

ART NEW ENGLAND

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The Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University/Boston, MA

www.lesley.edu/aib/portfolio/gallery.html

ROBERT STIVERS: GESTURES, MEMORIES, AND GRADATIONS



Robert Stivers, *Dream (Bed)*, toned silver gelatin print, 2001.

Robert Stivers uses the camera and darkroom to spatially and temporally isolate, dislocate, and ultimately relocate his subjects. His mysterious silver gelatin and toned photographs feel as if they were dredged up from a time past, or perhaps they are evidence of a world beyond this world. His vocabulary of strangely lit, blurred, burned-in images of people, places, and objects delineates a lushly surreal, at times decadently elegant vision that is ultimately dramatically disturbing.

Mirror provides an apt metaphor for Stivers's eye. An ornately framed mirror, centered and surrounded by blackness, reflects only some vague light; we can see smudges and fingerprints on the surface, but beyond that is darkness. The inhabitants of Stivers's mirror-world are never whole; they are radically altered and disassociated from contextual clues. The glowing, blurred face and neck of a woman in *Portrait in Oil*, for instance, appear chillingly disembodied.

The photographs in this exhibit are taken from Stivers's three books (which were available in the gallery). The most recent, the luxuriously oversized *Sestina*, is named after an arcane, complex French poetry form and is complemented by the film *Sestina*, which added movement to the visual vocabulary of the photographs and books. By presenting his imagery in three different media, Stivers extends the depth of his images.

Mary Bucci McCoy