

CARL DE KEYZER PAUL GRAHAM



Societies Adrift

Carl De Keyzer and Paul Graham have taken paths divergent from the other twelve recipients of the W. Eugene Smith Fund. Each seeks a more modern, open language and style that will espouse and better reflect, in their own eyes, the rhythms and tensions of our visual environment which has so dramatically changed in the past decade. The fact that one systematically uses flash and the other prefers color, leaves them open to accusations of having "fine art tendencies". Form and surface are indeed a primary concern. Categorically rejecting the "classic" 35 mm format for reportage, both of them prefer instead to work with the more austere Plaubel 6x7. De Keyzer has begun to use more frequently a panoramic format. His book *Homo Sovieticus* has been described as "a masterpiece of framing, composition and lighting". Of Graham's *Beyond Caring*, Carole Naggar remarked that he shoots "at ground level, where often papers and candy wrappers, crumpled newspaper, empty cans, cigarette butts, compose a still life of the pain and anguish of waiting on line." Ignored or discarded by international magazines, each of their projects however has led to books and exhibitions. Graham, a minimalist of sorts, presents his images "raw", mounted on an aluminium support, without frame or mat – "dispensable decorative elements". De Keyzer and he represent a new generation (all the other recipients of the grant are in their forties or over) the "enfants terribles" of the 50's. Graham, who studied to become a microbiologist, was born in England in 1956 – the time of Suez, Budapest, and the peak of the Cold War. De Keyzer, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Gent, was born in

Belgium in 1958 – during the period of De Gaulle, Lumumba and the decolonization movements. By the time they turned 20, the Vietnam war was already over. Perhaps that accounts for the lack of neo-realistic sentimentality and lyricism in their work. A far cry from Goya, far removed from Zola, where is the legacy of Gene Smith in this? Like the author of *Minamata*, De Keyzer and Graham are masters of their own ships. They insist on the absolute control of their subject by obstinately refusing to become prisoners of time, events or deadlines. De Keyzer gave himself one whole year to complete his *God, Inc.* project, a personal and stark analysis of the American religious movements and phenomena. Religion as an essential part of a society dominated by money, where anything can be bought and sold, "including souls". God is the nexus of a new patriotism uniting middle America, ethnic minorities and the have-nots of Reaganism. Graham has fixed his sights on photographing a new soon to be unified Europe, which has abandoned its historical liberal model of progress and social justice to raise a temple to free enterprise in its place: "either you are swept in or swept aside". In the years to come, he plans to produce a hundred images – some in the form of diptychs and triptychs, breaking away from the idea that one picture "tells it all". Adds Graham: "No one has a copyright on how you express and articulate concern. It's a matter of intent and conviction." By way of illustration, De Keyzer, on his part, contends that he is neither "reporter nor journalist" but that he owes it to himself to express his personal point of view.

Robert Pledge



1. Carl de Keyzer



2. Carl de Keyzer



3. Carl de Keyzer



4. Carl de Keyzer