



DLK COLLECTION

From one photography collector to another: a venue for thoughtful discussion of vintage and contemporary photography via reviews of recent museum exhibitions, gallery shows, photography auctions, photo books, art fairs and other items of sometime interest to photography collectors large and small.

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2011

➔ Alvin Baltrop: Photographs 1965-2003 @Third Streaming

JTF (just the facts): A total of 58 black and white and color photographs, framed in black and matted, and hung in a single room gallery space with small dividing walls. The show contains 47 black and white images, 11 color images, a glass case with various photographs and ephemera, a portfolio, and a carousel of 35mm color slides projected on the wall. The black and white images are generally vintage gelatin silver prints, with a handful of modern prints (in editions of 15) mixed in. The color images are modern digital c-prints, also in editions of 15. All of the works were taken between 1965 and 2003. Physical dimensions of the prints range from 4x5 to 9x13. (Installation shots at right.)



Comments/Context: Alvin Baltrop's photographs of the subculture of life on the abandoned West side piers in New York in the 1970s and 1980s mix danger and tenderness, public and private, in ways that brim with truthful, gritty energy. This broad retrospective show stretches from early images of his time in the military all the way to late pictures of hospital life, but it is the pier photographs that are his lasting and durable legacy.

Many of Baltrop's photographs capture the backdrop of the pier environment itself: the exposed steelwork, the rotting wood, the slabs of pavement, and the dark open spaces punctuated by shafts of light streaming through cracks and broken windows. There is a sense of expansive emptiness in these pictures, of vast uninhabited areas, a few carved up by the artistic experiments of Gordon Matta-Clark and others. It is a world of crumbling disintegration, only a few steps from utter ruin.



The cast of characters that passed through this collapsing world included a spectrum of New York's forgotten and marginal: runaways, homeless people, criminals, prostitutes, and men looking for gay sex. Baltrop captures these people in intimate portraits and everyday nudes, and often in the stolen moments of fleeting encounters, hasty couplings standing up against the

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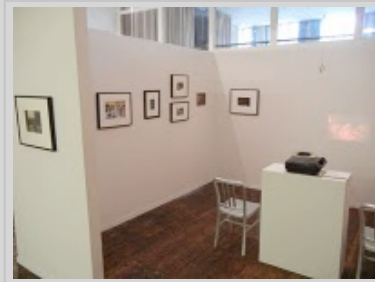
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backdrop of grime. While the lazy images of sunbathing make the scene seem open and accepting, a few images of covered corpses and lingering policemen attest to the rough violence lurking just underneath the surface.

While not every one of these pictures is particularly memorable, the body of work on the whole has an immediacy and authenticity that keeps it fresh after many passing years. The images mix on-your-guard tension with brief moments of understanding, documenting an invisible strata of individuals searching for connection and acceptance.

Collector's POV: The prints in this show are priced as follows. The modern prints, either color or black and white, are \$2000 each. The vintage gelatin silver prints were all marked "price on request" and I didn't ask for more information. Baltrop's work hasn't yet made it to the secondary markets, so gallery retail is likely the only option for interested collectors at this point.



My favorite image in the show was *Untitled*, 1975-1986; it's the middle image in the third column from the right in the top installation shot. I like the slashing intersection of the steel girders and the layers of angles and shadows created by the decaying structure.

Rating: * (one star) GOOD (rating system described [here](#))

Transit Hub:

- Artist site ([here](#))
- Review: *New Yorker* ([here](#))

Alvin Baltrop: Photographs 1965-2003

Through May 28th

Third Streaming

10 Greene Street
2nd Floor
New York, NY 10013

Posted by dlkcollection at 10:13 AM



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