Doug and Mike Starn/MATRIX 101
July 2 - September 25, 1988

Double Stark Portrait in Swirl, 1985-86
Courtesy of Stux Gallery,
New York City

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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 disjointive, 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 twinnness 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 Museum 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
University Art Museum
University of California, Berkeley, California
Works in MATRIX:

**Boots with Metal and Film**, 1983-87, toned silver print with film, metal and tape, 76" x 68", irregular, unframed. Collection of Julian Schnabel, New York City.

**Skull on the Head**, 1985, silver print with tape, 10" x 8", framed. Collection of the artists.


**Double Chairs**, 1985-87, toned silver print with tape, 111" x 102", framed. Collection of Eugene and Barbara Schwartz, New York City.


**Black Group #1**, 1986, silver print with tape, six pieces, 96" x 41" assembled, unframed. Collection of the artists.


**Green and Black Strip**, 1986, toned silver print with tape, 30" x 8", framed. Collection of Eugene and Barbara Schwartz, New York City.


**Portrait of M with Slate**, 1986-87, toned silver print with tape, with slate frame, 20" x 16", framed. Collection of the artists.


Lake Michigan Stairs (formerly Double Sideways Stairs), 1987, toned silver print with tape, wire and wood, 66" x 37", with three-piece frame. Collection of the artists.


Multiple Rembrandt, 1987, toned silver print with tape, 24" x 47", framed. Private Collection, Boston, Massachusetts.


Homo Faber (formerly Untitled (The Tunnel)), 1987, toned silver print with aluminum, glass and tape, 84" x 140", framed. Collection of Eugene and Barbara Schwartz, New York City.

Selected Exhibitions by Doug and Mike Starn:

Stux Gallery, Boston, MA '85, '87; Stux Gallery, NYC '86, The Horses (ICA Edition) & Recent Work '87; The Christ Series The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL '87 (also to Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA '88); Mike and Doug Starn: Selected Works 1985-1987 Honolulu Academy of Art, Honolulu, HA '88 (also to University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA '88).
Selected Group Exhibitions:

Selected Bibliography about
Doug and Mike Starn:


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