

The Starn Twins  
MATRIX/BERKELEY 115

University Art Museum  
mid March - mid May 1988

Double Stark Portrait in Swirl, 1985-86



Photographs created by the Starn Twins outrageously assault all given standards of production and appearance, technique and aesthetics. Instead of finely made prints of carefully composed imagery are prints that are scratched, stained, torn, smudged, faded, battered, and misshapen, with images of blatantly mundane or purposefully obscured subjects. The images are out of focus, radically cropped, doubled, fragmented, excessively enlarged, and disruptively manipulated. Compositions, moreover, are layered, taped, irregularly arranged, and highly idiosyncratic. The sense of disorder that runs rampant within the compositions is accentuated by the seemingly haphazard mode of pushpin display or the disjunctive, funky means of framing. Exhibition installations also cut against the grain by being odd assemblies of diverse works. Compositions which are both framed and unframed are typically hung in a stacked, cluttered manner upon the walls.

Of primary significance is the Twins' focus on the constructive factors which comprise and define photography. "We want to show the insides or guts of photography." This they do, for example, in Ian Churchill (1985-87) by emphasizing the paper itself, the use of a toner to modulate surface color, and the variant possibilities of light exposure--the basic process by which images recorded on negatives are made to emerge or disappear. In the Horses (1985-86) and Seascape (1987) series it is a focus on the exact or reverse repetition of the same image that is pronounced. Such image

duplication combined with attention to the process of multiple printing again gives preeminence to photography as the subject matter of the works.

While exaggerating constituent aspects of the photographic medium, the Starn Twins revel in the potentialities of manipulation, especially as this is allied with the dynamics of creation and destruction. Indeed, the constructivist aesthetic that prevails in the work must be viewed in terms of an equally strong deconstructivist attitude, for the compositions question the structures that typically give form, presence, and meaning to photographs. They uncover and challenge nearly all that is taken for granted about photography. Of particular note is the Starn Twins' refusal to consider photography as the archetypal medium of reproduction wherein reproduction connotes sameness and exactitude. For the Starns, whose identical twinning gives them an innate understanding of doubling, a key aim is to show difference within sameness, and to probe beneath the surface of duplication as a process and issue. By refusing to treat photography as mechanical reproduction, the Starns further confound concerns about originality and uniqueness that have plagued the art world since the emergence of photography in the nineteenth century.

Doug and Mike Starn were born in 1961 and grew up in suburban New Jersey. They began their collaborative photographs while still students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and have enjoyed a rapid rise

to success due to showings of their work at the Institute of Fine Arts, Boston (1985), the Whitney Biennial (1987), Documenta 8 (1987), and the Saatchi Collection, London (1988). The Starn Twins are represented by the Stux Gallery, Boston and New York.

Sidra Stich  
Senior Curator

#### Works in MATRIX:

1. Double Chair, 1985-87, toned silver print/tape, 96 x 84". Lent by Barbara and Eugene Schwartz, New York City.
2. Boots with Metal and Film, 1983-87, toned silver print/film/metal/tape, 72 x 60". Lent by Julian Schnabel, New York.
3. Double Stark Portrait in Swirl, 1985-86, toned silver print/tape, 99 x 99". Lent by Randolph Rocha and Gus Fabens, Boston.
4. Hands Detail, 1985-87, toned silver print, 46 x 46". Courtesy Stux/Boston.
5. Ian Churchill, 1985-87, toned silver print/tape, 82 x 83". Lent by the artists.
6. Untitled (The Tunnel), 1987, toned silver print/aluminum/glass/tape, 93 x 139". Lent by Barbara and Eugene Schwartz, New York City.

7. Black Group #2, 1986, silver print/tape, 96 x 41". Lent by the artists.

8. Double Sideways Stairs, 1987, toned silver print/tape/wire/wood, 66 x 37". Courtesy Stux/New York.

9. Horses (ICA Edition), 1986, toned silver print/tape, 19 x 24". Lent by the artists.

10. Skull on the Head, 1985, silver print/tape, 10 x 8". Lent by the artists.

11. Lisa (Framed), 1987, toned silver print/tape, 19-1/2 x 18". Lent by Herb and Lenore Schorr, Ridgefield, CT.

12. Untitled # P4, 1986, toned silver print, 20 x 15". Lent by William and Paula Zellen, Weston, MA.

13. Triple Seascape, 1987, silver print/tape, 29 x 24". Lent by Elizabeth V. Poulos, courtesy Stux/New York.

14. St. Michael Claw, 1987, toned silver print/tape/plexi/wood, 30 x 37". Lent by the artists.

15. Bars, 1987, toned silver print, 12 x 11". Courtesy Stux/New York.

16. Green and Black Strip, 1986, toned silver print/tape, 30 x 8". Lent by Barbara and Eugene Schwartz, New York City.

17. Seascape Details, 1987, toned silver print/tape, 39 x 52". Courtesy Stux/New York.

18. Burgundy #1, 1986, toned silver print/tape, 24 x 41". Lent by Beverly and Harris Schoenfeld.

19. Brown Lisa, 1986, toned silver print/tape, 10 x 10". Lent by the artists.

20. White Marcie, 1986-87, toned silver print, 12 x 14". Lent by Deborah Jordon, New York.

21. Eye with Plexi, 1987, toned silver print/tape, 19 x 24". Lent by Barbara Mirman, Boston.

22. Chicago Cityscape, 1987, toned silver print/tape, 15 x 29". Lent by Anthony Pisani, Boston.

23. Double Chair Fragment, 1985-86, toned silver print/tape, 15 x 30". Lent by the artists.

24. Portrait of M with Slate, 1986-87, toned silver print/tape, 20 x 16". Lent by the artists.

25. Multiple Rembrandt, 1987, toned silver print/tape, 24 x 47". Anonymous loan.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Stux Gallery, Boston, '85, '87; Stux Gallery, New York, '86, '87; Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL, '87.

Selected group exhibitions:

ICA, Boston, Boston Now: Photography, '85; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Biennial, '87; Kassel, Germany, Documenta 8, '87;

International Center of Photography, New York, Portrayals, '87; The Saatchi Collection, London, New York Art Now, '88.

Selected bibliography about the artists:

Frick, Thomas. "Starn Twins at Stux," Art in America, Nov. '85.

Indiana, Gary. "Imitation of Life," The Village Voice, Apr. 29, '86. Koslow, Francine.

"Doubling Photography: The Starn Twins," Print Collector's Newsletter, Nov. '86.

Masheck, Joseph. "Of One Mind: Photos by the Starn Twins of Boston," Arts, Mar. '86.

Ames, Katrine. "The Art of Double Exposure," Newsweek, June 29, '87.

Cameron, Dan. New York Art Now, The Saatchi Collection (London: Giancarlo Politi, '87).

Giuliano, Charles. "The Starn Twins," Art New England, Sept. '87.

Larson, Kay. "The Starn Twins," Vogue, Sept. '87.

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