt that the work I was doing wasn't enough about Montreal. So it was kept in some kind of limbo. What I was taken by was the wind. It was very soft and coming in from the windows, so the curtains were floating. That's what I wanted to capture. I think it's about the sensation of wind, of being almost outside, and of the outside coming in.

*BC: Do you often cast yourself as a prop? One thinks that self-portraits are about the self rather than about the space in which the self exists. How do you think you use yourself in the work generally?*

RA: I think I serve as some kind of marker, as a grounding, like a scale figure. But as I get older it's saying different things. Being 22 or 24 or even 35 is not like being 55, so self-portraiture is not about the same thing. I can look at myself and say I was just a baby. I look at that photograph and see the bizarre haircut and my age. I still use myself at least once or twice, I just don't make series of images using myself. But I'm still there. In the «Gravitas» show at Galerie Donald Browne in the fall there were three self-portraits out of 10 or 11 images. One is old and one is related to the body of work itself. It's like some kind of footnote.

*BC: You talked in the first part of this interview about the conceptual relationship you have to your work. You almost use your self-image conceptually rather than as a way of revealing your psychology.*

RA: I don't find heavy psychological and therapeutic work very interesting. I'm much more distanced. Of course, when you feel troubled or confused or you're going through pain, it does inspire the making of art, but it's not about that. It's also up to the viewer. I think when there isn't

that heavy expression, then people can identify themselves more, or project themselves more into the work.

*BC: How do you decide in a work like «Inconsciences» what image you want to put in relation to another one? I don't want to say sequencing because that implies a kind of narrative and the work may not be about that.*

RA: I think it's like film editing; it has a sense of rhythm and rupture and contrasts and similarities. It's very close to music, and for «Inconsciences» it had to do with the digital camera I was using. It transforms the colours and it was also about colour. Colours that are very, very saturated and blur; everything that the digital camera does to reality is very different from 35mm black-and-white large format. Also, in transferring the images onto the computer and looking at them on the screen one after the other, all the shifts become more noticeable. I became very aware of the shifts — in colour, in shape, in what's represented in the image, like locations. I was in New York at the time, so I had images of New York, images of Montreal, images of the countryside, and they were all in different colours, with lots of windows. So for me it was like a musical score, or like a broken up film sequence. I remember talking to you about this formal visual way of composing and I think maybe with colour everything is more emphasized.

*BC: Do you have a preferred format ?*

RA: For different projects I use different formats. The «Gravitas» work is shot with an 8-by-10 camera, which I've never used before, but I felt a large-format camera was appropriate for that project. I'm not a very good technician, so if I need to learn something I only learn what I need. I'm lazy and I don't continue to learn after. Then I'll try something else — I want to keep my system open, and I want to use photography to talk about the experience of being surrounded by images and being surrounded by the world. For me it's not going in one direction; it's trying to get all the directions at the same time. It's work that is open ended unfinished, in progress and recycled. It's always been like that.

*BC: What is the story behind the image of all those photographs spread out to dry in Michele's studio?*



RA: I was visiting her in Paris and was working on an exhibition project. I had brought lots of images to show to the curator. We were working on an exhibition about my film *Tout embrasser*. I arrived at Michèle's and my suitcase got stolen, so I walked around the neighbourhood and eventually found the suitcase an hour later. It was open and it had rained, so I went back to Michèle's studio, which has a mezzanine, and I just laid down all the photographs to dry.

*BC: But then you realized how good a photograph it would make?*

RA: Of course. I was in shock, but not in shock enough that I couldn't take a photograph. Also, I was happy because I had found all my stuff. It could have been a lot worse. The story doesn't really matter, but what's more interesting is that the image became an icon for our collaboration. You can make up another story on top and say I was visiting Michèle with my images because we were working on our project, but it actually happened one year before. But it has my images in Michèle's studio, her images are on the wall, on the side are her paints, and it looks like a continent, or some sort of aerial map. It's about mapping between two continents. The whole thematic aspect of what I did with Michèle can be found in that image.

*BC: Are you always on the lookout for an image?*

RA: In some ways, yes. That's how I make images. Making images instead of letting them go. Maybe it's a way of keeping and preserving. That's not so much about art photography as about seeing the world and some kind of sharing. It's not easy, and because it's not easy you have to rely on description: on the sound, the colour, the light, and on the conversation that was happening at the time. Everything that surrounds it becomes obliterated, but it's still contained in the image. I think attentiveness is the basis of what I do, and everything else is technique, formal exploration and formal decisions, labour, energy and taste.

*BC: When you were talking about Migration Areas, you were fascinated by what you called «the constant pressure of the dual and its subdivisions.» I wonder if that is also a general description of your work?*

RA: Yes. A good way to talk about it might be as some kind of awareness that many things go on at the same time, and the potentialities are there but you never explore them fully. But it's nice to see all the possibilities laid out. I don't take photographs of my daily life because I have to make

it different in order to see it. My daily life is going to school and buying groceries and going to meetings and cooking dinner, and I'm not paying attention to that. It's when I decide to pay attention, and that often happens when I travel, that I see something new. So it's not so much about the familiar as about what's different.

*BC: How do you avoid the banal? Your photographs aren't inherently dramatic or psychological, that's not the terrain that you work.*

RA: I was very impressed by a seven-hour-long interview with Gilles Deleuze where he's discussing words that start with different letters of the alphabet. For me, two very interesting ideas emerged, one being immanence, which is the potentiality and the displacement, and the other is layering. It's like geometry; you have these planes in space and time and something pierces a plane and reaches another. It's like an exchange of time. I think it's about making the notion of time more complex, about associating very banal images that contain different times or different allusions to time and space, about something that's old and something that's new, something very close and very far.

*BC: So the slippage between the temporal spheres is the point of excitement and the point of acceleration for the image?*

RA: For me it is something like that. So one single image is interesting because it has the kind of openness that will call for other things to be added to that kind of void. If it's complete it can be boring, but if it's incomplete you are solicited to complete it.

*BC: Maybe that's the organizing principle behind your sequencing. What you're looking for is being able to take advantage of the slippage between temporal moments.*

RA: It's funny how one needs to be able to turn around an idea before being able to express it, but I guess that's at the core of it. Another idea is juxtaposition. One emotion or one experience is never linear, it's never unilateral, it's always a conjunction of different things. That can be very complex and sophisticated, and it can also be very simple and basic, but I think it's always linking the space between two things.

*BC: So does the energy and the meaning come out of the interstitial, out of the in-betweenness, and not through direct, straight-on apprehension of the work ?*

RA: That's very important, as is the strength of the image. It has to be a balance of both.

*BC: In that sense is the single image inadequate for your purposes. Do you want more than the apprehension of the single image?*

RA: Well, the single image can make me dream, and from there I can make all kinds of interpretations and projections, like the way you can work with found images. I like to work with found images because they make me create or anticipate. There is a secret to them.